



An investigation into how the meanings of
spirituality develop among accredited
counsellors when practicing a new shamanic
energy therapy technique.

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Thesis submitted for the award of PhD

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Abstract

Karen Ward

An investigation of how the meanings of spirituality develop among accredited counsellors when practicing a new shamanic energy therapy technique.

Both in Ireland and internationally, counselling has become increasingly popular as a means to redress life issues and learn new behaviours designed to sustain the optimum changes made mentally and emotionally during treatment. However, many find this approach somewhat limiting if seeking a connection with their personal spirituality (Cooper & McLeod, 2011). Counsellors aware of this trend are conscious of addressing this issue and *how* it may affect their own sense of spirituality. This research was devised to answer that fundamental question while using an energetic/spiritual tool within their client work.

One of the emerging paradigms in counselling is that of shamanism (Wilber, 2001). This indigenous holistic way engages at the energetic level and has an established body of scientific research (MacKinnon, 2012) allowing positive intervention to promote health outcomes (Levin, 2011). The Energy Therapy Technique used in the research enabled the counsellors to incorporate their *own* spiritual meanings while offering their clients an inclusive way to tap into theirs during a clinic session.

The methodology was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and the findings indicate that counsellors' meanings of spirituality developed with major and minor changes. A new paradigm of trust ushered a palpable divine presence of Spirit into the clinic room bringing empowered awakening to the counsellors of their own volition. The ability to easily facilitate their clients tap into their sense of spirituality and self-heal were key components of their developments. A dearth of spiritual tools and lack of training with consequent implications for supervision indicates scope for further research.

This unique and original work within the biopsychospiritual field cultivates new ground within this sphere providing new theoretical and practical insights in an Irish context.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

“O sages standing in God’s holy fire, as in the gold mosaic of a wall.

Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre, and be the singing masters of my soul.”

- W.B. Yeats, *Sailing to Byzantium*, 1928.

1.1 Background

Both in Ireland and internationally, counselling, psychotherapy and counselling psychology, which are now well-established forms of mainstream therapy, have become increasingly popular as a means to redress life issues and learn new behaviours designed to sustain the optimum changes made mentally and emotionally during treatment. However, many find this approach somewhat limiting if seeking a connection with their personal spirituality (Cooper and McLeod, 2011).

1.1.1 Counselling evolving to include the psycho-spiritual

Since the 1960’s there has been an increase of interest in what could be termed the ‘secular sacred’ – spiritual practices that are not linked to specific religions but focus on personal empowerment (Cosgrove et al. 2011). Reflecting research literature, the quarterly magazine for the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) has increasingly published articles on this phenomenon and the integration of related techniques and practices. These therapies, (thereafter all referred to as ‘counselling’ for ease of term with these related fields of skilled practices), have been evolving to integrate the spiritual and to embrace the restoration of the spiritual-healing paradigm as a central honouring of holistic health (West, 2004; Lines, 2006).

The Oxford English Dictionary definition of counselling is: *the giving of advice on personal, social, psychological, etc., problems as an occupation; Also, in Psychol., a form of psychotherapy in which the counsellor adopts a permissive and supportive role in enabling a client to solve his or her own problems.* A counsellor endeavours to assist their client by listening, reflecting, asking pertinent questions and by offering specific tools to delve into aspects of their presenting issue providing an opportunity for movement from pain to clarity and insight. Conventionally, counselling is concerned with the mental and emotional. If the client wishes, however, to incorporate the spiritual then their counsellor needs to be able to facilitate this in a way that supports whatever spiritual beliefs the client does or does not hold.

1.1.2 Spirituality in healthcare

The Oxford English Dictionary states that spirituality is: *the quality or condition of being spiritual; attachment to or regard for things of the spirit as opposed to material or worldly interests. Also: the condition of being spirit or of consisting of an incorporeal essence.*

Within the academy there is progressively a call for investigation into spirituality and healthcare (Holmes, 2007; Frick, 2011) including traditional methods from esoteric sources (Faivre, 1994; Hanegraff, 2013). Increasing numbers of people now believe that spirituality is an important key contributor in return to full health (Koenig, 1999; Hatala, 2013). Western esotericism and transpersonal psychology have been two of the responses of academia to the introduction of secular spirituality in the Western world (Fukuyama et al. 2004; Walsh, 2007). Levin (2008, p. 101) concurs that ‘...the health-related features of major esoteric systems, from ancient initiatory traditions of East and West...the mystical, shamanic, Kabbalistic traditions... to the new age movement of the past quarter century... have become increasingly accepted and adopted by a growing segment of the healthcare-consuming public.’

However, the unsuspecting vulnerable public may leave themselves wide open to a range of spiritual practitioners, while good intentioned, not necessarily therapeutically trained to the degree reached by years of professional counselling training (MacKinnon, 2012). A key aspect of this training is the use of language with clients who are susceptible to the opinions of a perceived ‘expert’. This is a strategic feature of Hypnosis and Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) training but can easily be inadvertently misused by a New Age therapist who is well meaning and using suggestible language (Brockman, 2006).

In 1997, psychiatrist George Engel (1997) called for a new medical paradigm, the ‘biopsychosocial model’ which is a broad view that attributes disease outcome to the interface of human biology, psychology and sociology countering the traditional biomedical model crediting disease to mainly biological factors only. Moreno (1999) took this a step further, stating that human health not only depends on the individual but also on their relational links with others, spiritual beliefs and the cosmos. As a psychotherapist and phenomenologist using Judeo-Christian religious knowledge and thought psychology, his theories and psychodrama included creativity and the energy field of the clients.

He saw these both as ‘gifts’ that are divinely given and believed that it is every human’s ‘responsibility’ to connect both with each other and the cosmos for a healthy holistic life.

This heralded the rise of what has become known as the ‘biopsychospiritual’ field. The re-entry of spirituality to healthcare, this time in a secular context, is being spearheaded by the nursing profession (Egan et al. 2017).

Bussing and Koenig (2010) found that for many ill patient/clients, religiosity/spirituality is an important resource for coping associated with better quality of life. In their research, a large cross-sectional study on Religion, Aging and Health with 7,000 people, they used the Duke University Religion Index (DUREL) – a 5 scale item devised in the USA in 1997. They measured 3 aspects of religious involvement - organisational (public religious events), non-organisational (prayer, scripture reading) and intrinsic (living the path of) religiosity to discover that there were 4 aspects of spiritual needs that promoted holistic health. These were connection, peace of mind, meaning and transcendence. Commenting on this phenomenon, Holmes (2007, p.29) contends that ‘We have moved from merely treating disease in a discrete way, to beginning to look at the whole person in the context of their environment and taking more serious account of all these factors in defining illness and treatment. Spiritual beliefs and values are part of this healing wholeness approach.’

In the Nordic countries, Koslander, da Silva and Roxberg (2009), conducted a critical literature review of how a person’s spiritual needs are connected to dignity and their basic human rights in mental health care. They illustrated how spiritual needs are connected with an individual’s mental health and well-being as a requirement to experiencing life as meaningful. They regard the holistic approach as the only way for some clients to regain their mental health and well-being. The field of addiction also encompasses this approach particularly the AA model’s inclusion of their ‘higher power’ component (Swindon, 2001).

Hospice, pastoral care and chaplaincy have also been to the forefront of this movement within the medical setting embracing the transpersonal approach. Timmins et al.’s (2017) research findings identify that providing spiritual care to hospital patients is a key component of policy in Ireland today. Spiritual support is recognised as the responsibility of the whole healthcare team with particular responsibility ascribed to the role of the chaplain.

However, discussing religion and/or spirituality (religion/spirituality) is a field in which even experienced counsellors frequently find themselves unprepared or confused. Verbeck et al. (2015) in their literature search concluded that, contrary to what may be expected, many researchers reported that these issues are actually avoided in clinical work. They cite Frazier and Hansen's (2009) study that reported 30% or less of accredited counsellors discussed religion within their clinical sessions. Verbeck et al. (2015, p.104) further contend that four factors may underlie the failure to discuss religion/spirituality in counsellors' client sessions:

1. 'that religion/spirituality is not a factor in their [counsellors] own lives and therefore not relevant to the sessions (Plante, 2007);
2. they feel that they are poorly trained (Miller and Bright, 2010);
3. they may struggle with ethical issues believing that religion/spirituality inclusion is beyond their remit (Rosenfield, 2010) and finally
4. they may wish to avoid personal disclosure re their own belief system (Gregory et al. (2008)).'

The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) currently subdivides its membership of 33,858 into 9 divisions. 'BACP Spirituality', which has its own peer reviewed journal 'Thresholds' was formerly known as the Association for Pastoral and Spiritual Care and Counselling (APSCC). It was founded back in the 1970s as the Association for Pastoral Care and Counselling and was one of the first divisions of the newly formed British Association for Counselling. The name change reflects the shift in emphasis from formal religion to spirituality within the profession and their clientele.

Currently, the American Psychological Association (APA) has 56 categories for their 117,500 members and since 2008 introduced the 'Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality' to specifically address religion/spirituality issues also with its own peer reviewed journal. The Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy does not have specific divisions or categories. However, a plethora of articles on the topic of spirituality have been published in their quarterly magazine including articles on shamanism in 2012 (IACP, 2012-2017).

Shafranske, an early pioneer in this arena, repeatedly found that it is the counsellor's personal openness and orientation to spirituality that is the key factor which predetermines facilitating its inclusion in the clinical forum (Shafranske and Molony, 1990). When Crossley and Salter (2005), examined the experiences of clinical psychologists (analogous to counselling work) they addressed the issue of respecting the client's belief system. All participants felt the need to suspend their own opinions and display an empathic approach. Another solution was to refer the client to the relevant spiritual or religious leader be that their priest, pastor or rabbi (Bergin, 1991).

Clients can also affect counsellors negatively as Gubi and Jacobs (2009) found in their examination of the effects on 5 counsellors of working with spiritually abused clients and vicarious trauma. Rosmarin et al. (2013) conducted their research to discover whether counsellors who have a religion/spirituality practice are more inclined to favourable attitudes towards religion/spirituality and mental health treatment. While more recently Blair (2015)'s studies explored the multitude of ways in which therapists bring their own spirituality to their practice. These pertinent findings are explored more fully in the Literature Review (Chapter 2).

1.1.3 Interest in spiritual tools within counselling

Although counsellors are often reticent to introduce religion/spirituality into their clinical sessions, clients have reported a request for, at minimum, a discussion to take place (Williams, Dutton and Burgess, 2010). However, while it is recognised that discussing religion/spirituality with clients is a boon and a solace, there is a second tier to its potential usage. In ancient times spirituality and healing were one. A divergence between the two became part of Western culture when the medical world took a scientific approach to healing concentrating on curative medicine and the world religions focused on the spiritual with increasing onus on the theological (Porter, 1995). In our post-secular society, there is a yearning, commitment and active retrieval of both spirituality and healing as indivisible phenomena (Brockman, 2006). This term, post secular was coined by German philosopher, Jurgen Habermas, in 2005, to describe the return of a postmodern spiritual sensibility.

MacKinnon, (2012, p.18) a leading UK exponent of spirituality and therapeutic practice, argues that 'There is an apparent need... to be able to offer clients ways and means to bring the spiritual into their lives.'

Indeed, with the 'New Age' phenomenon large numbers of Irish people are now not only aware of but actively committed to the use of spiritual tools such as yoga, meditation, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Reiki and other forms of 'alternative' and/or 'complementary healing' (Cosgrove et al. 2011). The term CAM is commonly used to refer to this phenomenon of 'complementary and alternative medicine' worldwide. In the USA in 2007, according to the National Centre of Health Statistics, almost 4 out of 10 adults used CAM in the previous 12 months particularly natural products (17.7%), breathing exercises (12.7%) (NCHS, 2016).

Voas and Bruce (2007, p.44) contend that 'the spiritual is being hollowed out; the label may be used to flatter anything from earnest introspection to beauty treatments, martial arts to support groups, complementary medicine to palm reading.' This contention was made in response to Heelas et al.'s (2005) attempt 'to quantify the reach of "New Age practices" and "associated forms of mind-body-spirituality", namely the "holistic milieu" in direct comparison with traditional church going in England.' Based on that research - a comprehensive study known as the Kendal Project - Heelas and Woodhead assert that personal practise of these spiritual tools has been growing rapidly and may be predicted to continue. Going further, they conclude that while there has not been a 'spiritual revolution' to date, there is a strong contention that the holistic domain could become as large as the religious domain within the next few decades (Heelas et al. 2005).

The premise of their research is that there has been a seismic shift in modern culture towards 'subjective-life' experiences which are both relational as well as individualistic. Since the 1980's a sea change has occurred in the Western world towards a more 'person-centered' approach to education, work and healthcare as opposed to the 'life-as' older order where God/the teacher/doctor/pastor/psychiatrist as an authority figure provides a formal dogma to adhere to in a safe and nurturing way (Heelas et al. 2005).

In the last 2 decades, people are increasingly choosing, of their own volition, a variety of spiritual tools either privately or with practitioners. Counsellors, similar to other health professionals, have been seeking to incorporate these into clinical sessions so that clients may combine both if seeking this approach. However, importantly, interventions of a spiritual nature by counsellors may bring challenges if the technique is not a good fit or the introduction is seen as untimely, not relevant or offensive (Martinez, Smith and Barlow, 2007).

Although there is acknowledgement within the multicultural counselling movement of the potential for the inclusion of healing techniques, practitioners need to be consulted on a professional and safe way to adapt them and introduce them to clients. This endeavour requires careful and considered handling to ensure maximum success (Stewart, Moodley and Hyatt (2017).

Many contemporary understandings of spirituality are expressed in terms of subtle energies or a ‘life force’ or ‘vital essence’ that pervades the body. While there is no Oxford English Dictionary definition of Energy Therapy, this is referred to as being a ‘functional equivalent’ of spirituality and/or the ‘inherent nature of life’ and/or ‘inner spirit’ all of which corroborates with the Chinese term ‘chi’ (Heelas et al. 2005). The language used to describe religion/spirituality is vast and diverse. In this research the transpersonal element of life is continually referred to as ‘Spirit’ as a term to mean ‘God/Goddess/Divine Presence/Source of Love/Ultimate Truth/Great Holy Mystery’ – all descriptors from a variety of spiritual terminology. This premise of ‘energy as a currency of Spirit’ has equivalence and is substantiated by scientific innovations, mainly in quantum physics and advanced mathematics (MacKinnon, 2012; Cantwell, 2007). Not everyone agrees. For example, conversely Voas and Bruce (2007, p.51) argue that, for them, ‘much of what is called “spirituality” seems to be merely pseudo-science (such as “energy” circulating in the body).’

This is countered by Beeler and Ingerman (2012, p.7) who state that ‘When people start to feel the energetic field and experience their own spiritual nature or intuition... their own spiritual wisdom starts to flow through, giving them an experience of inner wealth, inner happiness, and inner bliss that meets the energetic field that is around them.’ For example, when Mastropieri et al. (2015) introduced what they referred to as “spiritual visualization” into their client sessions, they found that this improved their clients coping mechanisms of depression and anxiety.

1.1.4 Development of secular sacred self-healing tools

In the West, eminent psychologist (Carl Jung, 1973), researcher of mythology (Joseph Campbell, 1949) and religious historian (Mircea Eliade, 2004) speak of traditional cultures that had a belief in the role of energy as part of their universe or cosmology. Energy healing techniques of an intuitive and subjective nature survive in a number of forms today.

However, the problem is that they do not meet the Western standards of empirical evaluation and evidence-based results in order to be taken seriously by Western medical schools. This is not to say they have no basis in truth or self-evident results but they fail to be the focus of serious attention or consideration by the scientific or medical fraternity (Brockman, 2006).

Practise with healing techniques grounded in the manipulation of the human energy field is common across worldwide indigenous esoteric practices as well as modern complementary therapies (Oschman, 1996). Both contact and noncontact methods are utilised to bridge the gap between the internal world of the client and the external environment where the issue originated. The main conjecture for holistic healing practices with the individual is based on the principle of the potential impact of disturbances in human energy field. The therapist uses specific techniques aimed to transmit, remove and balance pure healing energies as a conduit of Spirit and enables the client's systems to be restored to harmony (Levin, 2011). These healing modalities include Traditional Chinese Medicine, Acupuncture, Reiki and Shamanic Energy Healing (Money, 2001).

Historically the counselling profession, originated by Freud (1961), took a solely cognitive approach with no inclusion of religion/spirituality (Brockman, 2006). As the geneses of counselling innovations transferred from eastern Europe to America in the 1950s, there came a leaning towards a more holistic approach beneficial to clients seeking an esoteric wholeness context to their life issues. From Carl Jung's (et al. 1973) Analytic Psychology and Roberto Assagioli's (1959) Psychosynthesis to Fritz Perl's (et al.1973) pioneering Gestalt Therapy, literally meaning 'whole form' and Arnold Mindell's (2004) Process-Orientated Psychology: all offered their clients tools/techniques whose origins borrowed heavily from ancient energetic practices. These foundational influences gave rise to what became known as 'Energy Psychology' in the 1990's including the spiritual tools of applied kinesiology, Tapas Acupressure Technique (TAT), Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), Thought Field Therapy (TFT) and Dynamic Energetic Healing. This will be further explored in depth in Chapter two's Literature Review.

Many of these spiritual tools arose from shamanism – ancient holistic practices - and related energy therapies (Wilber, 2001; Feinstein and Eden, 2008). As a primeval tradition, Shamanism is the name given to holistic healing with particular emphasis on the spiritual. In this field, the practitioner connects, in a dream-like state, with spiritual guidance to retrieve information which will assist them or a client to heal energetically whatever issue has manifest in their lives (Harner, 1990; Villolodo, 2001). As an area of academic study, this is a rapidly developing field originally based in anthropology and now increasingly adopted in counselling (Walters and Fridman, 2004; MacKinnon, 2012).

The modern evolution of these indigenous traditions is referred to as ‘contemporary’ or ‘neo-shamanism’ (DuBois, 2009). *The Oxford English Dictionary states that a shaman is: a person regarded as having access to, and influence in, the world of good and evil spirits, especially among some peoples of northern Asia and North America. Typically, such people enter a trance state during a ritual, and practise divination and healing.* The healing aspect of shamanism is known primarily as shamanic energy therapy which is derived from core worldwide practices in combination with local indigenous spirituality. It is inclusive, respectful of all (and no) faiths, gender and ethnicity (Tedlock, 2006). Shamanic energy therapists aim to engage at the deepest sub-physical and psycho-emotional level, referred to as the energetic (Money, 2001) allowing positive and ethical intervention to promote health outcomes for the client (Fotiou, 2012). Core principles of shamanic energy therapy are that the human body has an energy (also referred to as an ‘aura’) which is connected to the spiritual aspect and permeates the physical, mental, emotional from birth to death. This energy (referred to as ‘chi’ or ‘ki’ in Eastern countries) is felt but not visible to the untrained.

US anthropologist and author Michael Harner (1990) having studied while living with the Jivaro people of Ecuador, brought distilled ancient shamanic techniques into contemporary usage as ‘core shamanism’. He further garnered all he had gleaned and combined this with classic methodologies to coin what he referred to as ‘shamanic counselling’. Cuban/American psychologist, medical anthropologist and author Alberto Villoldo, (2001) also spearheaded the use of shamanic energy therapy in a modern context.

Villoldo united a combination of these esoteric principles with cutting edge practices in nutrition, biology and neuroscience as tools for personal transformation. His shamanic therapy work chronicles the modern evolution of shamanic energy healing comprising extraction (removing toxicity and energetic blockages), soul retrieval (restoring dissociated elements) psychopomp (working with death at a spiritual level) and aura cleansing work. Both Harner and Villoldo evolved these ancient practices into a form acceptable to the modern client. They identified the need to provide self-validating, accessible inner resources so that clients, of their own volition, could access their personal meanings of spirituality. Through the former's 'Foundation for Shamanic Studies' and the latter's 'Four Winds Society' thousands of westerners have been trained in these methods in the English-speaking world.

1.2 Spirituality in a contemporary Irish context

In Irish culture today there seems to be a distinctive loss of basic values and traditions that previously sustained a sense of thorough grounding in who and what we are as a people. In the last 100 years it has been suggested that this value system has begun to shift from one of community, familial tribalism and connection to the land and nature to one of instant gratification (Cosgrove et al. 2011). The resultant loss of security and sense of anchoring in turbulent times may have led to the manifestation of a plethora of physical, mental and energetic illnesses (Ingerman, 2010).

This is particularly evident in Dublin today, with the rise of what is known as secular humanism – the philosophy embracing human reason, ethics and naturalism rejecting religious dogma and the concept of a God. For example, the rise in holistic centres and mindfulness practices signalling that many Irish people have left their former religious practice for a variety of reasons and are yearning for connection. Yet there is a move from an era of post-modernity to a post-secular view in Irish society which heightens the need for an aspect of religiosity and spirituality in people's lives (Cosgrove et al. 2011).

Since the 1980's, the UK has experienced a burgeoning of what Heelas and Woodhead, (2005) term a 'mini-revolution' in available holistic activity from Yoga classes to Buddhist meditations, Traditional Chinese Medicine to well-being workshops. This is mirrored in Ireland and currently, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is investigating a 'multi-faith' spiritual support in healthcare particularly chaplaincy service provision (Timmins et al. 2017).

It seems that as a consequence of this lack of spiritual direction and connection many people are seeking answers and are revisiting the significance of Celtic spirituality in Ireland. This often leads to a transpersonal development quest which brings awareness of a need for the healing of old wounds, hurts and grievances (MacKinnon, 2012). In this way a contemporary spirituality may be consciously rediscovered that makes sense of inner life and a new worldview may be shaped (Varga and Simmel, 2007).

The term “Celtic” was coined to describe the descendants of various tribal races that co-habited and interbred in these remote western islands of Europe. They joined with the various indigenous tribes that already existed in Ireland and their customs interwove organically. Whelan (2010, p.12) continues: “The main body of Celts is believed to have come to Ireland between the third and fifth centuries BCE. When they arrived, it is thought that they encountered an already spiritual people who had their own religious practises and rites.” “Celtic spirituality” is a term for the evolution of their sacred rituals and beliefs as practised on these lands which evolved over centuries particularly in Ireland where the Romans did not invade. According to mythologist T.W. Rolleston (1911, p.81) “what is quite clear is that when the Celts got to Western Europe, they found there a people with a powerful priesthood, ritual and imposing religious monuments...The inferences, as I read the facts, seem to be that Druidism in its essential features was imposed upon the imaginative and sensitive nature of the Celt...by the earlier population of Western Europe, the Megalithic People.”

For author and Catholic priest, Donal Dorr (1996, p.i) this ‘notion of spiritual energy...[is] a hunger to get in touch with a spiritual life-energy, to experience it, to be moved by it. This concern is a symptom of a deep spiritual hunger.’ The redefinition of the concept of ‘spiritual capital’ from one of social influence to a wide ranging one of creativity and contemplation (Flanagan and O’Sullivan, 2012) is further evidence of this momentum building. Gathering apace in Ireland since 2012, this spiritual hunger is reflected in the formation of the Spirituality Institute for Research and Education (SpIRE), formed in 2016, which maintains a sensitivity to indigenous ways.

Shamanism when practiced from a Celtic spiritual perspective has key elements which correspond with worldwide shamanic practices yet it has a distinctive aspect reflective of its cultural and traditional context which both attracts and appears to suit the Irish psyche.

Eastwood (2012, p.103) clarifies ‘the term shaman was not employed in relation to Druidry or Celtic spirituality until very recently. This does not mean that the Druids did not perform shamanic activities, but their role was not viewed in such terms in literature or folklore.’

The modern version of Druidry does not place as much emphasis on healing tools as it does ritual and ceremony whereas ‘Celtic shamanism’ aligns more with spiritual healing techniques and practices. As researcher, and as an Irish practitioner of a modern version of these healing traditions, I view shamanism by its very nature as an ever-evolving paradigm and therefore choose to use the term ‘shamanism’ throughout the research to encompass the terms ‘neo-shamanism’, ‘Irish shaman’ and ‘Druidry’.

1.2.1 Development of a new secular spiritual tool based in Celtic Shamanism

As a counsellor, I have experienced at first hand the requirement for spiritual tools to safely practice with clients who seek a holistic approach and I felt a frustration at the lack of variety of such tools especially in an Irish context. Contemporaneously, as a Celtic shamanic therapist I experienced the freedom to discover, test and evolve ancient principles with spiritual help, into a form acceptable to the modern client. Developing and adapting to the requirements of the era whilst holding true to the strong principles of its foundations is a crucial aspect of shamanism for me, a stance that others concur with (Villoldo, 2001, MacKinnon, 2012).

In my counselling core course, which had a holistic approach, spirituality was discussed and tools in the form of breathing and meditation were offered. However, through my shamanic training, I became aware of specific areas of empowering energetic work which would facilitate clients to heal their presenting issues and I began to harness these for their benefit. I recognised that initiating a conversation with clients around spirituality was important but harnessing their personal beliefs to facilitate self-healing was a further possibility if the two genres could be combined within the biopsychospiritual approach.

As we have seen, the shift of Western culture to viewing the human from a holistic perspective is connected to the energetic web of life and a more active, inclusive form of spirituality. This has the potential to provide safe and simple tools to facilitate clients’ yearning for ways to self-heal while developing their consciousness within the world.

For the past 13 years I have been practising as a shamanic energy therapist, having studied extensively with Alberto Villoldo's Four Winds Society from 2003 to 2008 and Martin Duffy's Irish Centre for Shamanic Studies from 2006 to date. When combined with my twenty-year counselling and supervisory practice, I recognised that I was uniquely placed to devise a contemporary Celtic shamanic spiritual tool for use within a counselling clinical setting. During this period, I completed a research masters in All Hallows College, DCU, on the subject of Celtic shamanism in the greater Dublin area while concurrently developing a new energetic/spiritual technique. Working with two different supervisors, volunteer colleagues and eventually willing clients, I devised what is known as the Energy Therapy Technique over a period of 2 years from 2005 - 2007 and honed and refined it over the following 5 years in tandem with supervision and peer review.

Clients, who are holistically and crucially spiritually aware, often sense that they are holding an energetic blockage. Classic statements relating to these include 'I feel sick to my stomach', 'he broke my heart' and 'I've the weight of the world on my shoulders' which are psychosomatic often with no basis in medical terms. Shamanic tools may be adapted and evolved to assist clients safely and easily release these blockages of their own volition within these sessions (Brockman, 2006; MacKinnon, 2012). I reached the conclusion that if any of these shamanic energy techniques could be adapted for use *within* a counselling setting, the client would be empowered to break through the blockage, process their issue and move forward in their life without having to resort to a different therapy. Therefore, the Energy Therapy Technique was developed as a shamanic based energetic/spiritual healing tool for counsellors to use within their clinic with clients.

This work is facilitated from the counsellor's perspective through asking their client specific questions and inviting the client to sense what needs to be released and/or realigned energetically when in a dreamlike altered state of consciousness. The advantage of the technique is that it may be incorporated smoothly into a counselling session in the same way breathing or stress management techniques would be mooted and introduced. As with all potential techniques it does not suit every client or counsellor but anyone open to holistic ways or who has experienced Reiki or Bio-Energy is usually highly receptive. Reiki's 'universal energy' is transferred via the practitioner to the client's auric field hands-on and Energy Medicine is conducted in a similar manner but may be hands-on, hands-off or by distance.

Marrying the biopsychospiritual within a counselling psychotherapeutic setting, the Energy Therapy Technique provides counsellors the opportunity to offer consenting clients a new spiritual tool to move on from their presenting issue/s. Using visualisation, Yoga-type breathing and harnessing the client's personal spiritual beliefs, the counsellor has the opportunity to facilitate the client discover the source of their original wounding and release or retrieve from their energy field any blockages that prevent their return to holistic health.

1.2.2 Dearth of research from the counsellor's perspective using spiritual tools

In recent years there have been a number of research studies documenting the effects of counsellors introducing spirituality to their client work. The tools used have ranged from prayer to meditation to the wide variety of Energy Psychology techniques used in 'Dynamic Energy Healing' (Brockman, 2006) and these will be discussed thoroughly in the Literature Review. There have also been several key publications in the development of shamanic healing techniques (Ingerman and Wesselman, 2010; Mackinnon, 2012) following the lead of the two previously mentioned world-renowned US practitioners, Alberto Villoldo and Michael Harner.

However, within academia, investigations from a counsellor perspective in this milieu have not been as prevalent. Internationally there is scant documentation focusing on the meanings of spirituality for counsellors. There is also a dearth of research into the counsellor's experience relating to the use of spiritual tools and specifically shamanic techniques formally used within a counselling psychotherapeutic model. Both of these are explored in the next Literature Review chapter.

Sandra Ingerman, a key American voice in this modern evolution, has successfully adapted shamanic techniques, specifically soul retrieval, for use alongside, but not within, her psychotherapeutic practise (Ingerman, 1991). In tandem, Christa Mackinnon, in the UK, has recently documented her adjusted shamanic healing techniques as a key tool within her therapeutic practice (Mackinnon, 2012). There currently is no Irish equivalent. The key practitioners in this field in Ireland have extensive websites for their successful schools of 'Celtic shamanism' but as yet there are no detailed written accounts of the actual practices.

In my journey to commence this research, I began to ponder *how* my own sense of spirituality might have been affected, if at all, by the ability to facilitate this biopsychospiritual approach with my clients. I recognised that Ireland is changing, clients are requesting holistic work and the immigrant community are bringing new faiths into our clinic rooms. I established that if I could work in a way that would honour both counsellors' and clients' sense of spirituality that would be a boon. However, while I could garner a sense of how that might be for the clients due to the availability of literature from that context, I found a dearth on the counsellors' perspective. Why would a professional counsellor consider training in energetic/spiritual techniques for use in their clinic if there was no rigorous research into its possible effect on their sense of spirituality?

Counsellors in Ireland yearning to broach spirituality with their clients and introduce energetic/spiritual tools, particularly with a shamanic basis, require research on how that may affect their own sense of spirituality. It is one consideration to know that it is possible to palpably feel the presence of Spirit in your clinic room but it is another to actually hear accounts of how that might be for other professional peers.

1.3 Rationale of the research

This is comprised of two components: firstly, a critical synthesis of the literature and secondly, my personal clinical experience to indicate the need and value of this research study.

1.3.1 Aim

The aim was to investigate how the meanings of spirituality develop among accredited counsellors when practicing a new shamanic energy therapy technique.

1.3.2 Objectives

The aim of the study will be achieved through the following objectives:

1. To conduct a targeted Literature Review relevant to the aspects of counselling, spirituality and shamanism pertinent to the research.
2. To train and monitor 13 accredited counsellors to practise a new shamanic energy therapy technique with their clients.
3. To explore any developments in the meanings of spirituality of the accredited counsellors practising the technique.

1.3.3 Central research question

How do the meanings of spirituality develop among accredited counsellors when practising a new shamanic energy therapy technique?

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This research study examines any developments in counsellors' meanings of spirituality when using a spiritual tool, specifically facilitating their clients to work with their own energy field (aura/light electromagnetic field) to bring about positive balance psycho-emotionally and physically. The counsellors were provided with the means (using the technique) to offer their clients an opportunity to engage in their own self-healing, while tapping into their personal innate spirituality safely and confidently to bring spirituality into their clinical practice.

This work will chronicle the theoretical foundations, influences and origins of this form of therapy in reference to current worldwide research. Although more than 'the sum of the parts', for the purposes of this research, each section of the Energy Therapy Technique is separately explored alongside other spiritual tools within the Literature Review chapter. The various parts of the chosen energetic spiritual tool have been utilised previously and the research chosen reflects this. A key aspect is the modern evolution of shamanic energy healing (SEH) from an Irish perspective.

Thirteen semi-structured in-depth interviews have been carried out among accredited counsellors who practiced this energetic/spiritual tool with their clients 3 - 5 times each over a period of 3-6 months. Use of guideline interview questions with a semi-structured format allowed interviewees the opportunity to raise additional relevant complementary issues. The overview generated by this research will have particular reference to transpersonal spiritual healing and changing paradigms specifically the biopsychospiritual (Tedlock, 2006).

1.5 Research originality

There has been research on counsellor's experience of incorporating spirituality into their practice and Psychosynthesis, Hypnosis and Process Orientated Psychotherapy as well as Jungian therapy and Energy Psychology all borrow heavily from ancient shamanic and esoteric philosophies. To date there has been no published research of the meanings of spirituality from the counsellor's perspective.

With reference to using a new shamanic tool that enables counsellors to safely introduce spirituality to their clients within their professional clinical work. We will examine these in detail in the Literature Review that follows.

This research is interested in *how* counsellors respond personally to using a spiritual tool within their client work. This requires therapeutic skill as well as perceptive cognisance of the possible influence of their own spirituality in the process. The particular technique used - the Energy Therapy Technique enables the counsellor to offer their client an inclusive way to incorporate their spiritual meanings into a clinical session.

Also, this research will be one of the first systematic evaluations of accredited counsellors' spiritual expressions when wishing to engage with their innate sense of spirituality within the therapeutic sessions working within counselling in a Dublin or Irish context. In my view this is unique and original work within the biopsychospiritual field and this research will be cultivating new ground within this sphere providing new theoretical and practical insights.

1.6 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the position of focusing methodically on the circumstance of knowledge formation, most notably the effect of the researcher at each juncture of the research process. To this end, the Methodology and Research Findings chapters will conclude with a section on the reflexivity relevant to the topic within. The reflexive relationship in this instance is bi-directional as I, the researcher, am also a counsellor and a peer of the participants as well as the person who developed the particular spiritual technique utilised.

According to Willig (2001) the two key types of reflexivity are epistemological reflexivity and personal reflexivity, both being interdependent of each other. Epistemological reflexivity relates to the examination of the origin of the research question and any assumptions that arise during the research process. Specifically, it concerns my motivation to investigate what happens, if anything, to counsellor's meanings of spirituality when engaging with this in their day to day client work as previously discussed. Personal reflexivity considers the researchers own values, experiences and interest in their doctoral subject and so overlaps with epistemological reflexivity. To this end, I documented my impressions throughout the training, mentoring and interview stages.

As a researcher engaged in qualitative study, my primary intention was to understand any meanings in the development of the counsellors' sense of spirituality while holding the premise that, by their nature, these are not static or constant but personal and unique to each individual. I needed to examine by self-searching any preconceptions or assumptions I might have had in conjunction with those of the counsellors themselves with reference to how these might influence the invitation to participate and the construction of the questionnaire.

Self-awareness is paramount to research of this kind and as I was interpreting any developments in the meanings of their spirituality, I had to acknowledge the need to remain impartial whatever their response. Within the counselling profession, monthly supervision is a necessity with the inherent requirement for both honesty and transparency. This aided the process of teaching, mentoring and interviewing the counsellors engaged in the research, as we are all, within the profession, used to this impartial position.

This awareness extended to the analysis which reflected my own story on 3 tiers – as a fellow counsellor, as a peer and as the researcher. I needed to be aware of the personal impact both negatively and positively during the process. Therefore, I purposefully preserved as neutral a stance as possible with regard to the findings to minimise bias from intruding into the research process. I acknowledge that this was not always easy since I do believe that spirituality is an important addition to the counselling process and that the Energy Therapy Technique may be a beneficial energetic/spiritual tool. However, I was satisfied that throughout I maintained a professional attitude during my interaction with the counsellors. There was minimal contact and no personal discussions during the training, mentoring and the interview stages. The implications of the 3-tier aspect of counsellor/peer/researcher will be further discussed in the Methodology chapter.

1.7 Conclusion

To summarise, we have seen the rise of secular spirituality, the hunger for the energetic/spiritual and the lack of academic research from the counsellor's perspective. Now that the aims, objectives and central research question have been put into context and the significance understood, we can proceed to the next chapter where a review of the academic literature pertinent to counsellor's experience using spiritual tools within their clinical practice will be examined.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

*“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience;
We are spiritual beings having a human experience.”*

- Teilhard de Chardin, 1935.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the pertinent research literature focusing on the effects of bringing spiritual techniques into a counselling session from the counsellor’s perspective. This will incorporate an update on current literature and add new insights and knowledge in this area. A key feature is the re-emergence of energetic/shamanic practices within the therapeutic forum which facilitates counsellors to bring spirituality into their daily clinical work. **These practices inform the sum of the parts of the chosen technique for this research.**

As the thesis question centres on any developments in the meanings of counsellors using an energy therapy tool based on shamanic principles with their clients, the Literature Review focuses on 3 distinct themes.

1. Counselling and spirituality
2. Counselling and shamanism
3. Counselling and energy therapy

Within each theme, the literature search specifically focused on techniques, presently or previously used, to bring spirituality into a counselling session and how this impacted the meanings of spirituality for the counsellors using them.

2.2 Online research methods

The research strategy was conducted using a systematic cross-disciplinary electronic database search drawing on the disciplines of counselling, psychotherapy, psychology and spirituality, religion and shamanism and energy therapy. The following databases were searched: CINAHL Complete, PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycINFO, Pub Med, Academic Search Complete, MEDLINE and Google Scholar as well as the extensive DCU library.

Sections of the search were limited to the previous 7 years to ensure a review of recent and up-to-date evidence/literature. A secondary search referenced lists of retrieved articles reviewed for potentially relevant research not previously captured by the electronic search.

A total of 277 results emerged, using the Boolean phrase terms ‘counsellors experiences OR counselors experiences OR therapist’s experiences AND spirituality OR religion OR faith from 1943 – 2017 for peer reviewed research articles. When narrowed down to a more recent timeframe of 2000-2017 this reduced to 224. Using the terms ‘meaning’ ‘attitudes’ and ‘psychology’ and ‘psychotherapy’ did not widen the search.

A total of 357 results emerged using the Boolean phrase terms ‘counsellors experiences OR counselors experiences OR therapist’s experiences AND shamanism OR shamanic healing’ from 1943 – 2017 for peer reviewed research articles. When narrowed down to a more recent timeframe of 2000-2017 this reduced to 267.

A total of 117 results emerged using the Boolean phrase terms ‘counsellors experiences OR counselors experiences OR therapist’s experiences AND energy therapy OR energy healing’ from 1943 -2017 for peer reviewed articles. When narrowed down to the recent timeframe of 2000-2017 this yielded 96 results

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2.3 Key terms of this research

To commence it was important to explore the key terms in each category including relevant academic references. These were counselling, spirituality, shamanism and energy therapy.

2.3.1 Counselling

Counselling is a therapy in which a client sits with a trained professional to speak about any challenging issues in their life to gain clarity and insight. The counsellor, listening with compassion and positive regard, asks key questions which may highlight different aspects and perspectives for the client regarding their issue/s. The counsellor may also suggest certain techniques which the client can choose of their own volition to breakthrough, overcome or process these issues (Palmer, 2000; Cooper, 2008). Historically the displacement of religion in favour of science and the subsequent emergence of counselling and professional services for mental health have been well documented (Lines, 2006).

In brief, the movement from agricultural to urban communities during the Industrial Revolution (1760-1840) caused Western society to lose touch with their palpable connection to the land. This seismic social transition in tandem with the so called 'Enlightenment' intellectual movement emphasised reason and individualism rather than tradition. It was heavily influenced by 17th century philosophers Descartes, Newton, Kant, Goethe, Voltaire and Rousseau (Lines, 2006).

Whereas the 'pagan' method of treating the holistic needs of the community were dealt with by the local druid/priestess/ witchdoctor, the split became part of Western culture when the medical world took a scientific approach to healing reducing it exclusively to curative medicine (West, 2000). In tandem the world religions focused on the spiritual with increasing emphasis on the theological. The emerging gap resulted in epidemic mental ill health and the seriously distressed and insane were conveniently banished to 'lunatic asylums' known as 'madhouses' (Lines, 2006).

The early development of psychiatry began when the medical profession took an interest in the asylums and commenced treating these mental health conditions scientifically and systematically. The first references to dealing with 'insane' patients from a psychotherapeutic stance, was recorded in Amsterdam in 1887. In the mid 1900's early treatment was chemically induced followed by electroconvulsive interventions. However, the evolution from church and priest to medicine and psychiatry has occurred both ways with the founding of altruistic groups for example, Alcoholics Anonymous 1935, Relate 1938 and the Samaritans 1953 (West, 2000). By the commencement of the 20th century, mental health care was generally provided by the State in the Western world.

Most of counselling today can be traced back to a cohort of psychologists and psychiatrists who developed 3 main schools: The Psychoanalytic, the Behaviourist and the Humanistic. In the case of the former, in the 1890's Sigmund Freud, a German neurologist, developed Psychoanalysis, with origins in Anton Mesmer's Animal Magnetism and James Braid's Hypnotherapy. This allowed individuals to discuss their mental health issues with a trained professional (Gladding, 2004; Gelso, Nutt, Williams and Fretz. 2014).

Freud played a huge part in the history of counselling, although the term itself was not coined until the 1960's by social activist Frank Parsons and adopted by psychologist Carl Rogers in response to the US prejudice of non-medical 'lay' therapists. This early development began in Western Europe in 1900's with Freud, his protégé Carl Jung (et al. 1973), Alfred Adler (1964) and Otto Rank (1945) who all worked closely together in the Psychoanalytical School. Due to a deep-seated antagonism that existed between science and religion, this was predominantly secular (West, 2004). When Jung, Klein (1948) and other descendants split away they focused on what became known as Psychodynamic theory with its origins in the Psychoanalytic. The profession burgeoned hugely after the Second World War in 1950's Northern America. Abraham Maslow (1956) and Roberto Assagioli (1959) extended this movement to the field of Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology and championed the emergence of the school of Psychosynthesis with its pioneering principles and techniques for self-actualisation.

The Psychosynthesis approach to psychology developed by Italian psychiatrist Assagioli, both in Italy and the US, in contrast with existential psychology maintained that direct experience of the Self is attainable and the spiritual goals of self-realisation achievable. Psychosynthesis split from the foundations of psychology as Assagioli contended its premise that humans have a personality *and* a soul. He continued to insist that Psychosynthesis was scientific and preserved a balance with a rational, logical therapeutic approach. Although he is considered the 'Father of Psychosynthesis', the name originated with James Putnam (1902). It was also used by Jung and Orage (1906), who hyphenated the word to psychosynthesis. Techniques utilised include visualisation, symbolism, imagery and self-identification exercises.

The second major school of Behaviourists, was founded by John Watson in 1913, influenced by Pavlov's experiments with dogs and evolved by B.F. Skinner, focused on unhealthy human behaviours such as Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), addictions, anxieties and phobias. The popular Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) emanated from this school and its logical reasoning approach found appeal with members of the medical fraternity who wish to refer patients requiring mental help.

In 1940's America, Carl Rogers (1942) established the third major Humanistic school with his person-centred approach which includes both the Gestalt and Integrative methodologies. An important part of this evolution of the holistic approach within the counselling is attributable to the Transpersonal Psychology movement. Ken Wilber with his spectrum of consciousness model expands beyond conventional human development to incorporate Eastern thought to include psycho-spiritual growth. His theory purports that the human may travel from a pre-personal (infantile) stage to a mature healthy egoic self and move to a transpersonal connection with spirituality in a 'secular' context (Wilber, 2001). The scope of the burgeoning Transpersonal Psychology approach is succinctly characterised by Hartelius, Rothe & Roy (2013, p.3) 'it sets out to understand the cosmos in ways that are not constrained by either the sometimes-heavy hand of religious tradition or the objectifying eye of science.'

Modern counselling has reaped the rewards of Rogers' huge emphasis on empiricism and many new approaches have emerged which marry the theoretical with the experiential. The development of a new therapy takes key stages: the study and practise of a seminal training method, different theories emerging with experience, research and further study (Cooper and Dryden, 2015). This forms the basis of two emergent approaches – the integrative counsellor who consciously studies and practises a blend of the classic schools of counselling and the eclectic counsellor who utilises a mix of techniques (Corey, 1996). The latter has emerged with the advent of continuous professional development which requires accredited counsellors to attend regular courses and therefore assimilate contemporary ways of working.

Historically the counsellor was seen as the 'hero' who with knowledge and techniques intervened in their clients lives to mend unhealthy behaviours and thinking. Counselling is now evolving in our modern secular world so that the client is regarded as the 'expert' and their active input in the sessions is vital to real change occurring in their lives. They are not solely there to process the insights that may emerge but to creatively and actively transform their lives of their own volition (Tallman and Bohart, 1999). In effect the therapeutic space provides a forum where clients can be honest with themselves and explore, in a safe environment, their mental health. It could be argued that counselling in a modern context has now taken the place of the confessional box (West, 2004). It is important at this juncture to emphasise that with the introduction of new techniques and research, the evolution of counselling continues today.

2.3.2 Spirituality

The word 'spiritual' emanates from the Latin term 'spiritus' meaning 'breath of God' which is an older version of the Greek word 'pneumatikos' with the same understanding (Sheldrake, 2010). From an academic perspective, spirituality is a reflective, contemplative lived experience whose awareness brings a transcendent expansion of consciousness and leads to meaning and an authentic outlook on life and (a transformational approach to) its challenges (Schneider, 2005; Frohlich, 2007). According to O'Sullivan (2012 p.52-53), 'The term *spirituality*... refers to a *constitutive dimension* of the human person: the foundational sensibility and self-transcending capacity of the person for beauty, intelligibility, truth, goodness and love, which have been identified over the years in compact human experience.'

Spirituality has multi-dimensional aspects from the concept of a divine presence to altruism, ethics, morals and values which individuals may harness to bring purpose and meaning to their lives. A divine presence may be known in a formal religious context such as 'God/Yaweh/Allah' or in a more eclectic concept of spirituality as a 'Higher Power/Spirit/Goddess/Source of Love'. In both cases connection to and communication with the mystery of the divine is the essence of spirituality for many (Elkins, D.N., Hedstrom, L.J., Hughes, L.L., Leaf, J.A. and Saunders, C. (1988).

Professor John Swinton has conducted wide-ranging research in healthcare, disability studies and practical theology in the UK. As the keynote speaker at the British Association of Spirituality Studies 'Spirituality and Healthcare' Conference 2014, he declared his conceptualisation of spirituality: 'as a mode of orienting one's self to the world in a quite specific way of being that is vital to the process of 'caring well'...to the processes of working and living together.' (BASS, 2014).

Formal religions have a set of beliefs and assumptions that are imposed on their brethren that are ultimately unverifiable and beyond empirical testing (Lines, 2006). Part of the dilemma of defining spirituality as opposed to religion is how does one talk about the mystery of what is for many the un-nameable?

There are a plethora of theoretical definitions and yet there is a commonality which speaks of the interior essence of ‘being’ often referred to as the ‘soul/spirit’ and how it perceives life and is expressed. This sacred aspect of ourselves is not physical and has an ethereal quality which, by its definition, makes it difficult to grasp. All human beings possess the ability to connect with and know their spiritual aspect within a collective religion or as an individual. The meanings of spirituality, to each individual, are subjective, experiential and personal (Long, 2012). These transcend race and sex but may be influenced or shaped by culture, politics and generational age.

As life progresses, certain key events such as birth, death, sickness and trauma may cause us to question the meaning of life and to explore our sense of spirituality, sometimes for the first time in an autonomous way. Being spiritually aware invites a yearning to explore this as we constantly evolve by coming to terms with the big questions in life such as why we are here, good versus evil and the cycle of birth, life and death. Practicing and understanding spirituality brings a unity and wholeness to every aspect of the sacredness of life (Elkins et al. 1998). It is a personal choice made during one’s lifetime as opposed to being born into and practicing a religion without question (Kelliher, 2007). Spirituality needs to be ‘worked on’/engaged with/practiced continually and spiritual ‘helpers/guides’ from whatever form is practiced (angels, saints, deities) help to inform an outlook on life. Integration of the spiritual brings mindful living, the ability to respond to the external while constantly assessing the internal in a holistic manner. Spiritual or spirit-centred leadership is a topic of examination correlated with the workplace spirituality movement (Benefiel, 2005).

In the Western mystery traditions, the term ‘contact picture’ means a form spiritual helpers/guides take to assist the human through a type of reciprocal agreement with the perceiver. Thus fitting the belief systems in order to be visible and coherent which may include a particular religion or spiritual path. These tend to be forms that are reassuring and recognisable. For example, spiritual helpers/guides take the appearance adjusted to the understanding and ability to relate to the perceiver (Moss, 2014). Therefore Catholics ‘see/perceive’ Jesus and ‘Holy Mary’, Buddhists ‘see’ ‘Buddha’ and Druids ‘see’ power animals and ‘Celtic Goddesses’. There are occasions when the form may be drastically different to ‘shock’ the perceiver into what Grof (2014) terms a ‘spiritual emergency’ ultimately to lead the person onto a spiritual path to improve and heal any issues.

2.3.3 Shamanism

It is generally agreed by anthropologists that the tradition of Shamanism began in North Asia 50,000 years ago and spread to the Americas via the Bering Strait hunters. ‘The fact that shamanism was independently reinvented over and over in many places is supported by neuroscience and medical anthropology’ (Tedlock, 2006 p.15). Known as the founder of the modern study of the history of religion, Mircea Eliade (2004, pp.497-498), explains:

‘The word *shaman*...comes to us through the Russian from the Tungusic *saman*. The derivation of this term (comes) from the...Sanskrit *sramana* through the Chinese *sha-men*, which was accepted by the majority of the 19th century Orientalists...Shamanism has its very profound roots in the social system and psychology of animistic philosophy characteristic of the Tungus.’

The word ‘shaman’ (pronounced *SHAH-maan*) is used widely in a modern context to refer to indigenous people who were previously known by such terms as witch/witch-doctor/medicine man or woman/sorcerer/wizard/ magician (Harner, 1990). One of the advantages of using this term is that it lacks the prejudicial overtones and conflicting meanings associated with those more familiar labels. A shaman is a man or a woman who enters an altered state of consciousness at will, to contact and utilise an ordinarily hidden reality in order to acquire knowledge, power, and to help others. Harner (1990, p.44) notes that ‘the shaman has at least one and usually more, “spirits in their personal service”...[in] some cultures, shamans take mind-altering substances; but in many cultures they do not.’

Shamanism is the name given to holistic healing with particular emphasis on the spiritual in which the practitioner connects with the spiritworld to retrieve information which will assist them or a client to heal whatever issue has manifest in their lives (Tedlock, 2006). In a modern context, the shaman would have the combined skills of a counsellor, physician/nurse, priest/nun/rabbi/imam, spiritual advisor, holistic therapist, counsellor and social activist who is also a stalwart of the community. Matthews (2001, pp.1-2) suggests that ‘Because it is not an organised religion as such, but rather a spiritual practice, shamanism cuts across all faiths and creeds.’ A form of shamanic spirituality has been found on every continent in the world and today more people are increasingly investigating shamanic methods of soul exploration for their inner and outer life (Brockman, 2006, MacEowen, 2010).

Wilson (2013, p.118) contends that the term 'shaman' has been highly overused and the current popular 'existing definition (whatever it might have been) no longer holds'. The skills common to worldwide shamanic apprenticeships are also found in other practices such as 'Spiritualism' where one may be a medium and a religious scholar conducting shaman-like techniques in a mutually exclusive way.

The shamanic worldview of spirituality

The shaman, both modern and ancient, consciously enters an altered state of consciousness (ASC) to commune with inner spiritual guides for direct ecstatic connection with Spirit to experience self-transcendence. According to Garcia-Romeu and Tart (2013) 'various aspects of altered states of consciousness have been studied in numerous fields including history, archaeology, cultural anthropology, religious studies, philosophy, psychology and neuroscience, to name the most prominent.' While ASC's have been known and practised in indigenous cultures for millennia, they have only been taken seriously and studied in the West since the early 20th century (Friedman and Hartelius, 2013).

Shamanism is a wisdom tradition, not a religion and has no dogma (Harner, 1990; Walters and Friedman, 2004). The shaman, from a place of personal empowerment (Meier et al. 2006) and self-awareness, views themselves as part of the great web of unifying life-force where the micro refers to the 'self', the macro refers to 'the natural world' and the cosmic refers to the 'planetary realms' (Walsh, 2007; Wilson, 2013). In this way, they maintain continuous, mindful contact with Spirit. This mirrors the philosophy of Western Esotericism which incorporates the interconnection of correspondence with the natural world and the concept of divine living nature (Faivre, 1994; Hanegraaff, 2012).

2.3.4 Energy Therapy

Energy therapy is where a therapist works with the energy field or aura of the client to facilitate the removal of any blockages that have occurred due to any mental, emotional, physical or energetic trauma to promote healing. Energy Healing therapy has existed since the origins of recorded history from the ancient mystery schools of India, Egypt, Assyria, Greece and Rome. It may be argued that every indigenous tribe practiced their own version (Harner, 1990, Villoldo, 2001, Brockman, 2006).

Levin, (2011, p.14) systemised this into four main categories:

- 1) East Asian i.e. Reiki, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) such as Acupuncture, T'ai Chi.
- 2) Western professional i.e. nursing orientated 'Therapeutic Touch' and 'Healing Touch'.
- 3) Bioenergy i.e. 'Bioenergy Healing' established in Poland by Wirkus in the 1950s and researched at an academic level by Stanley Krippner (2012) and Alberto Villoldo (1987).
- 4) Contemporary metaphysical traditions i.e. an eclectic mix of bodywork, energy and ancient therapies, in the same vein as Integrative Counselling, under the umbrella of New Age healers such as Barbara Brennan and Donna Eden.

The late Dr. Richard Gerber, (2001) author of 'Vibrational Medicine' investigated the human bioenergetic system. He charted the vast network of connections between the body's energy meridians (Indian and Chinese traditions), the central and peripheral nervous and physiological systems (medical model) and crystalline energy systems (esoteric traditions). Levin (2011, p. 16) assents that 'the total balance and health of the human organism is a product of a balanced and coordinated functioning of both the physical and higher dimensional homeostatic regulatory systems.'

The premise of energy therapy is that human have a life force or energy that permeates the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of the body from birth to death. This concurs with quantum physics where life is composed of oscillating layers of energy consisting of different vibrations. The key principle that all schools of energy therapies agree on is the existence of a 'life force/essence' or 'universal energy' known as 'qi' or 'ki' in the Eastern traditions and 'etheric body' or 'aura' by the esotericists, (Levin, 2011; MacKinnon, 2012). As Einstein discovered, our energy fields are neither created nor destroyed by birth and death. They are manifestations of that part of our being which is eternal allowing us to witness the mythic journey of our souls (Cantwell, 2007).

When there is disease, be that mental, emotional or physical, that flow is disrupted and a blockage or imbalance may occur. This can take the form of a disturbance i.e. increase or decrease in flow, stagnation, diversion or split which, if left untreated, may cause disease. Therapists, who are trained in energy techniques can, with permission, redirect this flow facilitating the client to regain balance holistically (Boadella, 1987). The simplicity of this healing modality is that it clears blockages that are physical, mental, emotional and energetic working at a holistic and sub-conscious level (Mindell, 1993).

The human energy field is anchored in 7 key areas often referred to as *chakras* (the ancient Indian Sanskrit word meaning ‘wheel’. These subtle energies move in a clockwise fashion in these anchor areas and flow smoothly along energy channels called ‘meridians’ (Oschman, 1996). The chakra system has been linked metaphysically to the endocrine system of the body, embedded in the philosophies of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Acupuncture, Yoga, T’ai Chi.

The shamanic energy therapist specifically works with permission to facilitate the client participate in removing blockages or returning fragmented parts to their energy field. Carla Goddard (2012, p.1) writes ‘Your energy body is the sacred bridge between the physical worlds and the spiritual worlds...[it] can be lowered in frequency by thoughts and feelings like being fearful or angry...[it] can be elevated in frequency as well...when you step forward into your sacred self, your authentic self, your energy body elevates in frequency and becomes lighter.’

When people begin to feel their own energetic field, this opens them up to experience their personal spiritual intuition, offering them an experience of contentment and internal bliss that meets the energetic field surrounding them (Beeler and Ingerman, 2012). A key commonality of belief and practice is that the healing ultimately comes from Spirit and that the practitioner is merely a ‘channel/conduit’ who facilitates the client to open to spiritual energies to heal themselves (Quinn, 1989; LeShan, 2003). According to Lancaster (2013, p.235) these spiritual traditions show ‘evidence that their accumulated wisdom stands the test of being measured against research findings in the field of neuroscience.

Having defined these four key terms and explored their evolution, this interim summary highlights that counselling is currently introducing new techniques, spirituality offers a choice to investigate one’s personal connection to Spirit and finally, shamanism as a wisdom tradition, which has an energetic therapeutic aspect, corresponds with energy therapy and is becoming more mainstream.

We will now explore the first of the three themes mentioned earlier, which is counselling and spirituality.

2.4 Counselling and spirituality

2.4.1 An historical account of spirituality within healthcare specifically counselling

In ancient times spirituality and healing were inextricably linked. Historically for a variety of reasons including the advent of the Cartesian way of logical thinking, there was a divergence between the two (Mindell, 2012). The split became part of Western culture when the medical world took a scientific approach to healing reducing it exclusively to curative medicine and the world religions focused on the spiritual with increasing onus on the theological (King-Spooner and Newes, 2001).

At the end of the 19th century, Freud had published his seminal work on dream interpretation and this brought another shift towards understanding the holistic and soul aspect of health. Many of the original founders of the main schools of counselling had had formative religious backgrounds which transmuted into spiritual mystical exploration and translated into a distinctive set of theoretical codes of belief (West, 2004; Lines, 2006).

For instance:

- Freud 1856-1939 (psychoanalysis), a non-practising Jew studied Genesis mythology.
- Jung 1875-1961 (analytical psychology) from a Reformed Church up-bringing turned to shamanism during his 'Red Book' phase.
- Maslow 1908-1970 (self-actualisation and hierarchy of needs) had Orthodox Jewish origins and did intensive study on the state of happiness.
- Klein 1882-1960 (child psychology and Object Relations) also from a Jewish background, developed play therapy by observing children.
- Rogers 1902-1987 (person/client centred humanistic psychology) from a strict Protestant background chose to study liberal theology.

The archetype of the 'wounded healer' was created by Jung to explain the concept of counsellors embracing deep suffering and in so doing to then be capable of truly understanding their client needs. This has analogies with the shamanic tradition of healers having passed through difficult initiatory rites or illnesses which cause the individual to experience a 'dark night of the soul' (St John of the Cross, 16th century), contemplate the meaning of life and come to know God/Goddess/Spirit.

This period, which may last days, months or even years may involve depression, neurosis and even psychosis leading to an inspired breakthrough and deep connection to spiritual truths (Nouwen, 1979; Dunn, 2000).

Counselling has become popular in religious contexts i.e. pastoral and bereavement counselling which may be offered in a church setting using formal religious tools such as scripture reading or prayer. In a holistic context, the most popular resources offered are meditation, grounding/centring practices and breathing techniques. Many schools of counselling are more open to inviting the spiritual aspect into clinical practice among them: psychodynamic, Jungian, existential, humanistic as well as transpersonal and many integrative models (Rowan, 1993). An important part of this evolution is attributable to both the Psychosynthesis and Transpersonal Psychology movements. Roberto Assagioli (1959), when he split from classic Psychoanalysis to embrace the soul in psychology championed the use of practical techniques including imagery and meditation.

Ken Wilber (2001) describes Transpersonal Psychology as therapy that works ‘beyond the personal i.e. the cosmic or spiritual’. This is a burgeoning sub-section of psychology which studies human experiences that are beyond ordinary reality. Methods used include Yoga, Reiki, dream and trance like non-ordinary reality states, Meditation and Shamanism and all enable the practitioner to access their greatest potential by connecting with a spiritual, transcendent state of consciousness (Lukoff, 2000). **The practise of ‘active imagination’ - the chief meditative practise of Jungian psychology also belongs to this category (Smoley and Kinney, (1999).** This state was evidenced by Edmund Husserl, the founder of Phenomenology, when he recognised the disenchantment with science and, especially in his later work, deployed hermeneutics to discuss the metaphysics of ‘presence’ arguing that transcendental consciousness sets the limit of all possible knowledge (King-Spooner and Newes, 2001).

However, there are those in the profession who worry that counsellors who bring spirituality into their clinic are watering down the field and exceeding the boundaries of legitimate practice (Lines, 2006). Critics also point to the fact that vulnerable clients may be ‘bamboozled’ by fanatical therapists who are nothing more than ‘snake oil salesmen’ (Voas and Bruce, 2007).

Many counsellors have reservations about addressing spirituality with their clients either because a) they received no formal training or b) in the ‘politically correct’ world we inhabit, are fearful of using the wrong terminology (West, 1997).

Today there is a call to return to the original values of Hippocrates, the ‘father of medicine’ with the re-integration of mind, body and soul into the cause of illness and the overall concept of health with compassion, service and integrity as opposed to solely science (Lukoff, 2000; Remen, 2006). Within the academic forum, spirituality combined with mental health has been gaining momentum. Harold Koenig, the eminent medic and proponent of spirituality in healthcare, found no articles on ‘spirituality’ in MEDLINE (a major research engine) when he searched it in the 1970’s. A similar search in the 1990’s yielded 31 articles and in the 2000’s, this had increased to 4353 (Koenig, 2008).

Counselling, an acceptable form of mainstream therapy nowadays, is evolving to unite the spiritual-healing oneness paradigm as a central honouring of the human condition for holistic health (West, 2004; Lines, 2006). When a client comes to a counselling session, they are seeking help to make meaning of their pain, dilemma or trauma. Long (2012, p.27) concurs stating that ‘embracing the spiritual aspect of ourselves helps us to define our own personal truth: which is to think, to value and to assign meaning and purpose to our lives...out of the discovery of meaning comes a changed sense of personal power and choice.’

The counsellor endeavours to empower the client delve into the aspects of what has occurred (or not occurred) to ‘unpack’ the aspects of their issue and plan a way forward. Traditionally counselling dealt with the mental and emotional aspects of the client’s issue, however to achieve a fully holistic sea change that sustains the client in moving forward the spiritual needs to be addressed (MacKinnon, 2012). Thorne (1998, p. x) reflects ‘it is now common for people to present themselves to therapists [counsellors] with concerns that they themselves have categorised as specifically spiritual in nature.’ **Eminent Professor Joseph Trimble in the US addressed this very issue with the Native American population who yearned to include their spiritual beliefs in their counselling sessions (Stewart, 2010).**

There is an added opportunity for movement from pain to clarity and insight when a client is invited to share their spiritual beliefs within a counselling session. Then, subsequently through that lens, begin to view their life challenges. To be human implies a continual search for meaning in our lives and through overcoming personal pain and trauma, coming to know a sense of worth and place in the world. The journey through life inevitably brings times of difficulty and by tapping into their innate spirituality, clients may emerge into understanding, truth and wholeness (Frankl, 1984; Jon Kabat-Zinn, 2005). If they wish that future to incorporate their spirituality then their counsellor needs to be able to facilitate this simply, effectively and in a way that supports whatever spiritual beliefs the client does or does not hold.

Counselling, which subscribes to Carl Rogers principles of unconditional positive regard, congruency and empathy, gift the client the space to be truly heard and open to aspects of themselves that heretofore may have been hidden or undiscovered. This includes their meanings of spirituality whether expressed or not and may allow them to journey towards personal healing and acceptance. For clients to find their truth, learn how to express it and therefore bring honesty into their relationships, there is an opportunity to grasp a holistic perspective on their issue/s.

Long (2012, p.28) describes ‘the results of such exploration and the insights that spring from them enable counsellors to facilitate lasting and rewarding change, development and growth in the knowledge that it is impossible to co-travel with our clients to a depth that we ourselves have not journeyed. This work can transform our own unique inner world including the way we view it, as well as the larger world in which we all live.’

2.4.2 Spirituality’s recent meanings and applications in modern Ireland

In Irish culture today there seems to be a distinctive loss of basic values and traditions that previously sustained a sense of thorough grounding in who and what we are as a people and the consequent significance of that in our lives (Murphy, 2012). In the last 100 years, it has been suggested that the value system has begun to shift from one of community, familial tribalism and connection to the land and nature to one of instant personal gratification. The resultant loss of security and sense of anchoring in turbulent times may have led to the manifestation of a plethora of physical, mental and energetic illnesses (Ingerman, 2010).

Increasing numbers of people now believe that spirituality is an important key contributor in our return to full health from these ailments (Koenig, 1999). Holmes (2007, p.29) argues that ‘We have moved from merely treating disease in a discrete way, to beginning to look at the whole person in the context of their environment and taking more serious account of *all* these factors in defining illness and treatment. Spiritual beliefs and values are part of this healing wholeness approach.’ Indeed, healing and health have always been related to religion and spirituality, especially in Ireland where folk cures were and are common (O’Connor, 2011).

In Irish post-secular society, there is a yearning, commitment and active retrieval of both spirituality and healing as indivisible phenomena (Egland, 2001; Longtin, 2004). Following on from the demise of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ and economic downturn of the last decade, Irish people have been forced to look at their engagement with the material and commercial world in a new manner. Those who have a healthy sense of spirituality were philosophical while those who had not yet felt called to answer the age-old questions of the true meaning of life were often forced into a position of challenge and crisis which necessitated seeking help from the counselling fraternity (Cosgrove et al. 2011; Ward, 2013).

It is particularly evident in Dublin today, with the rise of secular humanism e.g. holistic centres and mindfulness practices, that many Irish people have left their former religious practice for a variety of reasons and yet are yearning for connection to what they perceive as God. The move from an era of post-modernity to a post-secular view in Irish society heightens the need for an aspect of religiosity and spirituality in people’s lives (Cosgrove, et al. 2011). As Holmes (2007, p.25) suggests, ‘The Church’s failure could well be one of the reasons why we have seen such an increase of interest in the subject.’

How are the ways of this path retrieved and importantly, according to Flanagan (2007, p.2) ‘who “owns” these powers? Are they of magic, or theology? Who channels these and who is authorised to do so?’ There are people who follow a formal religion but compartmentalise their religiosity i.e. Mass on Sunday rather than bringing a union of the divine into everyday life (Cosgrove, 2011). For these counsellors to be able to bring this aspect into their working experience and harness their sense of spirituality formally may be a great boon.

2.4.3 Counselling and changes within the field in modern Ireland and abroad

MacKinnon (2012, p. 39) UK psychologist, shamanic practitioner and leading exponent of spirituality in counselling says, ‘When we look at different psychological schools and psychotherapy/counselling we are entering a complex, diverse and still-developing territory, but we can also see the movement towards an inclusion of the spiritual.’

As humans, we have four dimensions to our nature; physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. The integration of all four gifts us the ability to live life holistically. Balance and harmony between all four can bring meaning to our lives (Villoldo, 2001). The continuing widespread public interest in spirituality and religion has created a strong requirement for counsellors to become more aware of and perceptive to the spiritual values of their clients.

Richard Bergin, (1996 p.6) states that ‘...this has not been an easy task for many professionals...[who] have not been adequately trained for or prepared to deal effectively with spiritual issues, and their personal secular views or lack of experience with religion can create barriers to meeting the spiritual needs of their clientele (Bergin, 1991; Shafranske and Cummings, 2013).

In the past 2 decades, in America, there has been a superfluity of publications on spirituality, formal religions and the counselling profession (American Psychological Association, 2002; Shafranske and Cummings, 2013). For Martin Seligman, a former president of the prestigious American Psychological Association (APA) spirituality and religion have a major responsibility to play in dealing with the increase in depression that has swept across the United States and other countries in the last 100 years (Lukoff and Edwards, 2000). In America, this in turn has led to educational organisations seeking a means to furnish their students and graduates with a way to introduce spirituality to their clients in a safe and appropriate manner.

However while there has been a focus on the research of introducing spirituality for the clients, there has been a neglect in terms of the counsellors’ experiences. This is illustrated in the history of the evolution of a broad spectrum of Handbooks on spirituality and counselling. For example, since the earlier edition of the Sage handbook of counselling and psychotherapy in 2012, the authors, Feltham, Hanley and Winter (2017) have specifically updated in relation to new trends in the profession.

An important section of the new definition of counselling and psychotherapy includes concern ‘...not only with mental health but with spiritual, philosophical, social and other aspects of living’ of clients but no mention of the counsellors themselves. In this 2017 edition they explain how many counsellors and psychotherapists have dual qualifications in holistic – mind, body, spirit – therapies including spiritual healing. A key emphasis is the decline of formal religion and loss of spiritual leaders leading to the clients wishing to explore existential and/or metaphysical meaning within the humanistic and transpersonal approaches. However, the emphasis remains solely client orientated with a dearth of counsellors’ experiences even though the assertion is that many have trained in these areas.

Adams, Bart and Koning (2015) in their Handbook for ministry, spiritual direction and counselling brought together a compendium of articles to provide a practical guide for spiritual directors, ministers and counsellors (including pastoral care) across various backgrounds to enable them to comprehend the esoteric and the significance in the lives of their clients. Although contributors are mainly Christian, there are Jewish and Islamic perspectives included however one glaring omission is the voices of the indigenous peoples. While those contributors who are religious reference their congregational clients’ expressions of spirituality and practises, once again there is a paucity of counsellors’ meanings or experiences.

The American Psychological Association (APA) Handbook of psychology, religion and spirituality (Pargament, 2013) - part of the APA psychology series - states that ‘religion and spirituality are anything but simple’ and therein lies the key premise of this publication – providing information on the relationship between both for its diverse membership. The scope is vast incorporating not only western and eastern religions and spiritual approaches but also the native and minority populations. The second volume includes a section on religion and spirituality in relation to specific issues which gives counsellors the opportunity to know what is appropriate and the reassurance that older practitioners and peers are combining both successfully and professionally with a myriad of techniques. Again, these all emerged from the clients’ perspective with a disregard for the counsellors’ personal experiences.

Paloutzian, R.F and Park, C.L. (2015, p. 1) in their Handbook of the psychology of religion and spirituality, ask a pertinent question that speaks volumes on the evolution of this topic - ‘as a counsellor are you sure that you are not spiritually blind, spiritually insensitive or spiritually illiterate?’. We have previously discussed Shafranske’s contributions and in his chapter of this Handbook, he continues to extemporise on spiritual consciousness, sensitivity and spiritual literacy. Once again, he introduces evidence-based practise which links these with both multi-culturalism and holism. The sections of the handbook on religion/spirituality development throughout life from birth to adulthood to death and their expression including mystical experiences, shows how much the esoteric is knocking on the doors of the mainstream.

Although primarily aimed at providing an advanced level comprehensive resource for practitioners, the Handbook of person-centred psychotherapy and counselling devotes a whole chapter to a person-centred perspective on spirituality by Martin van Kalmthout. His particular stance is that of Carl Rogers’ view of spirituality and Brian Thorne’s interpretation as we have seen earlier. This does refer to their personal sharing of the meanings of spirituality, as in later life Rogers did expand on this topic. However, generally this handbook similar to those mentioned, is focused on explanations, techniques and client orientated.

This trend to include these topics has reached Irish shores particularly in the last five years with a number of key articles published in the non-peer reviewed magazine of the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP articles, 2012-2017: Dowds, 2012; Mahon, 2012; Singer, 2012; Patchell, 2013; Harner, 2014; Long, 2014; McHugh, 2015; Harkett, 2015; Sharkey, 2015; Taylor, 2016; O’Moraín, 2017). **All, with the exception of one (Dowds 2012) do not include counsellors’ personal experiences or meanings of spirituality.**

Long, (2010, p.29) writing about the evolution of counselling in Ireland today, states that ‘Spiritual counsellors work at planting the seeds of love, compassion, patience, wisdom, justice, courage, respect, humility and generosity...inner resources such as these help counsellors to create and maintain spiritual and caring therapeutic relationships in the sacred space that is provided in counselling sessions.’

2.4.4 Aspects of spirituality within counselling

The various spiritual tools used include prayer, indigenous shamanic techniques, Energy Psychology techniques, mindfulness and meditation.

a) Being 'Present'

Gerald Porter, assistant professor of Psychology, in the State University of New York, Albany explored his personal meaning of spirituality and its implications for counsellors. He found that the essential foundation is the experience of 'knowing of the unknown', the metaphysical aspect of 'Self' and regular practice of whatever technique is best employed to do this. Spirituality cannot be felt through intellectual thinking or emotional feeling but only transcendent experience 'in the now' (Porter, 1995).

Fritz Perls, the co-founder of Gestalt Therapy concurred speaking of the power of being present and 'going inside' to connect to the spiritual overcoming any fragmentation or disassociation (Perls, 1973). This term is also known as being 'in the moment' or mindful meditation (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1990). The spiritual technique Porter employs, both personally and with clients, is that of mindful connection to the body. The premise is that when a human is firmly anchored in the physical 'in the moment', they are more readily able to experience the presence of Spirit. He cites his own experiences of his five senses being heightened to facilitate easy access to the transpersonal, a connection or union with Spirit (Porter, 1995).

b) The effect of the counsellor's own spirituality

Porter highlights the importance of the counsellor being stable enough in their own training and spirituality to recognise when a client is experiencing spiritual emergence (an awakening of the transcendent within) or spiritual emergency (a sudden or dramatic thrust into the realms of Spirit through an experience the client has no reference for).

Stanislav Grof (2010), who co-founded Holotropic Breathwork – an innovative form of experiential psychotherapy integrating energy, spirituality and inner 'journey/visualisation' with his late first wife, Christina, offers two examples; a Catholic having vivid shamanic type visions or a client experiencing a psychotic episode with serious pathological mental health issues. When the counsellor is firmly rooted in their own sense of the spiritual they are in a good standing to reassure and assist their client navigate these types of transformative experiences.

Spiritual exploration is not for the faint hearted and a strong holistic grounding is necessary to facilitate this search (Frankl, 1984). A professional counsellor needs to be capable of preparing their clients for the journey to mysticism in a robust manner. Shafranske, an early pioneer in this arena, repeatedly found that it is the counsellor's personal openness and orientation to spirituality that is the key factor which predetermines facilitating its inclusion in the clinical forum (Shafranske et al. 1990).

When Crossley and Salter (2005), examined the experiences of 8 clinical psychologists (analogous to counselling work, therefore henceforth referred to as counsellors) they addressed the issue of respecting the client's belief system. All participants felt the need to suspend their own opinions and display an empathic approach. However, if their beliefs hindered this then invariably, a dilemma emerged. One solution was to discern if the client was able to openly name the challenge while using their particular beliefs terminology and understandings. A second was to withdraw from this topic keeping to classic therapeutic work methods. A final solution was to refer the client to the relevant spiritual or religious leader (priest, pastor or rabbi) (Bergin et al. 1996).

Clients can also affect counsellors negatively as Gubi and Jacobs (2009) found, in their examination of the effects on 5 counsellors of working with spiritually abused clients. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Crossley and Salter (2005)'s data indicated that vicarious traumatic stress can occur with feelings of anger, outrage, sadness, helplessness and powerlessness common to all counsellor participants. The phenomenon of what Rothschild (2006) calls 'emotional contagion' and Valent (2002) refers to as 'mirroring' may occur when the counsellor 'picks up on' the client's negative experience. This was felt by one participant when she described her own unconscious 'disassociation' to the traumatic sharing of her client who did not want to face their abuse (Gubi and Jacobs, 2009). Howard and Van Deurzen-Smith (1996) identified the fact that if the counsellor is a person of faith then working with spiritual abuse may have a traumatising effect and lead to much questioning of the counsellor's own beliefs and practices.

c) Integrating spirituality into a counselling session

Lewis Blair, a counselling psychologist, conducted research in Scotland exploring the influence of 9 counsellors' spirituality on their practice. He (Blair, 2015, p. 164), specifically states that this study 'was not designed to test hypotheses about the topic but to explore and uncover the ways in which therapists bring their spirituality to their practice'.

Participants were qualified UK counsellors from a variety of theoretical orientations (psychodynamic, integrative, humanistic, person centred, transpersonal and psychoanalytic) and faiths (Christian, Quaker, Buddhism and no specific beliefs).

A key theme to emerge was the reflective, dynamic and developmental process in which the participants were engaged to integrate their spiritual and therapeutic identities. A sub theme of this was the direct influence of the counsellor's spirituality on their therapeutic work. Blair's participants (2015, p.164) shared that their sense of spirituality was a form of self-care that 'plays an integrating, synthesising function of their identity'. The only common personal spiritual practice was regular meditation. However, prayer, church attendance, group meditations, spiritual text reading, spiritual direction and training, attending retreats and appreciating nature also featured highly.

An important sub theme was *how* the counsellors responded to their client's spirituality and this required careful therapeutic skill as well as perceptive cognisance of the possible influence on their own spirituality. For this reason, counsellors who have a spiritual or religious practise are more inclined to favourable attitudes towards spirituality/religion and mental health/treatment (Rosmarin et al. 2013).

d) Lack of specific training

Blair's research discovered a second key finding - that of the congruence between spirituality and a broader professional context. All nine counsellors spoke of having to find their *own* harmony between their theoretical orientation and their ability to introduce the subject and felt sense of spirituality into the clinic room.

Blair's (2015, p. 167) research found that some theoretical training introduced spirituality and some 'almost killed off the spiritual part of me...because it was so intellectual, so academic'. Others sought specific extra training. However regardless of the training orientation, a need emerged for the developing counsellor to 'work out' and reflect on their personal spiritual orientation within their practice. As these seasoned counsellors spoke of the 'eclectic mix' of therapeutic style beyond original core course, Blair found that some counsellors underwent a move away from the 'doctrines' of their therapeutic orientation to respond more intuitively to spirituality within their work. His research was limited to a small sample which does not necessarily represent the broader population. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) practitioners, for example, were under-represented (Blair, 2015).

As a therapeutic approach, CBT is based on logical positivism, on observable variables and empirical evidence which may seem incompatible with spirituality. In their US research, Rosmarin et al. (2013) found that, CBT literature contained only 500 references to religion and spirituality. To address this gap, they surveyed members of the Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) on their attitudes to religion and spirituality (R/S). Their survey of 262 counsellors was the first of its kind and while not extensive, 54% reported a strong sense of spirituality.

They did note, although, that with this cohort, religious affiliation and practice as well as belief in God, were considerably lower than the general US population. A further 36% of counsellors reported being uncomfortable addressing R/S with their clients and 19% 'never/rarely asked' them of their spiritual beliefs. A large percentage 71% described little or no specific training in this area and approximately 50% expressed an interest in further education in the form of specific workshops and courses in R/S issues. This study was limited by the informal recruitment process utilising the ABCT email database, a specific list for the Spiritual/Religious Issues in Behaviour Change Special Interest Group (12% of the final sample) and word of mouth which may have resulted in members self-selecting due to an interest in this subject.

In a Northern Irish context, Lynch (2007) in her critical exploration of 16 practitioners' perspectives of spirituality in couples and relationship counselling, argues that this deficit may highlight predominating professional attitudes towards the intrinsic value of spirituality in counselling. The 2 participants in her research who did receive some training in this topic in their core course found it hugely beneficial. Others either attended workshops of their own volition or discovered that engaging in her research interview was helpful to addressing their stance towards spirituality in their lives. Since the mid 1990's increased attention has been paid to the question of spirituality and/or religion training in counselling courses for family therapists (Walsh, 2009). While McGeorge, Carlson and Toomey (2014) did seminal research on the effect of including spirituality training in core courses which facilitated a greater openness to working with the LGBTQ community.

This highlights a secondary aspect in that the counsellors' supervisors (who they must attend monthly for insurance and best practice reasons) may not be comfortable working with counsellors who either a) seek to discuss their client work which includes spirituality or b) wish to engage with their own spirituality in the supervisory sessions (Lynch, 2007).

Gubi and Jacobs (2009) also discovered a dearth of supervision adequacy in the area of spirituality in their UK research. Given the lack of training and the shortage of adequate theoretical frameworks, counsellors are left in a quandary as to their approach when clients, in a grassroots capacity, introduce the topic into the therapeutic space (Crossley and Salter, 2005). They highlight the challenges of finding a comprehensive module acceptable to all spiritual and/or religion stances that will gain consensus in the field. Like Rosmarin et al. (2013), they chronicle the need for training in the area.

e) Broaching the subject of spirituality with clients

Following on from this observation, Crossley and Salter's (2005) research harmonised with Rosmarin et al.'s (2013) findings. Having examined the experiences of 8 clinical psychologists (analogous to counselling work, therefore henceforth referred to with the generic term counsellors), Crossley and Salter addressed spiritual beliefs in therapy with a diverse spiritual orientation (Christian, Buddhist, Atheist). Two core themes emerged: The first addressed spirituality as an elusive concept leaving participants confused and unable to grasp its fundamental nature. Reasons given included inadequacy of language, discomfort related to previous adverse personal experience of religion and also spirituality not being a concept within the classical field of clinical psychology. The elusive nature was also characterised by the lack of discussion and training within the profession of clinical psychology. Participants' responses included a cultural level of discomfort and embarrassment surrounding the topic of the meaning of life.

The second emergent theme was finding harmony with spirituality and how to address this. The counsellors' key aim when working with clients was to conduct the therapeutic session in ways that were congruent with their particular beliefs. Moreover, Crossley and Salter (2005, p. 305) noted two specific aspects that addressed this 'delicate and artful process': a) understanding and b) ultimately respecting the client's beliefs. Their participants were equally divided in ways to broach the subject of spirituality with their clients – to address it in the entrance interview or to wait until the client brings the topic into the clinical session.

A key theme in Lynch's (2007) research was difficulty in finding the right language to discuss spirituality which concurred with Crossley and Salter's (2005) research. Using a phenomenological approach to place the lived experience to the fore, she found that not one couple counsellor ever brought up the topic but clients often did since it relates to their beliefs and values which all present when dealing with relationship issues.

West, (2000) pointed out that the client may do this or not depending, even subconsciously, on whether they perceive the counsellor to be open to this. It may be concluded that ascertaining if the client holds any beliefs at the entrance interview stage would facilitate their knowing that their counsellor was open to its inclusion in their work together (Hathaway, Scott and Garver, 2004).

In contrast the majority of Lynch's (2007) Northern Irish participants found the concept and language of religion available and familiar. Her conclusion points out that the use of metaphors frequently helps to define spirituality (Emmons, 2005). All conceived of spirituality as greater than the conceptualisation of religion and deeply redolent of connectedness and unity. The participants spoke of spirituality providing a sense of meaning in their lives.

Walsh (1998, p. 72) also holds the premise that spirituality expedites 'inner wholeness' while Gall et al. (2005) propose that deep-seated religiosity facilitates philanthropic incentive as its ultimate outcome. Clarke (2005) countered this stance saying that purposeful meaning leads to an experience of the transcendent. Highlighting a fundamental difficulty, Crossley and Salter (2005, p. 307), encountered 'the impossibility of reconciling the infinite relativism of spirituality as individual meaning with the more precise boundaries of spirituality as religion'.

f) Spiritual techniques employed in counselling

The most common form of spiritual intervention in Christian counselling is prayer and clients with this faith expect it as part of their therapeutic sessions (Weld and Erikson, 2007; Walker et al. 2011). In contrast, Wade et al.'s (2007) research found that only 11% of counsellors in agencies without spiritual or religious affiliation believed that this was appropriate. The method in which any spiritual (or energy) technique is discussed and incorporated requires sensitive handling to make sure that there is a specific fit (Hathaway, 2013). Crossley and Salter, (2005, p.308) noted that the diversity of meaning surrounding spirituality led to a coherent construction of approaches. They acknowledged the use of techniques such as 'Buddhist approaches to issue of the self (Claxton, 1986; Epstein, 1999), models of forgiveness (Worthington, 2001) and transpersonal perspectives on psychosis (Clarke, 2001)'.

This form of spiritual technique is not exclusive to religious practice as when a client is praying, they enter an experiential union with their concept of a higher power, be that God/Goddess/Spirit. However, when employed within counselling, from this state, deep healing may occur through the understanding and comfort of the counsellor (Rizzuto and Shafranske, 2013). They also note that there is a reciprocal experience for the counsellor in feeling this connection within their own belief system. The key to Rizzuto and Shafranske's (2013) work was the transformative influence of prayer to express pain as well as hope.

However, in direct contrast, praying as a form of spiritual technique has a negative connotation in the research of Verbeck et al. (2015). They explore 3 vignettes which are an amalgam of the co-author's and colleagues' client histories altered for reasons of confidentiality. In their 1st vignette, the counsellor's client, presenting with social phobia and fear of authority, had been abused by a priest as a child, asks his counsellor to pray with him. The counsellor experiences a dilemma as while the client wanted to pray, she, non-religious, doubted whether that would have any beneficial impact and wanted to recommend legal action. Working with her personal reaction to this request, the counsellor proceeded by naming her different approach and inviting her client to work together to see how they could proceed effectively.

g) Self-disclosure

Blair (2015) found that when working with clients in the area of spirituality, counsellors often introduced their own spiritual self-disclosure in a helpful manner although doing so contravened the principles of their training orientation. Self-disclosure by counsellors from the counsellor's perspective is not encouraged from a training perspective yet 90% report that there are times where it may be highly relevant while over or indiscriminate use is to be avoided (Verbeck et al. 2015). The nature of effects depends on the content and manner of the disclosure (Yeh and Hayes, 2011).

Clients may consciously choose a counsellor with the same spiritual or formal religious background and Shumway and Waldo (2012) report evidence that this strengthens the therapeutic alliance. On the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy website, with over 4,500 members, there is a section where each counsellor may state their area of expertise or interest and increasingly there are those who add in 'spirituality'. In June 2018, this stood at 991 out of 4,500 members. This relatively new resourcefulness naturally eases the dilemma of initiating spirituality with clients.

h) Meaning

The psychological definition of meaning offered by Braaten and Huta (2016) speaks of the feeling or sense of resonance and purpose. For them the experience of meaning involves witnessing and partaking in an immersive phenomenon which broadens to include the metaphysical domain. Viktor Frankl (1984), a renowned psychiatrist and neurologist was one of the key figures of Existential Therapy. He founded Logotherapy, a form of existential analysis and was a prominent source of inspiration for humanistic psychologists. Frankl posits that once life has meaning anything is bearable, speaking from personal experience as a Holocaust survivor. His theory highlights that there is no single or universal meaning in life but that each individual is accountable for manifesting their own through self-reflection. Frankl (1984, p.133) suggested that profound meaning can be developed in 3 important ways: 'by creating a work or doing a deed; by experiencing something or encountering someone; and by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering'.

Wells et al. (2016) conducted a national survey with 298 genetic counsellors (who work with patients and families making decisions about genetic risk) on the development, experience and expression of meaning in their lives. They subsequently interviewed 68 and conducted Consensual Qualitative Research analysis with 25 of these. Of the five themes to emerge, 23 out of 25 participants ranked religious and/or spiritual foundations highly, when asked what the sources were and/or influences on their sense of meaning. For some this was a specific religious practice yet for others a difficult religious incident provoked either a disconnection or a search for a wide-ranging spiritual identity during their life. Of the eclectic mix of background including Catholic, agnostic, Christian, Methodist and Quaker, 6 out of 25 shifted from organised religion to a broader sense of spirituality and found a deeper meaning within that.

These results were consistent with previous research including Rosmarin et al. (2013) previously discussed. This research does present limitations in that some of the counsellors were emailed the questions before the interview while others were not which may have skewed the findings. Plus, there was a lack of disclosure of sex and ethnicity with only 3 identifying as male and none as non-white/Caucasian.

This section examined the inclusion of spirituality in counselling with reference to history, technical applications and changes in the field including Ireland. We now have an opportunity to summarise this large section and reflect on the implications contained therein. We have seen that counselling is evolving to unite the spiritual-healing oneness paradigm and in Ireland and elsewhere, there has been a rise in secular humanism and the use of spiritual techniques. This usage has an effect on the counsellors' own meanings of spirituality and its disclosure which has shown a paucity of training and supervision in how to introduce and integrate these techniques appropriately. A critical analysis of the research in this section indicates that while the nature of the research is relevant, the rigor is not due to the use of small cohorts and the lack of emphasis on the counsellors' experiences. The implications here are that the meanings in any developments of their spirituality are difficult to gauge since the robust nature of the research is not present. The following section considers the inclusion of specifically shamanic techniques following a detailed review of their significance in counselling.

2.5 Counselling and shamanism

As an illustration of the relevance of Shamanism and the modern evolution of its techniques to counselling, it is important to first discuss the transpersonal approach.

2.5.1 Shamanism as a transpersonal approach

Carl Jung (1973), the eminent Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist, renowned for founding analytical psychology, was one of the key forerunners in bringing to modern academia awareness of the link between mental health and spirituality. For many years he worked closely with Sigmund Freud but over time their views began to diverge. Freud worked mostly from the mind, the logical way, and Jung was more open to the connection to and experience of energy particularly shamanism (Wynne, 2012).

The world of academia can be an antecedent but also a follower of local and world-wide trends. Since the 1960s there has been an increase of interest in what could be termed the secular sacred – spiritual practices that are not linked to specific religions but from a place of personal empowerment such as Yoga, meditation and the martial arts (Walsh and Vaughan, 1993; MacKinnon, 2012).

As previously discussed, Transpersonal Psychology was at the vanguard of academia in response to these trends in the Western world (Hederman, 1999). Expanding on this concept, Walsh (2007, p.5) says ‘The term itself [transpersonal psychology] explained the experience of the individual extending beyond the self to encompass wider aspects of community, culture, and even cosmos...Consciousness and consciousness-altering disciplines have finally attained academic respectability and in turn they have fostered further interest in shamanism.’ Humankind is evolving to seek a way forward to self-develop, heal and connect in a transpersonal way (Harner, 1990; Tedlock, 2006).

Traditionally psychology and its counselling aspect in particular, have been orientated towards the scientific eschewing the philosophical and mystical. Carla Goddard, a US self-styled ‘shaman medicine woman’ researched the human energy field from a contemporary shamanic perspective. She concluded that this auric field, also known as the light electromagnetic field forms a ‘bridge’ between the spiritual and physical worlds. How we think and feel effects the energy field and vice versa. Goddard (2012, p.1), significantly points out that ‘when you step forward into your sacred self, your authentic self, your energy body elevates in frequency and becomes lighter’. The benefits for the client of engaging in what has become known as shamanic energy healing include deep restorative sleep, a sense of peace, stress and anxiety reduction, a feeling of being re-energised, mental clarity, an ability to gain perspective on mental problems and patterns of negative behaviour and worries (Tedlock, 2006).

2.5.2 Principles of shamanic energy healing

Core principles of shamanic energy healing are founded upon the view that the human body has a life force or energy that permeates the physical, mental and emotional aspects of the body from birth to death. This forms the basis for the human soul/spiritual essence and corresponds with Western esoteric historical findings (Faivre, 1994; Hanegraaff, 2013). This energy is felt but not visible to the untrained. However, for those who are trained it is as real and available as the physical, psychological and emotional bodies. In the Hindu view, it is anchored in the nervous system of the physical body in the chakras (Maret and Eng, 2009). For Mackinnon (2012, p. 87), this concept ‘would explain the similarities we encounter in many different, completely independent indigenous cultures, and why their view of how the universe works, especially of consciousness (spirit energy/essence), underlies everything.’

‘Shamanic Energy Therapy’ is a modern generic term used to describe a form of therapy that has evolved from core worldwide practices of Shamanism in combination with local innate spirituality. A key tenet of shamanic energy therapies and other energetic approaches is the principle that all illness and disease begin first at the energetic (spiritual) level and percolates imbalance to the psycho-emotional and physical levels (Villoldo, 2001). From this follows the maxim that if blockages or toxicity are removed and disassociated elements restored at the foundation level of the energetic, then the client’s psycho-emotional and physical symptoms are improved at the deepest layer of causality. The powerful nature of the reward of this system of health creation is that it addresses not only energies underpinning negative patterns that are consciously held by the client, but crucially those held unconsciously too. As a result, the client can be released of the deepest unresolved patterns of ancestral, cultural, familial and relational ill-health, accelerating powerful personal, spiritual and inter-personal growth. This view of healing has been identified in several studies of shamanic healing practices (Tedlock, 2006; Winkelman, 2011; Fotiou, 2012).

Shamanic energy therapists aim to intervene at the deepest sub-physical and psycho-emotional level, referred to as the energetic (Ripinsky-Naxon, 1993). The energetic now has an established body of scientific research (Oschman, 2005; Maret and Eng, 2009) allowing the practitioner a deep technical understanding and ability to intervene positively and ethically to promote positive health outcomes for their client at all levels of their being (Harner, 1990; Villoldo, 2001).

2.5.3 Spiritual techniques, specifically shamanism, within counselling

Jung believed that a human’s spiritual life was vitally important to their personal healing process. From Jung’s research into world myths and cultures, Snowden (2010, p.xxiv) noted that Jung also observed commonalities that ‘reflected the underlying inner knowledge, like a vast invisible sea, that he believed linked all human thinking. This led him to the concept of the collective unconscious...which extends beyond the individual psyche.’ Jung’s principles of archetypal energies in the collective unconscious mirror shamanic principles of spiritual guidance. He is cited as a major influence in modern Western shamanism since he and his students brought the essence of these esoteric ways into a format that could be readily understood in the modern age (Snowden, 2010).

When talking about ‘modern’ or ‘Western’ shamans, Michael Harner (1990, p.xiv), a renowned modern shaman, says ‘these new practitioners are not “playing Indian”, but going to the same revelatory spiritual sources that tribal shamans have travelled to from time immemorial...if they get shamanic results for themselves and others in this work, they are indeed the real thing...The shamanic work is the same, the human mind, heart, and body are the same; only the cultures are different.’ Indeed, Roy Moodley in his academic research found that many immigrants to the US having increasingly been using both conventional allopathic and adapted traditional healing practices in tandem for the last two decades (Moodley, 2010).

a) Nature/land connection as shamanic energy techniques

The therapeutic merits of nature have been known by indigenous peoples and shamanic healers for millennia (Eliade, 2004). These ways and the evolving techniques to engage with them are now drawing the attention of the counselling profession. Chronicling her personal research journey, American psychologist Byron (2013) endeavoured to integrate her training in Incan Shamanism and Jungian Depth Psychology where the former relates to experience and the latter makes meaning. Using the classic Jungian analogy of the ‘veils between the worlds’ of ordinary and non-ordinary reality as engagement with the unconscious, Byron began to see parallels between an energetic connection to the land and altered psychic states. Working with the Q’ero Andean shamans from Peru, she engaged with their 4 levels of perceptual states; the literal level of normal awareness, the symbolic level of dreams, metaphors and images, the mythic or archetypal level and the level of pure energetic collective (Byron, 2013).

The Q’ero shamans carry the belief from ancient prophecies that the next group of medicine people will come from the North (i.e. the Western world) and bridge the shamanic realm and the modern world in service to Mother Earth who they refer to as ‘Pachamama’. Working with shaman Don Sebastian, receiving rites of initiation, Byron (2013) observed that she began to feel the energy of the land move through her body and integrate holistically at all four levels. Shamanism is about the relationship between all living things and shamans source their power from connecting with the Earth and each other much in the same way that meditation circles, gospel choirs and rave dancers do in Western culture. Chanting and drumming are other examples of sourcing personal power in contrast to ‘plant medicine’ and related psychedelic substances regarded as ‘non-sober’ techniques.

The key practise for connecting to the land in Q'ero healing sessions is through a collection of sacred stones known as *quiyas* bundled together into a *mesa or mestana* meaning 'portable altar' (Byron, 2013). These provide a bridge or anchor for collective energetic experience between the healer and the client or in a collective and the strength of this is directly related to the power held by the shaman. Using breathwork, the stones are 'charged' with the energy of the client and thereby utilised as tools for healing and transformation.

In an Irish context, recognising the dearth of empirical studies on the specific area of the integration of nature into counselling, Hanrahan (2014), using phenomenological informed Thematic Analysis, conducted research with 9 counsellors who see nature as important in their personal process and as an integral part of their clinical practice. The techniques they used, from a diverse range of frameworks (including Jungian, Transpersonal, Psychodynamic, Person Centred and Gestalt), emerged as Sand Therapy, mindfulness practices, drama, poetry and art and shamanic stone work both inside and outside the clinical space. Analysis highlighted how the three-way relationship between counsellor, client and nature can enhance the therapeutic process and awareness of self (Jordan, 2014). As much as the therapist may be ready to explore these tools, their use depends on the volition of the client. Due to the dearth of research in the area, there are those who claim a 'watering down' of the profession by utilising tools beyond the remit of their professional training (Lines, 2006).

b) Integrating local indigenous shamanic practices

Furthering this viewpoint, Lee (2002), a Chinese clinical psychologist, working in Singapore, incorporated indigenous shamanic techniques native to his clients as a means to enhance their process. He noticed that certain clients while engaging in Western psychotherapy held strong beliefs in the shamanic ways of China known as 'dang-ki', including 'feng shui' relating to the lived and built environment. **The effect of incorporating local traditional healing practices into counselling sessions has been recognised as a key source of their efficacy for certain clients (Trimble, 2010).** Lee cites 2 case studies where he used these techniques to great effect: the first by harnessing the use of a local fortune teller to appease the parents of a young client wishing to marry outside his tribe. The second suggested the use of local rituals for bereavement issues – the burning of incense papers as a symbolic healing.

Lee (2002, p.4) postulates that ‘instead of rejecting traditional medicine and folk therapies as quack and superstitious, we should study their underlying cultural value systems to inform our counselling practice.’ However, in this research he focuses more on the reactions of his clients rather than his own personal experience as a counsellor. These current findings add to a growing body of research in this area and Dobkin de Rois (2002), a medical anthropologist and counsellor adds to this with her study of 700 Latino immigrant clients in the US. She uses historic links with Hispanic culture and techniques including relaxation and hypnosis to create an altered state of consciousness conducive to self-healing and personal empowerment with ‘power animals’ as spiritual guides. These are used in conjunction with classical behaviour modification techniques. Dobkin de Rois, while she chronicles her methodology, adds little by way of personal expression. Nevertheless, she does conclude with an interesting analogy; just as the shaman receives knowledge from ‘outside’ of themselves via their spirit helpers, the counsellor receives theirs in a similar ‘outside’ fashion via their training skills including proverbs, sage quotes and metaphors.

The same principles can be applied to working with a specific client base, as Rich (2012) does with addiction, incorporating shamanic techniques with transpersonal psychology as an integrative approach to alleviate symptoms. She used the case study of a 25-year alcohol dependent female client, who consciously sought to bring spirituality to her process. Rich blended these modern and ancient tools together to great effect. Citing Wilber (2001), she argues that transpersonal theory paves the way for a pure holistic, integrative approach incorporating the mind-body-spirit trinity gifting the counsellor with a comprehensive path to the human psyche. This enables the counsellor to work with addicted clients initially on the physical and may advance to spiritual issues. The application of shamanic methods as a spiritual approach in conjunction with addiction counselling has appeared in academic literature as a legitimate practice for the restoration of holistic health (Winkelman, 2001).

Ken Wilber et al. (1986a), for example, notes that if someone experiences trauma, energetically an aspect of the self may become stuck or blocked (disassociated or fragmented in counselling parlance) to survive (Harner and Harner, 2000; Ingerman, 1991). In shamanic language, this is termed a ‘lost soul part’ and impedes the client’s ability to self-heal or progress. However, using the shamanic concept of ‘soul retrieval’, the counsellor may assist their client retrieve the ‘split off/soul loss’ from within their consciousness by employing altered state of consciousness techniques (Eliade, 2004; Money, 2000; Wilber et al. 1986a).

In Rich's (2012) case study, her client had worked with a shamanic practitioner in advance of attending her clinic. She furthers this work very effectively using altered state of consciousness trance 'journeys' to connect her client with fractured loss soul aspects, then mindfulness, meditation, breathwork and 'Focusing' techniques to subsequently integrate and anchor them. However, the healing work had already begun previously so how much could have been achieved in a counselling setting without the full shamanic intervention is something to consider.

This 'journey work' to achieve an altered state of consciousness is traditionally done in a supine position. However, as Rich discovered it is also conducive to a sitting position which is an easy transition for a counselling client. She also employed shamanic techniques conducted on her client's behalf with permission. In this case the client was a passive presence until Rich shared her findings and subsequently invited her to decide whether they resonated with her. In this incidence the spiritual 'messages' did indeed move the client deeply though Rich had been concerned about them and iterated her nervousness prior to the disclosure. Once again there is a dearth of personal meaning, with Rich merely alluding to her own feelings of difficulty and challenge with times of insight and momentum. Moreover, although her research highlights her own personal development, it is restricted to a single case study in a clinical setting.

In contrast, US psychologist and sex therapist Linda Savage conducted her study with 10 women in a workshop scenario to explore her meanings during integrated spiritual work. Savage (2014) sought to delineate a treatment model for healing and empowerment co-created with a shaman elder. Having learnt shamanic techniques, Savage found these generated a new awareness for her therapeutic practise, observing deep psychological shifts in her clients. The interweaving of perspectives and experience using yoga-like breathwork, guided meditation, dream work and shamanic ceremony offered new pathways for awakening feminine sexual energy, creativity, and personal power.

A central piece was working with the mesa of stones (similar to Byron, 2013) previously mentioned and transformational movement, which opens up the chakra system to the extraction of 'stuck energy' with permission and intention. The 10 female participants, in the workshop setting, were familiar with shamanic work and particularly the concept and practice of 'journeying'. This is a form of altered state of consciousness visualisation.

This is induced by breathwork/ drumming/chanting/dancing or ingesting plant medicine to connect to ‘Self’ and in this case to connect to specific spiritual ‘guides/helpers’. These are accessed by the imagination/sub-conscious and may be ancestors, deities of particular religions (i.e. St Brigid, Buddha, Mohammed), Angels and ‘power’ animals (Ingerman, 2010). Though, a key point often overlooked is that unlike mediums or victims possessed by spirits, shamans enter an altered state of consciousness to encounter and connect with their spirit guides of their own volition in a dialogue scenario (Eliade, 1964; Villoldo, 2001).

Savage’s (2014) experiential research included many synchronistic occurrences as the participants chose to frame ‘the meaning of their sexuality as their life force and emphasized the importance of this energy for creative expression (Wolf, 2012)’. While her work was a description of her personal reflections, peer reviewed in the *Journal of Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, it remains a personal narrative account from one workshop rather than research conducted over a sustained period of time.

c) The origins of shamanic techniques within modern counselling

Nonetheless, Scott (2014) agreed with Savage’s use of shamanic techniques within a psychological framework and compiled evidence in her own research as to its origins. She begins by citing Carl Jung’s analytical psychology, specifically his introduction to the concept of the psyche as the origin of ‘numinous’ experiences. As we have seen, these are based within his concepts of the collective unconscious, archetypes and the individuation process (Jung, 2001). Scott continues with Richard Noll et al.’s (1985) cognitive pragmatic approach which concurred with Jung’s two distinct forms of thinking: the everyday ordinary state of consciousness and a more introspective mode of thought characterised by internal imagery. Having studied with Michael Harner, considered by some to be the ‘father of modern shamanism’, Noll formed his theory of the controlled cultivation of this mental imagery as a means to give expression to the unconscious psyche via an altered state (Harner, 1980; Noll et al, 1985). Although this may be true, how individual shamans comprehend their experience may be at variance with these scientific theories of visions and consequentially need to be empirically investigated.

Comparatively, Michael Winkelman (2010, p.3) researched the neurobiological and phenomenological perspective of altered states of consciousness. He came to the conclusion that they are 'naturally occurring biological states in which the brain's structures are integrated to facilitate the normal processing of emotional, intellectual, social and environmental information within an imagetic system reflecting deep structures of knowledge'. While helpful, the extent of his neuroscientific concepts runs the risk of reducing multifaceted visionary experiences to simple physiology.

2.5.4 The Irish context specifically 'Celtic' shamanism within a counselling setting

When practiced from a Celtic spiritual perspective, shamanic energy therapy has key elements which correspond with worldwide shamanic practices yet has a distinctive aspect which denotes the cultural and traditional context which both attracts and seems to suit the Irish psyche. In Ireland, there has been a recent surge of interest and a greater awareness of the shamanic role in Celtic Pagan culture and in Druidry (Butler, 2011). These ancient ways were 'remembered' by practitioners through personal shamanic journeys, extensive research of old texts and study of current indigenous practices worldwide (Mathews, 1989). This healing modality of shamanic energy therapy works well in a modern context since it does not contravene whatever religious beliefs a client may have but indeed 'sits over' any or no faiths as it works at an energetic level based on the premise of the energy field which permeates and surrounds the human body (Brockman, 2006).

Many Irish people, who have turned away from the formal religion of their youth, are experiencing a lack of spiritual direction and connection and are seeking answers (Dorr, 1996). This may lead to a transpersonal development quest which ushers in an awareness of a need for the healing of old wounds, hurts and grievances and a revisiting of the significance of Celtic spirituality. In this way, one may consciously rediscover a contemporary spirituality that makes sense of our inner life. Shamanism, as currently practiced in Ireland today from a Celtic perspective, offers a practical way to return to old sustainable values, redress life issues and reconnect with a sense of one's innate soul's yearning (Cosgrove et al. 2011). Indeed, because of this, many personal clients have returned to their original belief system, be that a formal religion or an eclectic mix of faiths with fresh eyes and a renewed sense of understanding.

In counselling terms this affords an advantage to both client and counsellor as a way to open up new doorways to explore, process and move beyond life challenges and trauma. MacEowen (2010, p.17) found that his clients ‘uttered nearly the same phrase: “Frank, I did not learn something new. I relearned something I once knew but had forgotten”.’ He refers to Celtic spirituality as ‘a path of honouring nature and an enduring process of orienting to an invisible thread of memory as a means of enriching life... as evidenced by lore that has been passed down for thousands of years, as well as by the variety of ongoing innovations that clearly reflects a thriving Celtic spirit today.’

A key outcome of my MA research showed that of the 9 master shamanic practitioners in Dublin interviewed, the three who were accredited counsellors and also practiced shamanic energy therapy agreed that spirituality in counselling offered amelioration for their clients. Interviewee 1 (Ward, 2013 p. 101) stated that *‘When I worked as a straight forward psychotherapist counsellor, I was reasonably effective. When I started adding shamanism to what I was doing I became more effective. There is a world of a difference...where I could be sitting talking to a client for 10, 12 15 sessions, I get as much work done in 2 or 3 sessions of what I call Psychotherapeutic Shamanism or Transpersonal Shamanism, that mixture of working... going a layer deeper... you are tuning into the intuitive faculty of both the client and yourself and looking at the deeper roots of the surface presentation.’*

In summary, we have seen that shamanism is a transpersonal approach and that classical practises have been adapted for use as shamanic energy techniques. These include nature/land connection, local indigenous techniques such as ‘journeying, breathwork, use of stones and visualisation. The origins of shamanic techniques within modern counselling with a focus on the Irish perspective, was discussed in relation to this research. The next section considers energy therapies: similarities, differences and the merits of their use within the same context.

2.6 Counselling and energy therapies

2.6.1 Origins of energy therapy methods used within a counselling setting

There are many forms of ‘complementary’ therapies which are based on the concept of energy fields (Mollon, 2018). Oschman, a cell biologist, (2003 p.xxxi), extensively researched ‘the nature of energy medicine from a scientific perspective’ and concluded that the human ‘organism has a vast *systemic interconnectedness*’ with its energy principles as much a vital part as the hormonal, nervous and biochemical systems.’

To recap, Heelas and Woodhead (2005, p.27) explicitly describe ‘energy’, ‘chi’ as the ‘functional equivalents’ of spirituality’. Cantwell, (2007, p. 5) an Irish shamanic energy therapist and co-founder of the Slí an Chroí school of shamanism further explains that ‘energy is the currency of Spirit.’ In direct contrast Voas and Bruce (2007, p.51) state that ‘much of what is called ‘spirituality’ seems to be merely pseudo-science (such as ‘energy’ circulating in the body).’ This is a derogatory term referring to health treatments with little or no empirical scientific evidence.

The concept of working with ‘energy’ came to prominence in a modern context in the 1990s since Gallo (2004) coined the phrase ‘Energy Psychology’ (EP). In the 1960s, George Goodheart developed early EP principles with his work on Applied Kinesiology and Acupressure by ‘tapping’ specific body points with intention to relieve post-traumatic stress disorders known as Tapas Acupressure Technique (TAT) (Frost and Goodheart, 2013). This new and controversial amalgamation of mind/body approaches to treat psychological disorders was further developed by Craig (2009) who combined these techniques with psychotherapy. He made these accessible to counsellors, specifically Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) a simpler version of Callahan’s (2013) Thought Field Therapy (TFT).

This is succinctly detailed by Mollon (2018, p.2.) who argues that ‘purely talk-based forms of psychotherapy, although not without value, are simply not able to engage effectively with the realm in which the patterns of emotional distress are encoded in the area at the interface of the psyche and the soma - the body’s energy field.’ These energetic techniques, specifically TFT, EFT and TAT are key tenets of Howard Brockman and Mary Hammond-Newman’s (2006) ‘Dynamic Energetic Healing’ process – a new counselling model that sits under the umbrella of Energy Psychology.

Developed in the late 1990’s the emphasis is on ‘process’ and using manual muscle testing and energetic tools which integrate very well with other more established therapies. This increasingly popular approach, inspired by the work of Arnold Mindell (1993) and Milton Erickson (1991), has become known for treating PTSD, depression as well as spiritual issues. US physicist, professor emeritus of Stanford University and founder of the Institute for Psychoenergetic Science, William Tiller (2017, p.1.) marrying science with esoteric principles stated that ‘For the last four hundred years, an unstated assumption of science is that human intention cannot affect what we call “physical reality”’.

Our experimental research of the past decade shows that, for today's world and under the right conditions, this assumption is no longer correct. We humans are much more than we think we are and Psychoenergetic Science continues to expand the proof of it.'

The modern evolution of energy therapy techniques in the mainstream adhere to strict vetting procedures, rigorous formal training and exams with supervised practice. Certified graduates must also maintain annual continuous professional development for example within the professional bodies of Reiki, Healing Touch, the Barbara Ann Brennan Healing School and Bioenergy Therapy. However, there is nothing to prevent a self-professed healer/shaman from setting up and touting their wares to the unsuspecting public. As in any profession there are always charlatans. When dealing with vulnerable clients, much damage may be done by unscrupulous proponents of the shamanic energy therapeutic healing (Levin, 2011).

2.6.2 Perceptions of energy therapy

According to Carmen Kuhling (2011, pp.211-212) the so called 'New Age movement may be seen by some to be restricted to a marginal group of "flaky" practitioners and consumers.' The term 'New Religious Movements (NRMs)', coined by Cosgrove et al. (2011) is another broader term used in reference to the New Age phenomenon which brings considerably large numbers of Irish people to engage with Traditional Chinese Medicine, Reiki and other forms of alternative/complementary healing. Cosgrove et al., (2011, p.6), heading a collective of academics co-hosted the first multidisciplinary Irish Conference on New Religious Movements in Maynooth in 2009 and in their conference publication they stated that the term "'New Age" is a rare example of a category which is almost exclusively used by those who do not identify with it.... which has come to be more commonly used as an implied criticism.'

However, those who do subscribe to the therapies, techniques and ways of this movement may hold a wider worldview that incorporates formal religion with holistic ways. Cosgrove et al. (2011) found that some Irish people practice an eclectic mix of spirituality from Catholic weddings and funerals to owning angel cards, while doing yoga or meditation and visiting sacred sites such as Newgrange.

Jenny Butler (2011) has done ethnographic research on the worldview and ritual practices of the Irish neo-pagan community. This term emanates from the Latin word 'paganus' meaning 'one who lives in the country'. Her use of the term 'neo' indicates the modern spiritual movement as distinct from pre-Christian contexts of so-called 'pagan' religions. Butler (2011 p.112) outlines 'the diverse forms of Celtic-based spirituality.... (with) neo-shamanism and the many subsets and forms of practise' that include techniques associated with shamanism in indigenous contexts.'

She specifically mentions the popular religious practise of the 'pattern day' where devotees walk in a circular pattern around holy wells three times, a practise also used in neo-pagan, shamanic and Druidic rituals. The mainstream media often refers to individuals who engage with these types of practises under the banner of neo-paganism, including Celtic shamanism, in a patronising manner as a 'tree-hugging-hippy' (Butler, 2011).

Spirituality in a modern secular context is being used to describe a broad range of areas from complementary holistic therapies to beauty treatments to martial arts and self-contemplation (Voas and Bruce, 2007). As we have seen in 2005, Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead conducted the Kendal Project where they attempted to quantify the reach of holistic practises in direct comparison with traditional churchgoing in England. They found a distinction between perceptions of complementary medicine (Eastern) and faith healing (local). Their evidence suggests that those who favour holistic practises tend to be a smaller core group of people mostly practitioners themselves and a larger group of mainly health-conscious citizens. They concluded that alternative spirituality has been growing rapidly and is expected to continue at a rate that could rival that of traditional Catholic congregations within future decades (Heelas et al. 2005).

There has been a propensity for critics to minimise the growth of alternative spirituality. In the progressively technological Western world, secularisation has been on the rise and it would appear to be a retro-active step to return to older pagan belief systems (Dorr, 1996; Butler, 2011, Cosgrove et al. 2011). 'Much of the older religious terminology seems out of date, over-pious, escapist and dualistic...spiritual energy remains the "in" language of a minority, who are often dismissed as "spiritual freaks"' according to Dorr (1996 p.i).

Anthony Murphy (2012, p.229) echoes these sentiments saying that some ‘believe that the older forms of spirituality – mainly pre-Christian and therefore largely prehistoric ones – are purer and better than what we have today.’

2.6.3 Energy techniques in counselling and their meanings for counsellors

The past decade has seen rapid developments in the use of a plethora of energy techniques in counselling, with academic research into their type, efficacy and client reactions. However once again there is a lack of study on the experiences and meanings for the counsellors themselves.

West’s (1997) research in the UK with a large qualitative study with 30 counsellors, although 10 years old remains highly relevant to this research question. Using semi-structured interviews and a 10-month human inquiry group with 7 participants, he focused on the ‘healing’ aspect of their work. This included techniques such as subtle energy work, transpersonal aspects, altered states, shamanism and mediumship. Key themes which emerged were: the transition phase for the counsellor to begin to integrate healing in their counselling work, the language used to describe this to clients, the nature of healing as distinct from counselling and the challenges in finding a supervisor for both approaches. West’s (1997) study examined the meanings and implications of the counsellors healing experiences.

Findings revealed that 85% of the participants regarded healing energies as present in their work and 78% felt ‘at times part of something bigger’ implying that the research recruitment process attracted those who already do both types of work and have a strong sense of spirituality rather than a broad range of diverse backgrounds, technique use and beliefs. Using a bricolage of methodology including 2 forms of grounded theory and content analysis, West explored the various categories emerging and the relationship between them.

He questioned whether this was the best methodological approach since the role of the researcher is minimised and he felt that the small units of coding meant the holistic nature was lost in the final analysis. More recently, literature emerged that offered alternative and superior methods such as Williams, Dutton and Burgess’s (2010) exploration of the subtle and intangible aspects of energy healing which was best achieved through a phenomenological approach, characterising the ‘being-in-the-world’, lived, embodied experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1964).

Of West's final 27 participating counsellors, 10 had had a mid-life crisis or an illness that led to an awakening to healing work. A further 11 reported experiencing the 'energetics' of healing themselves and cited this as a reason to consider its incorporation into their counselling practice. West's (1997, p. 304) counsellors identified 2 distinct forms of healing; firstly: the overt use of healing techniques and secondly 'incidental' healing which occurred due to the felt sense of Rogerian 'presence' i.e. cultivating a safe, 'spiritual space' that the client could access their own 'secondary' healing. The challenges of describing/labelling the healing work for counselling clients and supervisors was a dilemma faced by 12 of the counsellors specifically mentioning the taboo of 'healing' practices and the difficulty of finding the right language to describe it.

This phenomenon was also evident in Mason's (2012) research with 5 UK counsellors to ascertain how Energy Psychology (EP), as we have discussed previously, informs and affects their practice. Using in-depth semi-structured interviews and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) 4 main themes emerged in Mason's findings: EP as facilitative of therapeutic change, the respectful nature of EP, the impact of EP in the therapeutic relationship and the challenges of integrating EP into the work context. While the counsellors shared copiously on the effects they saw in their clients, there is considerably less evidence of any developments due to their own experiences when working with their clients. Instead there are examples of the effects with solo use and Mason (2012, p.228) documents one participant who spoke of 'feeling the energy shift and then noticing I was different...at a somatic level, so it had no words.'

When working with clients, another counsellor commented on the 'spiritual qualities' that entered the space. Though none talked explicitly about the effect on their own sense of spirituality, several did feel that demonstrating the techniques helped them. They specifically highlighted connecting with their clients on a spiritual level which facilitated profound healing. In relation to their reaction of the effect of EP techniques on their clients, one counsellor spoke of how important it was to gauge correctly the client's readiness for this type of work especially thorough assessment procedures. Some clients chose not to use EP simply asserting their own autonomy or saying it was too 'technique based'.

Overall the 5 counsellors were very happy to have safe techniques that they could not only use effectively with their clients in a clinical session but they could teach clients to use themselves safely at home. A limitation of their research was the lack of depth of some of the data due to less emphasis on the personal experiences rather than the different paradigms and methods of EP.

In an Irish context, White's (2014) research directly targeted the impact on the work and life of psychotherapists (analogous to counsellors) integrating EP with post-traumatic stress disorder clients. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) White explored the meanings that 3 counsellors, with differing spiritual belief systems (Christian, Eastern and no faith), attributed to their lived experiences of making sense of the integration of EP into their work. Four themes emerged: transformation, paradigm shift, state of presence and spiritual realisation (White, 2014). All 3 counsellors experienced a deep impact on their sense of identity, consciousness and meaning of life contributing to experiences of mystical transcendence. According to White (2014, p. 57) EP's use brought them 'a lived experience of flourishing and serenity'.

In common with White's findings, Rizzuto and Shafranske (2013, p.140) attained a similar state during a client session, when witnessing 'a timeless quality of transcendence and peace, which infused meaning and sanctified their client's life'. They qualified this further stating that when a counsellor works from an 'empathic, interpretive, and respectful stance... [the clinic room] may be further transformed into a sacred space' (Rizzuto and Shafranske, 2013, p.188). From here, the client may come to know healthy relationships with their counsellor, with significant others in their life, with their version of God and ultimately themselves.

Although White's research is a Masters dissertation, it addressed an area directly relevant to this thesis and therefore was worthy of consideration. However, the small sample of 3 counsellors only revealed results that ultimately favoured the central thesis question and a larger sample may have elicited a wider range of experiences. Each of the 3 counsellors preferred TAT as an EP technique so that the central question could have been solely concerned with this particular practice rather than the wider remit of the EP approach itself. Critics dispute the efficacy of this type of energy technique believing it lacks any valid scientific basis (pseudoscience) and can bewilder clients with assertions of prodigious 'cures' (McCaslin 2009).

To summarise, having examined the origins and perceptions of Energy Therapy and its various techniques within a counselling setting, we explored any meanings for the counsellors in previous research both in Ireland and abroad. The techniques used in the research cited included subtle energy work, maintaining sacred space and self practise which are all part of the Energy Therapy Technique. Also the methodology in many cases was that of Phenomenology including IPA which will become more relevant in the next chapter. Overall critically, we comprehend a paucity of research from the counsellors' perspective and if there is, the cohort is small and the meanings not a chosen point of focus. The implications are that this particular research study is highly relevant and pursues a fresh and important position. We now conclude the Literature Review by assessing the three sections, the research and their comparisons below.

2.7 Conclusion

This Literature Review has identified that spirituality with its modern evolution of techniques, is becoming more relevant for positive outcomes in counselling. Much has been researched about the reaction and benefits of this within the client cohort. It also identified that there is a dearth of academic research on how this relates to the meanings of counsellors' experiences when they include a spiritual component in their therapeutic approach.

Of the research available, while Rich (2012) working in the area of addiction did not express any personal developments, Savage (2013) shared her reflections in detail but her research was confined to a single workshop. Dobkin de Rois (2002) in a much larger study did not chronicle her own experiences and neither did Lee (2002) both focused on client reactions.

Neither Dobkin de Rois nor Lee revealed accounts of their own personal experiences. Porter (1995), in contrast, freely shared his personal meanings in positive terms particularly how this heightened his own spirituality as did Crossley and Salter (2005), Gubi and Jacobs (2009) and Verbeck et al. (2015) emphasised the negative effects including vicarious trauma.

In the literature reviewed, there was much said about the paucity of language to explain spiritual techniques to clients in an attempt to integrate these into the counselling sessions by West (2000), Crossley and Salter, (2005), Lynch (2007) and Blair (2015). This included how to broach the subject of spirituality not solely to clients, but also to supervisors.

Blair (2015) identified a lack of specific spirituality training within core counselling courses to prepare the counsellors to maintain their own spirituality privately while remaining faithful to their own beliefs and those of their clients. Additionally, the study undertaken by Rosmarin et al. (2013) found that 70% of the counsellors who participated had to resort to undertaking significant 'self-learning' and would welcome specific spirituality and religion workshops to further their continuous professional development (CPD) education.

In an Irish context, Lynch's (2007) participants who did receive spirituality training in their core course found this to be very beneficial and Walsh (2007) emphasised the increasing onus on family therapy training to feature spirituality in their Courses. However, there is potential for harmful and unethical practices to emerge. Gubi (2009), Lynch (2007) and Rosmarin et al. (2013) found that this may be further exacerbated if adequate supervision is not provided or there is inadequate understanding of the broad implications of this type of therapeutic work.

Walsh and Vaughan (1990, p.126) called for further research into the integration of what they referred to as 'shamanic technologies' for use by the 'Western health practitioner' to alleviate both psychological and psychosomatic symptoms. Here they specifically highlighted counsellors trained in shamanism 'in a consciousness-altering technique or tradition'. If clients wish to incorporate their spirituality into their clinical sessions then their counsellor needs to be able to facilitate this simply, effectively and in a way that supports whatever spiritual beliefs they themselves do or do not hold.

Porter (1995) spoke eloquently about 'presence' as defined by Carl Rogers while Mason (2012) found that 'spiritual qualities' entered the clinical space when he used esoteric techniques. Blair (2015) and Rosmarin et al.'s (2013) counsellors revealed that their own sense of spirituality became a form of 'self-care' which was an important feature. However, correspondingly, Verbeck et al. (2015) detailed that this frequently brought up the dilemma of whether to self-disclose or not to clients.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected as the superior methodology across the 3 categories of counselling when using spiritual, shamanic and energetic techniques by Crossley and Salter (2005), Williams (2010), Mason (2012), White (2014) and Hanrahan (2014).

All spoke of capturing the ‘being-in-the-world’, lived, embodied experience of their participant’s meanings (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) whereas West (1997) who used Grounded Theory shared in his research discussion that he felt there were limitations in the lack of ‘holistic’ stance.

Spiritual techniques used within counselling from a religious, shamanic and energy therapy approaches included prayer, intention, Reiki, bio-energy, TAT, TFT, EFT, breath work, stonework, visualisation, soul retrieval and indigenous rituals. An interesting finding was the description of EP as an intuitive creative process to integrate the techniques which provided a pivotal tool and focus for the sessions (Mason, 2012). The Energy Therapy Technique, chosen for this research, emanates from a self-empowerment perspective is conducive to facilitating a breadth of scope for the client to bring innate creativity to their healing process.

Of the research available on offering spiritual techniques within counselling, the focus remained mainly on the client cohort rather than the counsellors themselves. A portion of the small number of studies that did, were either a single workshop or a small cohort and therefore not in-depth research in this specific sector. Those that shared their personal experiences did so in positive terms particularly how this heightened their own spirituality. Some emphasised the negative effects including vicarious trauma. There was much said about the paucity of language to explain spiritual techniques to clients including how to broach the subject of spirituality not solely to clients, but also to supervisors. A lack of specific spirituality training within core counselling courses was identified and many welcomed specific spirituality workshops to further their continuous professional development (CPD) education including supervision. Spiritual techniques used included shamanic and energy therapy approaches. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected as a superior methodology when using these.

We also note the use of shamanic ‘journeying’, breathwork, sacred stones, visualisation and connection with spiritual ‘guides/helpers’ which are also components of the Energy Therapy Technique. On a critical stance, while we see that the methodologies utilised included phenomenological approaches to gauge the experiences of the clients, very few studies focused on ascertaining any meanings for the counsellors themselves. Once again this indicates a dearth of robust research in this area.

This literature review has identified that spirituality is becoming more relevant for positive outcomes in counselling. However, it also identified that there is a dearth of research on how this relates to the experience of counsellors in particular when they are including a spiritual component to their therapeutic approach both worldwide and in an Irish context. Therefore, I can rationalise that this research is valid, relevant and indeed necessary.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

As soon as we begin to confront the deeper questions of human life in the world today,

We have begun to craft spirituality.'

- Jack Finnegan, *The Audacity of Spirit*, 2008.

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the chosen research methodology and its rationale, design, theoretical framework, data collection and analysis process. As we have observed from research conducted and discussed in the Literature Review, frequently the methodologies emanate from the phenomenological perspective of the participants (Crossley and Salter, 2005; Lynch, 2007; Gubi and Jacobs, 2009; Williams, Dutton and Burgess, 2010; Mason, 2012; Hanrahan, 2014; White, 2016). Therefore, the Methodological Framework for this research is that of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) – an approach to psychological qualitative research with an idiographic focus, which offers insights into how a given person, in a given context, makes sense of a given phenomenon.

3.2 Study aim

This research investigated any developments in the meanings of spirituality among accredited counsellors practicing a new shamanic energy therapy technique. This technique brings a spiritual aspect based on shamanic principles into a counselling session which traditionally focuses on the mental and emotional aspects of a client's issue. This research is therefore, highly relevant to the understanding of the evolution of counselling in a modern context.

Since the 'meanings' of spirituality are a key factor, the method of gleaning this rich depth of information was clearly marked as that of a qualitative approach. One of the values of this type of research is that, according to Flanagan (2004, p.89) it 'offers the opportunity to explore in some depth and detail the sensibilities, hopes, values, beliefs or lived practice of a smaller number of people.' This required me, as the researcher to bring my own intuitive, interpretative input to the phenomena experienced by the participants.

Willig, (2001, p.2) puts it succinctly: 'Qualitative research does not, and cannot, answer questions about relationships between variables...[but] is concerned with the description and interpretation of research participants' experiences.' This type of research takes a 'bottom up' stance with the exploration of small amounts of data in depth for richness of experience. The findings are presented in 'everyday' language based on the verbal descriptions of the participants lived experiences. As the research question concerns the phenomena of the experiential meanings and the theory of phenomenology, I felt that an exploration of this framework was important to investigate before the final choice of methodology was made.

3.3 Theoretical framework: Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the science of phenomena and describes the orientation of a person's lived experience (de Visser and Smith, 2007). As Van Manen (1990, p. 4) states 'beings that have "consciousness" and that "act purposefully" ...[create] objects of "meaning" that are "expressions" of how human beings exist in the world.' This perspective sees research as questioning how humans experience the world as a unique part of it.

Although Phenomenology came to prominence in Franz von Brentano's school of philosophy in the late 1800s, it was Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), a mathematician and philosopher from Moravia, now the Czech Republic, who was known as the true founder of Phenomenology. The main characteristic of Husserlian, and indeed all phenomenology, is its orientation towards intuition. He also interlinked this with the term 'givenness' or 'manifestation' (Moran and Mooney, 2002). Husserl saw phenomenology as a discipline in which the world is described by experience of conscious acts.

Phenomenology calls this inseparable connection to the world - the principle of 'intentionality'. This is rooted in philosophical traditions and at its heart is a study of human science. It asks about our experience of life/a particular phenomenon and our ultimate meaning of it. This differs from other approaches since it is concerned with pre-reflective insights rather than any analysed theory. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), as Husserl's protégé and colleague characterised this specifically as conscious retrospective reflection on previous experiences (Moran and Mooney, 2002).

Phenomenology does not focus on the statistical or behavioural, in contrast to other sciences, merely the experiential. It is a human science of the explicit and is systematic in the use of practiced methods of questioning and intuiting with self-reflection. Van Manen (1990, p. 14) explains that the 'label "human science" derives from a translation of the German *Geisteswissenschaften*...*geist* meaning...a quality of inwardness [and] *gestig* – a matter of the depth of the soul, spirit, embodied knowing and being.'

While Husserl emphasised consciousness and the transcendental, Heidegger dropped both these terms and introduced his own vision of phenomenology. Husserl's foundational 'transcendental reduction' spoke of searching for the underlying nature of consciousness itself whereas Heidegger took a more interpretative stance with 'meaning' of fundamental importance including the world of people, relationships and language. For Heidegger the essence was 'thoughtfulness' of the wonder of life itself - a hierarchy of experience flowing from 'doing' to mindfully 'being' that is, being immersed in an experience rather than being simply aware (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). This is what we would refer to today as 'mindfulness' or living life 'in the moment'. Heidegger referred to this nature of human existence with the German word *dasein*. This means 'being there/there-being' or 'presence' and is often translated into English with the word 'existence' (Husserl, 1970).

Heidegger was aware that how we interact with our environment is a full and vital part of the world we live in and denoted this as 'reduction' and a way to awakening a profound sense of amazement at the mystery of life itself (Heidegger, 1962). Phenomenology differs from other academic research in that it takes a poetic stance since the results are an integral part of the research without a huge 'punchline' so to speak. It presents the primal voice of the experience in a language that 'sings the world' rather than analysing or coming to a formal conclusion (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). One particular criticism of Phenomenology is that the 'evasive or poetic style' including those of renowned scholars Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Derrida, may seem irrational, self-indulgent or obtrusive (Van Manen, 1990). A less experienced scholar could, in theory, hide behind these types of terms while ultimately saying nothing. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that Phenomenology has its own form of rigorous criteria when according to Van Manen (1990, p. 18) 'it is "strong" in a moral and spirited sense... "soulful", "subtle" and "sensitive" in its efforts to bring the range of meanings of life's phenomena to our reflective awareness.'

There is a beautiful analogy credited to Jager (1975) where he likens the Phenomenology researcher to the ancient myth of a traveller to far flung places who returns to share their stories with rapt audiences of the way the world ‘really’ is. For Van den Berg and Linschoten (1953) the practice of ‘human science starts where poetry has reached its end point.’

Another common criticism of Phenomenology is that the researcher, whose objective is to interpret the experience as a ‘true guardian’, may become side tracked by extraneous issues which emerge during the course of the interaction with the participant. Heidegger issued a note of caution to be mindful of what he referred to as ‘fore-conception’, in bringing our pre-suppositions with us as we attend to the analysis in hand (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Therefore, it remains a challenge to approach the data analysis while leaving any presuppositions or understandings aside. In this way, we can make explicit any beliefs or biases while still acknowledging them. We will return to this later when discussing the concept of ‘bracketing’.

Some would argue that Phenomenology has no inherent value since there is not much that can be done with its findings. However, to paraphrase Heidegger, it is more about what the data could do with us, if we dare to concern ourselves deeply with it.

3.4 Epistemology

Epistemology informs the conceptual issue at the core of the research question (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). In this instance do the meanings of spirituality of the accredited counsellors develop while using an energetic/spiritual tool with their clients? I needed to own my own assumptions about the possible outcomes at the onset of the research. I asked myself what type of knowledge I wished to create and what that relationship between us might resemble. For example, did my own sense of spirituality develop from personal experience using the Energy Therapy Technique to bring a ‘secular’ spirituality into the sessions with my clients? I acknowledge that this sense had been previously formed and thus was enhanced by using the technique. I also found that this energetic/spiritual technique was very helpful as a tool to safely and appropriately illustrate that a person can be assisted to find healing resources from a non-ordinary reality by tapping into their innate sense of spirituality.

The task at hand was literally and figuratively to ‘step into the moccasins’ of the counsellors to hear and understand the meanings of their lived experience. What a researcher retrieves may be an inaccurate reflection of what happened to them or a flight of the imagination. It does not matter as what is important is the phenomenological knowledge of the quality and texture of their experience. The approach, Willig (2001, p. 8) explains ‘is similar in many ways to that of the *person-centred counselor* who listens to the client’s account of his or her experience empathically, without judgement and without questioning the external validity of what the client is saying.’

Another aspect of this parallel between Phenomenology and counselling is of significance in this choice of research methodology, as it heightens the concept of what Schleiermacher (1998) called the ‘craft of meaningful insights’. It is understood that an interpreter may glean more from analysing a text or experience of the subject better than they understand themselves. A key feature of a counsellor’s *modus operandi* is the ability to view their clients’ experiences through a wide -ranging lens and by subsequently formulating a series of apt questions to assist them find a way forward with their issue. In common vernacular, aiding the client ‘find the wood from the trees’. For Heidegger this facet of phenomenology explores the dormant or covert as it surfaces into the open as well as that which is the manifest observance (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

As mentioned in the Literature Review (Hanrahan, 2014; White, 2016) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) takes this a step further, reflecting on the meaning of experiences in a wide social, cultural and theoretical context not taking it simply at face value. Through a double hermeneutic stance, the researcher is intimately involved in the process of understanding and making sense of their experience. It is relevant to highlight that the epistemology of the Energy Therapy Technique itself is viewed through the academic discipline of Antoine Faivre and Professor Wouter Hanegraaff’s hermetic philosophy of Western Esotericism. This term integrates transpersonal historical writings and ancient texts which document shamanic principles and specifically the reservoir of rejected alchemical, mystical knowledge in Western culture. These incorporate the interconnection of correspondence with the natural world, the concept of divine living nature, the mediation of imagination and the potential of humans for spiritual transmutation (Faivre, 1994; Hanegraaff, 2012).

3.5 IPA as research methodology

Research methodology is a process employed to gather informational data about a given topic. The three methods applied are either **quantitative**, which is a measurable approach to processing data or **qualitative**, which transcends the structure of the data collection method and focuses on ‘how things were understood’ and not ‘what happened’ or a combination of both (Bryman, 2004).

My research question was idiographic, concerned with the details of particular cases rather than formulating general causal laws, arguing that this process should be ‘bottom-up’ (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). The method of analysis had to reflect this by focusing on the attention to the particular of the phenomena experienced by the counsellors and their meanings. The research required a method that balanced phenomenological detail with interpretation to develop the account of a counsellor’s ‘engagement-in-the-world’. Having used Thematic Analysis in my Masters and researched the various methodologies that would best fit my requirements, I concluded that a qualitative phenomenological approach was appropriate which, Van Manen, (1990, preface) states ‘takes its starting point in the empirical realm of the everyday lived experience.’

I rejected Grounded Theory as it is more ‘data-driven’ offering a formulaic, objective idealist approach to test emerging new theory/ies against data (Willig, 2001). I considered Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as it offers an idiographic, hermeneutic stance. With the latter approach, there is no attempt to quantify variables or control context with its overt epistemological preconceptions. IPA is concerned with the detailed examination of the human flow of ‘lived experience’ where quotidian occurrences become something of importance. In this case, this was the counsellors’ clinical practice working procedures using a new spiritual tool and any significant impact in their lives specifically their meanings of spirituality.

There are other related qualitative methods such as Descriptive Phenomenology which aims to portray the interviewee’s experiences, remaining close to their wording. IPA takes the process a step further in assigning meaning to their accounts beyond that which they may be able or willing to giving deeper meaning.

There is a fine line between the **realist** stance which takes the interviewee's accounts at face value taking due care to record and transcribe their exact words and a **relativism** stance which tells the researcher something about how they construct meaning in their lives. Willig (2001, p.5) iterates my chosen path very well when she determines that a superior way is 'to adopt a realist position in relation (i.e. holding up the mirror) to relativist data (i.e. the research participant's constructions) ... [thereby] accurately and truthfully representing the participant's subjective world (i.e. their constructions of meaning).' This research aims to interpret the meanings of the counsellors' experiences of spirituality as they engage with their clients in a therapeutic alliance while directly seeking to invite the numinous into the clinical setting.

IPA offers an established, systematic and phenomenologically focused approach to the interpretation of first-person accounts and therefore points to this as an excellent 'fit' and obvious choice of methodology for this research. Below I lay out the rationale highlighting the key features which justify this choice.

3.5.1 The 3 key principles of IPA

According to Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p.1) 'IPA is a recently developed and rapidly growing approach to qualitative inquiry. It originated and is best known in psychology but is increasingly being picked up by those working in cognate disciplines in the human, social and health sciences.' Coming to mainstream academia in the mid-1990s, IPA has drawn on older approaches particularly that of the pluralistic. As a methodology, it was developed in its earliest guise specifically through clinical and counselling health psychology (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

Although the premise was formulated by the leading philosophers in phenomenology, Husserl and Heidegger at the turn of the last century, what we know today as IPA emerged in the 1990s and as stated by Smith, Flower and Larkin (2009, p.4) '...was able to capture the experiential and qualitative, which could still dialogue with mainstream psychology.' For that reason, I wished to explore this modern evolution of a much older philosophical stance and in particular that of Smith, Flowers and Larkin who embrace the underpinning theories of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Gadamer. Thereby they recognise the contribution of each and take a complementary viewpoint rather than an opposing one. This brings a more holistic approach to the theoretical framework which appealed to subject of this research.

a) Phenomenology

IPA is *phenomenological*, as it is concerned with the subjective meanings people ascribe to experiences (Smith, 2003). As I have discussed previously Phenomenology, from a psychological perspective, directs its focus on patterns of meaning and how they are formed. It is centred not only on the meanings people take from their experiences but on their *sense* of those meanings which is highly relevant to this research question. Thus, Phenomenology is, according to Moran ‘an attempt to bring philosophy back from abstract metaphysical speculation wrapped up in pseudo-problems, in order to come into contact with the matters themselves, with concrete lived experience’ (Moran and Mooney, 2002, p. xiii). This is taken further by Moran and Mooney when they say it ‘...means literally the science of *phenomena*, the science which studies appearances, and specifically the *structure* of appearing – the *how* of appearing – giving the *phenomena* of manifest appearances their due, remaining loyal to the modes of appearance of things in the world’ (Moran and Mooney, 2002, p.5).

Phenomenology may be regarded as having two distinctive phases: transcendental and hermeneutic/existential. The former, from the philosopher Husserl, works to reduce to its core the very understanding of any experience i.e. to transcend at a personal and contextual layer. In this way, any historical or cultural assumptions are suspended through ‘bracketing’ off to derive the core essence of the conscious phenomena. Phenomenology is derived from the Greek word ‘*phenomenon*’ meaning ‘appearance’ and ‘*logos*’ meaning ‘discourse’ and Heidegger extrapolated this to mean that the former is perceptual while the latter is analytical. He formulated his theory that phenomenology explores the examination of something to illuminate that which is latent or hidden. Heidegger further extended Husserl’s original work to introduce the assumption of what he referred to as ‘fore-conception’ which we might term pre-suppositions. Therefore, the researcher brings their prior experiences to the examination of their participant’s activities and needs to ‘bracket’ these to one side to adhere to the main focus. We will explore this further in relation to the of hermeneutic approach next.

b) Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics encapsulates the theory of interpretation and originated as a system to configure meaning of biblical texts which in time widened its sphere to historical and literary tomes. The hermeneutic approach takes the premise that the observer (or researcher) i.e. the one who has the experience, will attempt to make sense of it.

IPA comes from a *double hermeneutic stance*. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) postulate ‘...the researcher’s sense-making is second order, he/she has access to the participant’s experience through the participant’s own account of it...IPA...wants to know in detail what the experience for *this* person is like, what sense *this* particular person is making of what is happening to them.’ This circles us back to Heidegger’s exploration of the manifest and crucially the un-manifest that emerges from the interpretation – the essence of hermeneutics (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). In summary the researcher is making sense of the interviewee making sense of their particular experiences.

At the beginning of the last century, Schleiermacher offered a more holistic view centred on the intuitive position asserting that the interpretation of phenomenology was a craft or art that required a variety of skills including intuition. In this way, a researcher could unearth meaningful insights that might not have been obvious to whoever had the original experience (Schleiermacher, 1998). Indeed, one can view the similarity between the process of IPA and the process of counselling where trained professionals listen to their clients’ stories and attempt to make meaning of these to assist them overcome their issues. This links us back to Heidegger’s uncovering of the latent through the researcher’s perception, awareness and consciousness.

Hans-Georg Gadamer advanced the origins of Phenomenology further when he spoke about the influences of the particular phenomenon on the interpretations which influence the fore-conception which then may influence the interpretation (Hoy, 1997). This concept of the ‘hermeneutic circle’ resonates with the majority of theorists and is concerned with the relationship between the ‘part’ and the ‘whole’. To understand any part, you need to examine the whole in this case, the differing relationships. The circle comes into its own when we consider the nature of the iteration of this type of analysis – cyclical rather than linear with a forward and backward shifting movement to capture the essence of the phenomena to be uncovered. Therefore the ‘whole’ in this case is made up of the researcher’s preconceptions and the ‘part’ is the encounter with each counsellor.

This cyclical perspective enters the concept of ‘bracketing’. As we have seen Husserl, from a mathematical perspective, formulated the concept of ‘bracketing’ off the mundane and placing these firmly outside the phenomenon of the participants’ lived experience to facilitate the perception of its consciousness (Husserl, 1970; de Visser and Smith, 2007).

The technique of 'bracketing' is seen as a way to show scientific rigor within hermeneutic studies. However, there is much debate on this topic, as Heidegger then conceived firstly the philosophical attitude to 'bracket' one's preconceptions when encountering the subject's conscious experience and then secondly to bring these firmly into reflection within the hermeneutical aspect of phenomenology. Smith, Flowers and Larkin, the modern founders of IPA and the chosen methodology of this research, re-evaluate 'bracketing' as a combination of both approaches – a cyclical process and something that can only be partly achieved (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Therefore, I needed to acknowledge my position as a peer/researcher/ founder and any pre-suppositions therein. I followed then by acknowledging Husserl's formula to endeavour to 'bracket' off circling around to focus solely on the interviewees. At this juncture, I looked to Heidegger and circled back to my original position as researcher to analyse the transcripts recognising the influence of my background in doing so. However, ultimately I followed the Smith, Flowers and Larkin stance and then became aware that I am changed by the above encounter and circled again as I brought my experience of these 2 steps into ultimately making sense of the material.

c) Idiography

We see the weaving of all three key principles in action as hermeneutics brings in the *idiographic elemental influence* which is concerned with *the particular*. This has two distinct aspects – the scrutinisation of the *detail* as completely thorough and the *understanding* of how a particular phenomenon has been comprehended from the perspective of the person in a set context. It focuses on the particular meaning of the phenomenon for the person having the experience. Due to this, IPA studies usually have a small number of participants as the aim is to reveal something of the experience of each of those individuals.

According to Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p. 3) 'IPA studies are conducted on relatively small samples sizes, and the aim is to find a reasonably homogenous sample, so that, within the sample, we can examine convergence and divergence in some detail'. Given the aim of this research, its central question and the choice of qualitative research, a relatively plentiful sample of 13 accredited counsellors was employed to glean a rich depth of information. This fit comfortably within the remit of IPA while allowing for extensive data and comparative analysis.

3.5.2 Conclusion for choosing IPA

As the technique used in this research has shamanic and spiritual components, the fact that Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) also add that a cornerstone of Husserl's philosophy of phenomenology is concerned with its '...more esoteric aims... in order to gaze in wonder at consciousness itself' confirmed my instinctive choice. It is a meaning-focused, qualitative method which aims to understand the first-person perspective *from* the third-person position, through inter-subjective inquiry and analysis (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). It is committed to situating personal meaning in context which lent itself very well to this research. Therefore, the methodological framework for this research is that of IPA – an approach to psychological qualitative research with an idiographic focus which offers insights into how a given person, in a set context makes sense of a particular phenomenon.

3.6 Methodological framework: IPA

Phenomenological psychological research aims to clarify subjective experiences from the position of hermeneutics of empathy as distinct from hermeneutics of suspicion. With the IPA approach, there is no attempt to quantify variables or control context. The aim is to capture how phenomena are experienced by the participants; how the 13 counsellors in this research experienced any developments in their sense of spirituality. This method balances phenomenological detail with interpretation to develop the account of a counsellor's lived experiences.

IPA First Theoretical Axis: As humans engage with an occurrence of significance in their lives, they reflect on those experiences and IPA is the research of engaging with those reflections (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Some of these are consciously activated, some random and some due to insight. They may be momentary or continue for a length of time. Whether these reflections are considered a blessing or a curse, they are considered relevant and their meaning is reflected on.

IPA Second Theoretical Axis: Hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation is a key feature of IPA as humans, by their nature, endeavour to make sense of their experiences. The researcher in turn is dependent on what the participants share and ultimately interprets that account to understand their experiences (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

To conclude IPA is a methodology which combines the phenomenological, the hermeneutic and the idiographic as the researcher, by reflecting on shared phenomena, attempts to interpret the personal lived experience of the participants producing a pattern of meanings.

3.7 Research design

This section chronicles the participant selection process, research methods, ethical considerations, training, monitoring, data collection, analysis framework/methods and any limitations.

The research process was a four-strand approach:

- (1) **A Training Workshop** with the accredited counsellors took place in Dublin to explain, demonstrate and instruct them in the application of the chosen energetic/spiritual tool (the Energy Therapy Technique) its origins, rationale and usage. In total 3 workshops took place, two in May 2015 and the third in January of the following year. Each counsellor received a comprehensive training manual and had the opportunity to observe the technique in action as well as experience and offer it twice over the 2 day workshop. The format of the technique and the training workshop are both documented thoroughly in the training handbook contained in Appendix 8.
- (2) **An Implementation Phase** where the counsellors applied the technique with 1-5 clients during 3 therapy sessions. Of the 13 counsellors, the majority (10) complied by working with the maximum number - 5 clients x 3 times, others (2) with 3 clients x 3 times and the final counsellor (1) with 1 client x 3 times. As the technique was new to them, for training and ethical purposes, they were requested to work only with clients who had no psychiatric diagnosis and did not require medication. To facilitate smooth clinical sessions, they were also advised to offer the technique to clients who presented with one uncomplicated issue i.e. no clients with multiple challenges for example anxiety versus anxiety with alcohol addiction and co-dependency issues.
- (3) **Semi-structured interviews** then took place to investigate any developments in their meanings of spirituality having implemented the technique with their clients.

- (4) **Data analysis** using IPA subsequently was undertaken with a rigorous in-depth review of the transcripts to ascertain any developments the counsellors attribute to their meanings of spirituality.

3.7.1 Selection of participants

The sample size chosen was on the larger end of typical IPA sampling, which may range from 1-16 participants (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009), to provide for rich variety and a detailed research outcome. This was also to anticipate the possibility of counsellors being prevented from completing the research and this was the case with one participant.

The sampling strategy was purposive and the 14 counsellors were recruited through a variety of means: contact through the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy's annual Conference, word of mouth (hearing about the research anecdotally) and colleagues' referrals (referred to as 'snowball sampling') all of which formed a list of potential accredited counsellors. At the ICAP conference 2015, I made an announcement at the end of a presentation with an email address given for response to the approximately 70 counsellors present. The 22 accredited counsellors that signed up approached of their own volition with no personal vetting of any form to eliminate researcher-bias. A short email of invitation was then sent to the total list of 36 potential counsellors, giving the dates of the training workshops and the time commitment involved. From this, 14 counsellors responded in the affirmative and these became the research cohort.

Therefore the procedural steps using standardised protocol were as follows:

- a) A list of potential accredited counsellors was assembled over a 12-month period.
- b) Contact details were obtained from the IACP website listing (open to the public) and the counsellors themselves.
- c) A letter of invitation was emailed to prospective counsellor participants.

All counsellors who participated were accredited by the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) or a similar society such as the Irish Association of Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy (IAHIP) or Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI). The criteria were established by me, the researcher, my Supervisors and the DCU Ethics Board. All participants fulfilled the criteria specified for inclusion detailed below.

Inclusion Criteria were: the participants had to be fully accredited counsellors engaged in current therapeutic practise in Ireland for at least 2 years and insured, paid up members of their relevant association. They needed to have a client and colleague base with a suitable range of potential volunteers who could acquiesce to the use of the energetic/spiritual tool. They needed to agree to be a part of the research of their own volition and sign the Consent Forms agreeing to the conditions therein.

Exclusion Criteria were: the participants were not eligible if they did not comply with the above Inclusion Criteria. A key exclusion point was that no counsellor was considered unless they were fully accredited with at least 2 years experience of working with clients on a regular basis.

Counsellor Profiles

Two training weekends were arranged and 12 accredited counsellors were invited to take part as one dropped out on the 1st day of training, the initial number of participants was 11. Eight months later, in order to add further variety, 3 more accredited counsellors joined the cohort, bringing the eventual number of participants to 14. The social profile of the 14 was as follows: 3 were men and 11 were women, all were Irish and of white Caucasian ethnicity. Participants ranged in age from approximately early-40s to mid-60s. A gender balance was sought and the 3:6 ratio of males to females was deemed indicative of the population of counsellors in Ireland today as was the age and ethnicity profile. The geographical spread was countrywide.

Two counsellors are shamanic practitioners, trained in one of the Irish schools of shamanism, who conduct regular ceremonies and live in tandem with the rhythms and cycles of the seasons. Four had undertaken some shamanic training but at the time were non-practicing. Another two had minimal knowledge and were also non-practicing. Five had no knowledge of shamanism before taking part in the training. All interviewees were enthusiastic and many expressed their opinion of its timely nature in their lives. As there were 3 male participants, the counsellors were given unisex pseudonyms and I used plural pronouns 'they/their' rather than he/she when referring to their comments to maintain their privacy and confidentiality. Following the training of the 14 counsellors and after 1 subsequent drop out, 13 completed the research.

Figures 1-3 below introduce the counsellors.

Figure 1: Research Group A consisting of 5 counsellors 23rd May 2015

Code No.	Age Range	Location
Terry	late 50's	Midlands
Lee	early 50's	South Dublin
Brett	mid 40's	North Dublin
Jude	late 50's	West of Ireland
Leslie	early 50's	West Dublin

Figure 2: Research Group B consisting of 6 counsellors 30th May 2015

Code No.	Age Range	Location
Pat	mid 60s	East of Ireland
Fran	early 50s	South Dublin
Kim	late 50s	North Dublin
Finn	mid 50s	South Dublin
Robin	mid 50s	South of Ireland
Ger	mid 40s	Midlands

Figure 3: Research Group C consisting of 3 counsellors 16th January 2016

Code No.	Age Range	Location
Cory	early 40s	East of Ireland
Alex	mid 60s	Dublin
Kerry	mid 50s	Midlands

3.7.2 Counsellor definition of spirituality profiles

To ascertain whether there were any developments in the meanings of spirituality for the counsellors, it was important to know how they defined their sense of spirituality prior to commencing the research. The first interview question was designed to establish the standpoint base from which they engaged with the research. All 13 answered with no evasion or non-compliance. The summation of these was:

Definitions of Spirituality:

Lapsed Catholic - Fran, Lee, Robin, Finn, Pat

Eclectic/broad outlook - Lee, Kerry

Christian - Robin, Ger, Pat

Practicing Catholic - Jude, Kerry

Nature-based spirituality - Fran, Kim, Alex

Energy-based spirituality - Fran, Jude, Ger, Terry

Spiritual rather than religious - Leslie, Cory

3.7.3 Ethical issues

A key component in research is the ethical consideration of duty of care to the participants including risk management, informed consent, confidentiality and data security as regards pursuit, retrieval and storage of information. DCU demand rigorous standards that were adhered to and ethical approval was subsequently granted as all relevant criteria were met (Appendix 5). Each participant received information sheets - Plain Language Statements (Appendix 4) and signed written Consent Forms (Appendix 3) to participate in the research which included audio recording of their semi-structured interviews.

Research involving humans in any capacity requires considered control. In this instance, the researcher believed that as the sample of professional accredited counsellors comprised of experienced practitioners, there was minimal risk of vulnerability. No money or financial recompense was offered or received. Care was taken to ensure that no possible ethical harm could occur at the interviews i.e. would someone feel undermined by the questions I would ask? This was deemed not to be the case in discussion with supervisors and peers since all participants were experienced counsellors of mature age and professional status.

These interviewees would potentially benefit from the freedom and the merit of talking about their sense of spirituality and inclusion in research within a subject of interest currently under investigated in academia. Written permission assuring anonymity and complete confidentiality was requested before all interviews took place and the resultant forms are retained for safekeeping for the duration of the research. Additionally, permission was sought to record each interview for ease of note-taking and to allow observation of body language and nuances of answers i.e. 'listening to what was said' throughout. In preparation for the commencement of these interviews a digital recorder was purchased and tested.

Insider considerations: The counselling community in Ireland is relatively small so care was taken to assure confidentiality and anonymity while observing strict protocol as consistent with academic research. All identifying features were removed from the transcripts and coded anonymously. Although the researcher was known to the majority of participants, contact was minimal i.e. social greetings and brief conversations at the annual AGM. Because the researcher was a peer/founder of the Energy Therapy Technique, the issue of power and its impact on counsellor perceptions had to be considered. It was possible that some counsellors might experience feelings of disempowerment or judgement during the training, mentoring and/or interview stage. However, given time to consider the ethical implications, Plain Language Statement and Consent Form, without reserve, all volunteered to take part knowing the researcher, thesis question, the training required and topic to be discussed. There were other positive considerations which included instant rapport and trust which were evident and these were considered to overcome any possible disadvantages of inhibition and discomfort. The issues of confidentiality were discussed with each counsellor who in their professional role possesses a strong theoretical and practical fluency with the concept.

Client Considerations: From the onset this research was strictly about the counsellors and not their clients. As accredited professionals they were trained to choose which clients were appropriate to issue an invitation to work in this manner. However, in the main, the clients had already self-selected by broaching the topic of spirituality. Every accredited counsellor is insured and has regular supervision with supervisors who are members of an appropriate professional body. Introducing new techniques that are apposite are part of the counselling profession. All counsellors were issued a 'client information sheet' and a 'client consent form' which they signed after reflective consideration. All clients could opt out of the research at any stage.

Supervisory ethics: All counsellors who took part in this research were fully accredited and therefore supervised monthly by their own professional supervisors as is compliant with the IACP Code of Ethics. There was also the option for further supervision with me, the researcher, for the duration of the research in relation to the spiritual aspect of this new technique. It is important to note that accredited counsellors learn new techniques constantly as part of their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) onus and many occur over a weekend time frame.

Ethically, this is a key part of the profession and it is taken as given that any further reading as supplementary to the notes are incumbent on the student to procure themselves or enquire of the trainer researcher. In this study no such requests were made.

3.7.4 Description of the technique training

The Energy Therapy Technique was developed as a spiritual healing tool for counsellors. It takes approximately 40-50 minutes to facilitate a client in the process with 90 minutes for the first session which includes full explanations and the entrance interview. As both a counsellor and a shamanic energy therapist I wished to merge these complimentary practices together in a safe and effective manner and consequently developed the Energy Therapy Technique from 2005- 2012. The account of its development is chronicled in Appendix 6.

a) Brief Energy Therapy Technique description

An in-depth summary of the technique is contained in Appendix 8 – the training handbook, although it was deemed advantageous to include an abridged version here to aid the reader's comprehension of what the counsellors were required to learn, experience and offer their consenting clients.

An Energy Therapy Technique session begins with a detailed entrance interview, the setting of a clear intention, short breathwork which is similar to Holotropic Breathwork (Grof and Grof, 2010), semi-guided visualisation where the client, of their own volition, identifies any blockages, understands their origins and the energetic dynamics of same. Facilitated by the counsellor, the client then has the opportunity to release any blockages and remove these safely by tapping into their innate spiritual guidance. The technique protocol finishes with a solid grounding and exit interview while choosing simple ways to integrate the work at home following the session.

This 40-50 minute treatment involves the counsellor facilitating the client, who is seated opposite with closed eyes in an altered state of consciousness, to connect with any spiritual guidance and self-facilitate the removal of any blockages or return of any 'missing' aspects of themselves. For example, the client with the help of visualised spiritual 'helpers/guides' and in a nature place of their choosing, can 'remove' the weight off their shoulders and 'bring back' the sense of self trust they perceived lost to gain insight for their issue.

There is also the opportunity to cut any ‘unhealthy energetic ties’ with anyone living or deceased. This is gently facilitated by the counsellor who asks questions and invites the client to sense what they feel needs to be done through visualisation to release the blockages.

Basic components of the technique:

Basic components include an introduction to Energy Healing and the Chakra System. The client’s permission is sought to undertake the treatment and once forthcoming, an entrance interview is then conducted. During this the client is asked to set a clear intention for the session to help him/her maintain focus. An Anchor Stone (Lia Naofa, in Gaelic, the native Irish language) is chosen to ‘ground’ the client during the session.

Therapy Session:

1. Explanation of technique

2. Visualisation of a safe place in nature. ‘Immram’ meaning ‘Journey’ in Gaelic.

3. Calling in spiritual helpers/guides i.e. deities, guides, pets, deceased relations.

4. Intentionality stated for client ‘ownership’ of the session.

5. Breathwork i.e. Yoga style ‘Circular Breathing’.

6. Description of the energetic blockage i.e. colour/shape/texture/form.

7. Observation of the original wounding scene by ‘Adult Self’.

8. Self-Healing begins i.e. privately speaking/actions/forgiveness/gratitude.

9. Return to the nature place where the counsellor offers a checklist of possible energetic occurrences which the client is invited to remove energetically with their spiritual help..

a) Solid Extraction: hardened area of client’s energy field i.e. ‘a weight on my shoulders’, ‘Cruaigh’ in Gaelic.

b) Energy Tie Extraction: fluid ties/cords to or from living people ‘Sreabhach’ in Gaelic.

c) Soul Retrieval: return of a lost soul part/disassociated part.

d) Psychopomp Work: gentle loving release of a soul to the ‘spiritworld’.

e) Inner Child Work: the classic counselling technique.

f) Divine Illumination: rebalancing the energy field. ‘Imbas’ in Gaelic.

10. Soulwork setting small tasks to anchor in the client energetic shifts.

11. Gratitude and Grounding.

12. Exit Interview.

b) The energetic/spiritual tool training handbook

The handbook was devised as a quick reference guide for usage and a supplement and ‘aide memoire’ to the training workshop the counsellors attended in which all the terms had been described and explained in detail documenting each step of the Energy Therapy Technique. This is included in Appendix 8.

c) The therapeutic space

The counselling room a client enters is an immediate safe and warm environment suitable to engage in therapeutic process as well as clean, tidy and neutral in terms of art and décor. Two comfortable chairs, a small table, a box of tissues and a glass of water are staples of most counselling rooms.

Two key aspects of shamanic energy therapy were added to this:

Holding ‘space’ which allows the counsellor to maintain a confidential and protected energetic field for the client to connect to and access their spiritual guidance in an altered state of consciousness safely through their own volition.

and

A stone ‘anchor’ or ‘Lia Naofa’ meaning ‘holy stone’ in Gaelic is chosen by the client as a tangible grounding during the session. The stone represents an element of Earth and a resource which the client can take home afterwards.

As previously stated the premise of the Energy Therapy Technique is that a human may accumulate blockages in their energy field which have a psychosomatic effect on body and mind. The accredited counsellors were taught to use terminology that would be readily understandable by their clients. For example plain language terms suitable for the clients was taught while using counselling terms for the same phenomenon with reference to the original shamanic descriptions (Appendix 11).

3.7.5 Monitoring and supervision

The 2 day training sessions took place in a private space within a local community centre, in Dublin city on May 23rd and May 30th 2015 and January 16th 2016. Following this training, as an IACP accredited supervisor, I offered the counsellors the following supervisory monitoring options including and especially the spiritual aspect (all voluntary); a follow up day (0 availed of this), one to one monitoring in my Clinic (2 availed of this), follow up phone-calls (10 availed of this). One counsellor did not avail of any of these options and one dropped out due to a family bereavement. It is important to note that accredited counsellors learn new techniques constantly as part of their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) onus and many of these trainings occur over a weekend time frame. All counsellors who took part in this research were fully accredited and therefore supervised monthly by their own professional supervisors as well as the option with me for the duration of the research in relation to the spiritual aspect of this new technique.

3.7.6 Rigor and validity

According to de Witt and Ploeg (2006), there are five expressions of rigour required in phenomenological research. These range from: **Balanced Integration** with transparent equivalence between the methods employed and the methodology, **Openness** to acknowledge the researcher's pre-suppositions in relation to the subject with a conscious decision to bracket these appropriately, **Concreteness** in the relevance and application of the topic to life (in this case the counsellors' personal and work lives), **Resonance** indicating the effect of the findings on the reader be they deemed obvious or surprising and **Actualisation** whereby future readers may potentially ponder on the findings to further the inherent value of the research. Each of these five attributes were faithfully adhered to during the course of this research.

The validity of academic study requires sufficient procedural evidence to ensure consistency. Barker, Reynolds and Stevenson (1997) advocate 5 critical components. These are: **Transparency** about theoretical orientation and any biases contained within, **Replicability** so that the study methods may be replicated by others, **Grounding** of the findings in the data sources, **Verification** of the means of results scrutiny and finally **Uncovering** so the reader is provided with means to ‘hear’ the interpretation of the phenomena experienced by the counsellors. I have ensured that the procedures are capable of being replicated and adhere to a logical consistency. The data is thoroughly grounded in the counsellors’ interviews which were transcribed verbatim while inviting the reader to witness the ‘interpretative leap’ of the developments in the meanings of their spirituality.

Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) subscribe to the criteria of Yardley (2000) as a particularly good match for IPA research. The first principle is **Sensitivity to Context** and this is fulfilled in relation to the choice of topic and indeed IPA as the methodology and extends to the treatment of the counsellors during interview and the subsequent material. This sensitivity includes a generous inclusion of the counsellors’ extracts in the Findings chapter so that their voices are heard and the reader may check the interpretations made.

The second principle is **Commitment and Rigor** which encompasses ensuring that the counsellors were at all times content and had the feeling of being heard. Rigor broadens out to include not only the method of idiographic engagement but also crucially to the thoroughness of the interpretation itself.

Yardley’s third principle coincides with Barker, Reynolds and Stevenson (1997) above as **Transparency and Coherence**, referring to the clear path adhered to during the research journey and its replicability. I have endeavoured to be faithful to this by charting each element of the process steadfastly step by step. The coherency ranges from follow through of the research argument to the logical sequence of the themes presented from initial to final interpretation. A key aspect is remaining authentic to IPA standards at all times. The final principle is **Impact and Importance** – does this research have something valid and useful to say? My aspiration has been to fulfil these criteria in as professional a manner as possible.

3.8 Data collection

This section records the compilation of the questionnaire, the interviews and transcription of the data. Within the context of Phenomenology, it can be quite misleading to refer to the insights gathered as ‘data’ which has tones of quantitative methodologies. However, for the purposes of semantics, I will refer to the experiences shared as ‘data’ meaning information garnered/given - the origin of the term. It is important to realise that the retrieved phenomenon is always going to be different to the actual lived experience itself. This is beautifully articulated by Van Manen (1990, p. 54) when he said ‘that the meanings we bring to the surface from the depths of life’s oceans have already lost the natural quiver of their undisturbed existence.’

3.8.1 Plain language statement and consent form

Prior to making the decision to take part in the research, each counsellor received an Information Sheet/Plain Language Statement and a Consent Form (Appendices 3 and 4). Preceding each interview, there was a brief reiteration of the research question before both forms were read, signed and locked away for safe keeping as per the requirements of the DCU Ethics Board data protection. Once reassured of their permission and having obtained the signature the interview began.

3.8.2 Interview questionnaire

Semi-structured interviews allowed interviewees the opportunity to raise relevant complementary issues. The interview questions (Appendix 10) were formulated from 2 sources with an intuitive sense of flow to their sequencing.

- a) ‘Classic semi structured interview formulations including introduction, follow up, open ended, probing, open impact, structuring, specifying and interpreting questions and silence’ (Bryman, 2004).
- b) The literature review findings.

Rationale for questionnaire wording and sequence: Two pilot interviews were undertaken with peer counsellors who were using the Energy Therapy Technique for a number of years. This was to assist identifying the areas of greatest conceptual intricacy. Within these early interviews some questions did not seem to ‘fit’ and it was established that the order and indeed the wording required examination.

An analysis of these experiences revealed the need to ask the central thesis question in 2 slightly different modes. Also, the opportunity to examine the dynamics of the interview indicated a need to allow plenty of scope for the counsellors to add in their own comments. Consequentially the questions were revised to include a generous space in the concluding section for this. The changes made are detailed below.

The first section consisted of three questions which were of a practical nature to set the context of the participant's sense of spirituality, its inclusion, if at all, in their counselling work and any previous knowledge of shamanic energy work. These answers provided a standard for the findings discussion later. Although these questions were chosen for this initial section as requiring straightforward answers, in practice the counsellors spent time pondering on their answers mainly due to the consideration of the language to describe their beliefs.

1. How would you define your sense of spirituality in general?
2. Do you discuss spirituality with clients and if so, is that initiated by you or by them or both?
3. What experience of shamanic energy work have you had previously, if any?

The next section consisting of questions 4-9 contained a distinct lead up to the central question - the main thesis investigative kernel. Questions 4 and 5 broached the subject of spirituality and the energetic ascertaining the counsellors' perceptions of these issues.

4. What are your views on marrying the energetic/spiritual with the mental and emotional within counselling work?
5. What do you see as particularly energetic or spiritual, if at all, in the Energy Therapy Technique?

The succeeding question 6 held the principal query of the thesis pertaining to any developments in the meanings of the counsellor's spirituality after completing the research. This question 6 was asked in a slightly different way again in question 8 to ascertain if the counsellors might 'hear' this worded differently and to eliminate a biased response. The intervening question 7 was both relevant and a bridge while question 9 enquired into the specific areas they considered particularly spiritual.

6. Describe, if any, the developments in the meanings of your spirituality from using the Energy Therapy Technique with your clients.
7. Has there been a ripple effect using an energetic spiritual tool in your work on any other aspect of your life?
8. What, if at all, is the relationship between using the Energy Therapy Technique and any developments in the meanings of your spirituality?
9. Was there any part of the Energy Therapy Technique you found particularly spiritual?

The final section comprising of questions 10-12 were both an opportunity for the counsellors to add in their own comments freestyle.

10. This is an open forum for you to mention anything specific from using an energetic/spiritual tool with your clients.
11. Anything else you would like to add or comment on?
12. Will you continue to use the Energy Therapy Technique in your counselling work?

Questions 6-11 were of a more philosophical nature with a sense of open-endedness to allow the interviewees speak freely. They included specific reference to the research question itself to provide a focusing framework for emerging data/experiences. The final question was intended as a wrap-up short answer which it generally received from the counsellors.

The construction of the questionnaire was informed by the phenomenological question of the study itself while being mindful to the ‘what is it like?’ of their lived experience. The essence of every question was to be open to the possibilities inherent in their insightful meanings (Gadamer and Fantel 1975). The questions posed needed to draw the counsellors into their ‘lived experience’ and elicit a sense of their experiences.

3.8.3 Interviews

Thirteen accredited counsellors were interviewed once they had completed the required client work. This was to gauge their views on the meaning of spirituality for them and their perspectives and attitudes on using a technique designed to bring this energetic/spiritual aspect into their workplace. A key tenet of the particular energetic/spiritual technique used is client self-empowerment so a pluralistic approach was paramount with each client choosing whether they wished to take part in the research of their own volition.

Semi-structured interviewing was the chosen method. This is described as the ‘use of guideline interview questions to add context to the answers with a semi-structured format to allow interviewees the opportunity to raise additional complementary issues’ (Bryman, 2004, pp.143-145). In classic IPA parlance this method gives ‘voice’ to the participants by prioritising their experiential accounts. It was chosen for this research because it was important to record the spontaneous reaction of the counsellors to the questions asked. Its in-depth yet open-ended aspect suited the subject matter since it gives ample opportunity to probe deeper into the experiences of those interviewed while allowing the freedom of the interviewees to speak of their experiences in a looser, narrative context.

As we have seen the interview questions included introduction, follow up, open ended, probing, open impact, structuring, specifying, and interpreting questions along with silence which added context to the answers. The majority of interviewees responded readily to the questions offering an easy flow of dialogue.

Each of the 13 counsellor interviewees was asked where they wished the interviews to take place and 4 choices were offered:

1. In their Clinic.
2. In my Clinic in a central location in Dublin city.
3. In an appropriate room in Dublin City University (DCU).
4. In an appropriate room at a venue of their choosing.

The majority (11) chose my Clinic, another selected their own Clinic (1) while another requested a quiet space in a hotel (1) for the interviews to be conducted. As previously mentioned, a discrete Olympus digital voice recorder device was used for this function, placed on a side table between the 2 interview chairs. Extra batteries were brought for backup and the device and voice levels were tested before each session began.

3.8.4 Data compilation

All interviews were transcribed from the Olympus digital voice recorder using headphones and a Dell personal computer. The interviews were between 40 minutes to 1 hour in duration with the majority (10) averaging approximately 45 minutes. The interview process went very smoothly as all of the counsellors were used to talking to clients and peers openly and consequentially there was no shyness or reserve.

Neither was there any hesitation with consent to take part or permission to record the interviews. When listening back to the material there was an impression that this time-frame was natural and had allowed for a relaxed and unhurried atmosphere. No counsellors requested the option of reviewing their transcripts although offered.

3.9 Data analysis

This section describes how the data was processed using IPA with step by step analysis including transcript reading and exploratory coding. The data gleaned from the counsellor interview questionnaires was analysed to gauge any developments in their meanings of spirituality from an interpretative perspective. A central tenet was the classic hermeneutical understanding that interpretation is personal and cyclical (Anderson and Braud, 2011).

This was combined with a phenomenological lens to ‘hear’ an account of their interiority and gauge the holistic nature of the ‘lived experience’ of the counsellors using a technique with an energetic/spiritual aspect with their clients. The analysis needed to transcend the structure of the data collection method and focus solely on ‘how things are understood’ as opposed to ‘what happened’ while balancing phenomenological detail with interpretation to develop an account of each participants engagement-in-the-world’ (de Visser and Smith, 2007). IPA focuses on the empathic interpretative approach to subjective experience – how are the counsellors making sense of the research question?

3.9.1. IPA step by step methodology

By its very nature IPA is characterised by a set of related processes and philosophies that are employed flexibly according to the particular researcher and their context. This is a key point and was paramount in choosing this methodology. The initial step was one of *analytic focus* towards the counsellor’s endeavours to make sense of their experiences with their clients using the technique. This was followed by the classic *hermeneutic circle* as the focus moved from the iterative to the inductive weaving from the part to the whole and vice versa (Smith, 2003). This stage involved analysis of each transcript line by line using exploratory note-taking followed by an elaboration of developments to allow the emergence of specific patterns leading to master themes of a related overarching, broader interpretative nature. Importantly, this IPA strategy allows room for considerable innovation as the analysis moves from the initial stepping stones to the *gestalt* development of the final themes.

This aspect brings a creative challenge to the intense process of personal interpretation. Ultimately the IPA methodology is a joint process between the researcher and the participants but the final result will always be the subjective double hermeneutic stance of the former's account of the latter's experiences. Therefore, I applied a rigorous, robust and systematic process, as charted below commencing with the first transcript and proceeding to the second only when this was completed. In so doing I adhered to IPA's idiographic commitment of working through the process in a coherent pattern. Each transcript was printed using the recommended wide margins for both initial notes in the right-hand margin and emergent themes in the left-hand margin (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

Step 1: Transcription reading

Each of the semi structured interviews was transcribed verbatim. I listened to the original recording while reading and rereading each account many times to become intimately familiar with the nuances of each one. I made personal notes of my first impressions to capture my thoughts and reduce a sense of overwhelm at the enormity and responsibility of the research task. As an experienced shamanic therapist used to working with energy, I was aware, at this early stage, of beginning to experience the classic IPA data *immersion* when absorbed with each individuals account. I was 'entering their world' by 'tuning' in to their 'sense' and 'feeling' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

The transcription notation used in quoted extracts follow the APA formatting guidelines i.e.

I: means interviewer speaking.

Kim: means the counsellor Kim is speaking.

Q.1: means question 1 is being asked

An ellipse... indicates material omitted.

Brackets indicate explanatory material added to aid the reader i.e. [laughter]

And when phrased in this manner [silence] specifies a significant pause.

Jude P.6 L.4-10, 12-13, 20, 29-34 means that the counsellor named Jude has said this quote on page 6 of their transcript from line 4 to line 10 and including lines 12-13, 20 and 29-34.

Step 2: Initial notes

I then commenced close line by line analysis noting down key phrases and preliminary interpretations in the right-hand margin. While this was time consuming, it allowed me to explore not only the language used but the semantics and context inherent at this exploratory stage. Once I surrendered to the process and trusted my intuition, I discovered a natural flow of initial interpretation and abstract concepts while engaging fully in each account. I noted similarities, congruence, contradictions and metaphors highlighting whatever structured the participant's experiences. Using the alternative suggested IPA format of exploratory note taking from Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) I divided these initial notes into 2 distinct strategies including the colour coding guidelines.

- a) Firstly, I used 'free association' to scan through each text, writing in **green ink** the first thoughts that originated in my mind trusting my intuition and spiritual guidance.
- b) Secondly, I proceeded through each paragraph highlighting the text in **purple** which gave an initial impression of importance. Using **red ink**, I then wrote in the margin the reason why I considered this text valuable.

I felt these approaches suited my psyche and allowed, as Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p. 91) testify 'for a fluid process of engaging with the text in detail, exploring different avenues of meaning which arise and pushing the analyses to a more interpretative level.'

Step 3: Emergent themes

The comprehensive preliminary exploratory notes then formed the basis for the next phase of analysis. The task was that of reducing the volume of detail to identify emerging patterns while maintaining the complexity and essence of the lived experiences being shared. The object was to reveal key relationships, connections and configurations. I was aware of the shift towards the interpretative element of IPA as I moved further away from the counsellors' transcripts to my initial notes and subsequent themes. The original *whole* of each transcript became a distinct set of *parts* during the analysis to come full *hermeneutic circle* back to a new *whole* at the final stage of the analysis and conclusions. I trusted that the final resultant analysis closed this *hermeneutic circle* as a product of my research alliance with the counsellors. The themes that emerged were coined succinctly as a concise phrase or term that was faithful to the transcript. These reflected not simply the counsellor's words but also my interpretation in a solid grounding and understanding.

Figure 4 is an example of a section of an analysed transcript from counsellor Fran showing examples of free association and initial thoughts in the right-hand side column and emergent themes in the left-hand side.

Figure 4: Transcript Sample from exploratory notes to emergent themes.

<u>EMERGENT THEMES</u>	Q. 6 Describe, if any, developments in the meanings of your spirituality while using the Energy Therapy Technique with your clients.	<u>EXPLORATORY NOTES</u>
holistic connection	<p>Fran: Well, I think I am more connected to myself, em, I notice even as you ask that question the hair on my head has started to burn [pause] Like a fuse.</p> <p>I: What does that mean?</p>	<p>‘thinks’ versus ‘knows’?</p> <p>Immediately connected to self/Self</p> <p>Somatic response - sign of spiritual connection</p>
spiritual connection	<p>Fran: My Guides are near. That Spirit is very close to me. Em, that I am doing the right thing its nearly a push. When I am</p>	<p>how Spirit ‘is’/resonates with Fran</p>
instinctive feeling	<p>doing this work, I want to do it more and more, I don’t mistrust myself whereas when I am doing therapy sometimes you</p>	<p>using shamanic terminology</p>
mistrust/trust	<p>would say “I wonder will they come back now?” with this stuff, I am here but I am handing it over. OK. And I just...there is no agenda in it, it’s brilliant. Not that I do agendas in my counselling work but there is that power dynamic that doesn’t seem to emerge here in this work. It’s just, em, either the chalice I guess. If that makes sense?</p>	<p>mistrust – why? Trusts the spiritual more than mental emotional approach?</p>
responsibility/agency	<p>Q. 7 Has there been a ripple effect specifically bringing an energetic spiritual tool into your work on any other aspects of your life?</p> <p>Fran: Em, I feel fulfilled.</p>	<p>Gives full agency/responsibility to Spirit</p> <p>Why mention ‘agenda’ if there is none – subtext of doubt?</p> <p>chalice = holding vessel</p>
A ‘holding’		

counsellor/client dynamic	I feel I have really showed up to help these people to move on. Sometimes I used to, kind of, question what I was doing, I was doing a lot of good work but not seeing much results in it and I know it's a slow process and all that. But this stuff, I do know when they are going out the door they just are much more energised going down the stairs. And they are not running out, [but] energised, eh, the handshake is much warmer. They are smiling and they are making connections. They went, "that was that, I knew it at a head level but I didn't know it, and now I see it." And	excited, impassioned speech the feeling due to this work a sense of Destiny call/vocation doubt measuring outcomes
energetic/spiritual way		
counsellor view of client reaction		
energy		honesty, courage in sharing
connections	I feel, I suppose the only way I can describe it is. It is like a clearness or a cleanse. I experience a cleanse within me. I suppose its... I feel fulfilled I've showed up for what I said I would do, I would help them to do and I've done my best and they have...that is the fusion. It's amazing, it is quite moving even discussing it.	energy specific client somatic feedback connections
language		
counsellor reaction to E/Sp work		not answering the question here
contract		
fusion/union		how counsellor feels doing energetic/spiritual work
insight		interesting terminology. in shamanic terms a 'cleanse' means a 'release/letting go' counsellor/client

		<p>‘contract’</p> <p>emotional response</p>
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Step 4: Superordinate themes

Each transcript’s emergent themes were honed down to superordinate themes. Idiographic analysis led to an account of these themes including the addition of the relevant indicative quote with counsellor code, page, and line number. Inevitably not all themes were mentioned by all interviewees (or discussed in the same ways). Therefore, dominant themes and relationships between themes plus any ‘outlying’ themes were noted. The final stage involved searching for patterns across the themes across all transcripts as I moved from the focus of the individual to the larger sample of all the counsellors’ transcripts.

During this re-evaluation and re-labelling, attention was paid to the most potent and frequent themes and the connections between them. There was a creative and natural flow to this endeavour with a strong sense of intuition.

I commenced with the classic innovative element of IPA – that of the data organisation with some themes being eliminated and others categorised together. To do this, I typed out the emergent theme titles in sequential order into a word document list. I then viewed them critically and cut and paste to arrange them in new compilations while matching similarities and relationships in clusters of related themes. This approach allowed me to place any themes opposed to each other on opposite ends of the list and so view clearly how they related/did not relate together. I found this a highly intuitive way of working that appealed to my sense of artistry.

Next, I used the classic IPA modes of ‘abstraction’ and ‘subsumption’ to create the various clusters of titles into super-ordinate themes.

- **‘Abstraction’** involved putting ‘like with like’ to invent a new title for each.
- **‘Subsumption’** allowed an emergent theme to become a superordinate theme since it acquires a higher status due to its importance in bringing together related themes.

Figure 5 indicates how emergent themes amalgamate to become a superordinate theme.

Figure 5: Emergent Themes to Superordinate Theme – subsumption

Emergent Themes	Superordinate Theme
Holistic connection	
Spiritual connection	
A 'holding'	Connection
Instinctive feeling	
Connections	
Contract	
Fusion/union	

I also noted the frequency of themes and although they were not always an indication of importance, they did highlight key patterns and were thus useful. The function of the language of each theme was also a consideration as in IPA this is a key feature in the interplay between the thoughts and meanings of the participant's experiences.

Finally, I constructed Word document files on my laptop to categorise each superordinate theme using the process of:

- **'Compilation of analysis'** by pasting in each transcript's salient comments/phrases including details such as counsellor code, page and line number.

Step 5: Repeating the process

Once the first transcript was completed, I then moved on to the second and so on. I gave myself a break between each, approximately half a day - long enough to release the energetic connection but short enough to retain the flow of intense interpretive work. I used this time to complete other academic tasks and rest.

Step 6: Organising the master themes

The final stage, organising the master themes, involved searching for patterns across the superordinate themes for each transcript.

I asked myself:

- Which are the most potent themes?

- Which are most frequent across all the counsellors' accounts?
- What are the patterns between them?

There now occurred a re-evaluation and re-labelling of these themes which I found once again predominantly creative. The natural flow in which the individual themes began to merge and form dominant themes was highly gratifying at this stage of the research. The master themes surfaced as I continued to interpret the data at group level yet retaining the voices of each individual participant. I labelled each superordinate theme with a number to indicate how many times this occurred across the counsellors' transcripts. Although, this is not necessary and an option in IPA methodology, I felt that it gave a valid visual indication of how important a theme was to the counsellors and therefore worthy of inclusion (Bryman, 2004). I listened to my intuition to cluster the themes together grouping them not solely for potency and frequency but crucially for the patterns between them.

At this stage it was helpful to construct a Word document file for each counsellor with their quotes on each superordinate theme where relevant. These were referenced to the related page and lines. Ultimately this was merged to become one large Word document containing all superordinate themes and the 13 counsellors' quotes for each theme. This enabled me to gain perspective of the broad range of the themes emerging and their uniformity.

Figure 6 on the next page illustrates how this materialised using one of the smaller theme components as an example.

Figure 6: Superordinate Theme with individual quotes

<p>‘I think this is quite deep work and I think certain people are more open to it than others. And I think it does require quite a broadmindedness...within clients.’ Lee P.13 L. 39-42</p>	<p>Superordinate Theme</p>
<p>‘So, people were recalling things that they hadn’t heard in years, maybe for 50 years. You know, something had been buried and it was coming up now and I like to think that these things only come up when it is safe to do so...and I would like to think that I was providing, you know, fostering an environment that they felt safe enough to be able to do that.’ Lee P.14 L.7-16</p>	<p>Requirements of energetic/spiritual work - 5</p>
<p>‘Each of the people I worked with would have a sense of, that sense of something bigger, you know, in whatever way they would define it.’ Robin P.1 L.20-23</p>	

‘If I haven't done, maybe if I haven't gone that journey myself that I wouldn't be, I wouldn't be as capable of holding it. Maybe I could facilitate it but to understand it and to be comfortable in it. I think you may need to have gone the journey yourself.’ Terry P.17 L.4-9	
‘It's very simple [energetic/spiritual work]. All you have to do is let go. And like, you know what, they say, like in addiction Let Go and Let God, well it's just Let Go and Let Spirit, that's all you have to do. You know get out of your way.’ Terry P.17 L.13-21	

I felt the force of the interpretative leap as I widened the hermeneutic circle to encompass all 13 transcripts. There was a strong resonance with a sense of responsibility yet completion. Although I was moving away from each counsellor's individual account to the broader perspective, this permitted a more profound interpretation of the data. I trusted the process knowing that the essence of their language was profoundly interwoven with their meanings and views.

Step 7: Layers of interpretation

IPA is interpretative but there are different levels to this art. There can be a tendency for too much caution or indeed too much description. In the written sample below, I show the analysis in terms of the hermeneutic circle. Having worked from the parts (the particular = individual transcripts) to the whole (the holistic = all 13 transcripts) I now circled back to glean deeper meanings from certain key resonant sections. This became a cornerstone of the analysis, spiralling to a depth of interpretation that illuminated an aspect of the whole interview and the themes running throughout the research in total.

‘So, people were recalling things that they hadn't heard in years, maybe for 50 years. You know, something had been buried and it was coming up now and I like to think that these things only come up when it is safe to do so...and I would like to think that I was providing, you know, fostering an environment that they felt safe enough to be able to do that.’ Lee P.14 L.7-16

There are many rich levels of interpretation here. The first I took a face value: Lee states factually that the clients were bringing up memories that were old – in some cases 50 years old and the environment was appropriate for this to happen. At the second level, there is a metaphor that ‘something had been buried’ – a sense of treasure being mined, the forgotten being restored in a place conducive to the preciousness of that. A third level takes this to a more thorough micro-exploration namely the researcher’s interpretation of the extract and the meanings for the counsellor. In this case I ‘heard’ a vestige of incredulity that after such a long time the client recalled something that was not talked about perhaps even ‘hidden’. The use of the word ‘*now*’ gave a felt sense of the present while the word ‘*only*’ highlighted that for the counsellor it was indeed the circumstances created in their clinic that were ‘*safe enough*’ to facilitate that.

To conclude there is a fourth type of interpretation that must, as with the others, remain faithful to the epistemological ‘insider’ stance of IPA. This is based on hermeneutically circling out and in yet constantly verifying that the analysis remains closely grounded to the textual data. To do this I took an interpretative leap that this was yet another ‘requirement’ of this type of energetic/spiritual work. I heard the word ‘*fostering*’ as a ‘holding’ that spoke of the counsellor having facilitated divine presence into the clinic room so that the client could self-heal. This was consistent and in tandem with the analysis of the other transcripts and linked in with the concept of ‘holding space’ a key tenet of the technique used.

In Figure 7 below, the 5 superordinate themes were placed in the same cluster due to the natural feeling of harmony between them. The ‘counsellor/client spiritual dynamic’, ‘connection’ and ‘requirements of energetic/spiritual work’ may seem obvious choices while a ‘knowing’ of energy/spiritual ways’ and ‘energy flow/movement’ was interpreted as innate spiritual remembrance and energy connection between counsellor, client and their spiritual beliefs. The master theme name emanated from the premise mentioned previously – that energy is a functionality/currency of Spirit (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005; Cantwell, 2007). There was a deep sense of acknowledgement that Spirit was present in the dynamics, connection and requirements of the relationship between counsellor and client with a strong felt sense of ‘knowing’ or remembering *how* to work together in this holistic way.

Figure 7: Superordinate themes to master themes

Superordinate Themes	Master Theme
Energy flow/movement - 12	Spirit in Clinic: Clinic in Spirit
Counsellor/client spiritual dynamic - 14	
Requirements of energetic/spiritual work - 5	
Connection - 4	
Innate energy/spiritual ways - 4	

Since the number of participants is on the larger size for IPA, the analysis naturally shifted to assessing the salient emergent themes for the whole group. Here there is great variety possible as long as these themes are representative of examples taken from the individuals.

Therefore, recurrent themes are measured as being present in at least a third of the counsellors' interviews. This required considerable skill to negotiate while retaining the idiographic focus on each individual and making assertions for the entire cohort. The Master Themes will be discussed in the next chapter Research Findings.

3.10 Reflexivity

Qualitative interviewing involves a continuous process of reflection on the research and the reflexive process calls for self-examination of the researcher as well as the research relationship itself. The findings do not simply come to light at the final phase of the research but evolve from an expansion of insight throughout the research process. As the research proceeded through the different stages, my role in relation to the counsellors took on different forms. At the interview state there was a keen sense of the interactive element between me as the researcher and the counsellors. I was aware that previously I had been viewed by the counsellors as a peer, during the workshops as a founder of the Energy Therapy Technique as well as a trainer. I then moved into mentorship as they offered the technique to their volunteer clients and finally, I took the role of academic interviewer. At this latter stage of the research, I saw my reflexivity as the opportunity to open up any pre-conceptions within this situational dynamic as we both participated in the emergence of the data.

The positionality of the researcher is important in any research and the underpinning epistemology and methodology dictates the relevance of the researcher's position. When, as

in this instance, the researcher plays an active role within the study, there are certain worldviews experiences that will influence the course of the work (Burgess, 2006). An important element was the concept of ‘bracketing’ and as we have seen, Smith, Flowers and Larkin, the modern founders of IPA re-evaluate ‘bracketing’ from its origins with Heidegger and Husserl as a combination of both approaches – a cyclical process and something than can only be partly achieved (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Firstly, I acknowledged my position as a peer/researcher/ founder. I then acknowledged Husserl’s founding formula to endeavour to ‘bracket’ off circling around to focus solely on the interviewees. Finally, I circled back to Heidegger and my original position as the researcher to analyse the transcripts recognising the influence of my background in doing so. However, having chosen IPA as the methodology influenced by Smith, Flowers and Larkin, I then became aware that I was changed by the above encounter and circled again as I brought my experience of that into ultimately making sense of the material.

I have acknowledged that I am a fellow counsellor, a shamanic energy therapist and the founder of the shamanic-based energetic/spiritual technique used. With the very nature of the profession, counsellors work alone (with their clients) and meeting and networking at peer events i.e. Annual AGM, Conferences, Workshops, is important to avoid isolation. During the course of the research, while present at these events, I purposely maintained a discreet distance from the counsellors who volunteered for the research. It is important to reiterate here that I never met or knew personal details of the counsellors’ clients and strict confidential boundaries were in place throughout.

The counsellors were aware that the chosen technique is shamanic-based and I also follow the shamanic path in my spiritual orientation. Therefore, although I was an ‘*insider*’ being a counsellor, shamanic therapist and trainer and mentor in this study by maintaining strict boundaries with no knowledge of or presence at the counsellors’ clinics, I was also an ‘*outsider*’. Burgess (2006), as a researcher nurse clinician took the position of ‘*insider-outsider*’ which fit my unique circumstances (Minkler, 2004). On Herr and Anderson’s (2005) action researcher positionality continuum where 1 is an ‘*insider*’ (researching one’s own practise) and 6 is an ‘*outsider*’ (researching ‘*insiders*’), I was at a 3 between the two (an ‘*insider*’ working with ‘*insiders*’). The practise of keeping an informal reflexive journal allowed me to be cognisant of positionality at all times.

I needed to acknowledge that my choice of research question and methodology was altruistically orientated as I was seeking to find out what happens to counsellors' meanings of spirituality when working with an energetic/spiritual tool. This question was part of an academic pursuit with a consequent award for me which could have posed tensions with the counsellors who took part (Waterman, Webb and Williams, 1995) if they had perceived that academic necessity was more important than the counselling work.

As a whole the interviews proceeded smoothly. However, I was aware of three counsellor's preliminary reactions. Two began in a manner of establishing themselves as academic peers, with details of their own studies. I received the impression that these counsellors were initially more 'head' orientated than 'heart' an aspect featured in the subtext of their interviews. This settled down quickly.

The third counsellor had engaged in the research with only 1 client – the absolute minimum required. There was an initial sense of having not complied and although they began by apologising, I was quick to reassure that their input was valid. Indeed, that interview was consistent with the other 12 and therefore a justifiable inclusion.

As the shamanic-based energetic/spiritual technique employed was developed by me - the researcher, I was required to examine any possibility of a relational impact on the counsellor in using this with their clients. As the interviewer, I was aware that I was also a counsellor and a shamanic energy therapist. Therefore, I made a concerted effort to appear friendly, firm and professional while staying in neutral mode. I found the counsellors very willing to offer their considered answers to the research questions (sight unseen) and this was a relief having mentored them for 3-6 months as they used the technique with their clients. Inevitably one feels a nervous excitement when facing the final reaction to the long research process and I was satisfied that I did my utmost to be as impartial as is possible in this situation.

I reflected on my various roles especially retaining as much as possible an awareness of endeavouring to maintain a professional attitude during my interaction with the counsellors. For example, there was no occurrence of discussions of a personal nature other than banter concerning the weather or light current news items during the training, mentoring and the interview stages.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the rationale for the IPA methodological approach chosen and detailed the procedure for recruiting and training the counsellors as well as gleaning the analysis. It placed the ‘felt experience’ of the counsellors at the heart of the research and provided in-depth responses and rich data relating to the development of their sense of spirituality. The following chapter presents the research findings obtained with these methods.

Chapter 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

‘Meaning makes a great many things endurable, perhaps everything.’

- C.G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation, 1967.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the master themes honed from the research data. These themes capture how the 13 accredited counsellors’ sense of spirituality developed through the use of an energetic/spiritual tool in their clinic work.

4.2 Recap on IPA Methodological approach

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), by its very nature is concerned with the way people understand their unique experiences. It is therefore data driven rather than theory driven and takes a natural ‘bottom up’ approach. Case-by-case analysis involved reading each full transcript while coding initial exploratory comments on the right-hand side and emergent themes on the left-hand side. The right-hand side column featured free association thoughts and initial interpretation in green ink. The middle column contained the transcription text. Here relevant text was highlighted in purple and the reasons it was considered relevant noted in red ink on the right-hand side column. In the left-hand side columns, I documented the emergent themes. These were then grouped together into clusters and transferred into a

separate Word document and to create a clear audit trail, matching quotations and corresponding line numbers for each interviewee were included. The clusters, potentially higher order superordinate themes were then grouped together and compared. As master themes emerged from this data, they were outlined in a narrative account supported by participant quotes.

4.3 Analysis findings

As seen in the Introduction and Literature Review chapters, spirituality is a phenomenon of complexity, deeply private and beyond irrefutable description. According to McSherry, Cash and Ross (2004, p.934) it is the 'subjective dimension of peoples' existence'. To paraphrase Heidegger at this findings stage, it is more about what the data could do with us if we dare to concern ourselves deeply with it. I assumed a realist stance in relation to the relativist data (Willig, 2001) holding up a mirror to the counsellors' meanings of spirituality and any developments thereof.

At this juncture it is important to acknowledge that the central thesis question answers offered by all 13 accredited counsellors were subsumed into the master themes where I have highlighted their origin. There were two versions of this key question offered in the interview questionnaire. As is consistent with IPA, any developments in the meanings of the counsellors' spirituality, while using the technique with their clients, provided the conceptual foundations for the formation of the master themes. There were major developments in the meanings of their spirituality from 10 counsellors and minor developments from 4 counsellors.

The progression of the journey and creative process from superordinate theme clusters to master themes included a number of drafts and redrafts honing the data to the essence of recurrent focus. As discussed in the Methodology chapter, in each case the potency of the recurrence is indicated by the frequency which is shown by the number of times this subject was iterated (Bryman, 2004). The connections between them are inherent in the clusters themselves. There was a resonance to each title's emergence that 'fit' the category from which it flowed intuitively.

As is consistent with the IPA approach of Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), there are short introductory sentences giving context to each section of verbatim quotes. These emerged

naturally from the counsellors' transcripts of their own volition. Therefore, the personal commentaries about participants in these sections were taken from the interviews conducted during the research and are not from any other source.

4.4 Superordinate themes to master themes

The task of creating the key superordinate themes from the material garnered was another huge leap from the mundane to the intuitive. This elicited yet another movement around the hermeneutic circle as I consciously focused on the broader over-arching sense of each particular cluster. The titles for each section were what I would refer to in a shamanic sense as 'soul' inspired and rose from listening with an internal ear for resonance. This naturally flowed on to the master themes which were further honed and re-ordered. Figure 8 overleaf depicts the superordinate themes with numerical weighting leading to each master theme.

Figure 8: Superordinate themes leading to master themes

Superordinate Themes	Master Theme 1
Language of spirituality– 18	Speaking the Unspoken
Initiating spirituality with clients – 10	
Superordinate Themes	Master Theme 2
Spirituality and religion - 12	Evolution of Counselling to Holism
Spirituality in counselling training - 10	
Energetic/spiritual approach and counselling - 20	
The energetic/spiritual approach – 21	
Inclusivity - 4	
Superordinate Themes	Master Theme 3
The responsibility of trust - 6	Paradigm of Trust
Multiple layers of trust – 26	
Superordinate Themes	Master Theme 4

Energy flow/movement – 12	Spirit in Clinic: Clinic in Spirit
Counsellor/client spiritual dynamic – 14	
Requirements of energetic/spiritual work – 5	
Connection – 4	
Innate energy/spiritual ways - 4	
Superordinate Themes	Master Theme 5
Reaction to counsellor's facilitation – 18	Empowered Awakening
Confidence and empowerment – 6	
Insights and surprises – 6	
Ripple effect in the counsellors' life - 10	
Superordinate Themes	Master Theme 6
Manifestations of presence – 17	Divine Presence
Divine light/brightness - 7	
Witnessing – 8	

Therefore the final inventory of Master themes is:

1. Speaking the Unspoken
2. Evolution of Counselling to Holism
3. Paradigm of Trust
4. Spirit in Clinic: Clinic in Spirit
5. Empowered Awakening
6. Divine Presence

In this chapter we explore each master theme and my interpretations of the counsellors' meanings. In each section, I have included an initial paragraph explaining the resonance of each title and a brief summary of why the superordinate themes led to its formation. The counsellors' quotes will be separate from the explanatory text unless in short, succinct utterances when they will be enmeshed in the text.

I felt it was prudent to present each individual theme initially before portraying the assumptions about how the counsellors related to them. The cogent analysis of the master themes will be summarised in the final section of this chapter with a chart to reflect their inter-relationality which highlights the interpretative phenomenological analysis procedural flow.

4.5 Master themes findings

This section chronicles how using an energetic/spiritual tool in their work developed the sense of spirituality for the 13 counsellors. The findings are captured in the 6 master themes which are now presented in a narrative form with direct relevant verbatim quotes by the counsellors.

4.5.1 Master theme 1: Speaking the unspoken

Intuitively there was a poetic sense to the naming of this theme which caught the impression of the numinous yet the quandary in the counsellors' lived experiences. The title of this theme seized the intense feelings, frustrations, conundrums and dilemmas of the counsellors.

We discuss this master theme under **the 2 superordinate themes** - the language of spirituality and initiating spirituality with clients. From these, two strands of resonant meanings came forth - the paucity of the former and the dilemma of the latter.

Both were articulated by the majority of the counsellors at the early stage of the interviews in response to questions 1 and 2, namely 'How would you define your sense of spirituality in general' and 'Do you discuss spirituality with your clients and if so, is it initiated by you, by them or both?'

For clarity, the findings of these two superordinate themes are presented as follows:

- a) **Language of spirituality:** **This superordinate theme** is discussed under the layers of nuance from dearth of language to describe spirituality, to terminology to describe spirituality and difficulty in describing phenomena in the session.
- b) **Initiating spirituality with clients:** **This second superordinate theme** is discussed under the various permutations of who initiated the topic and includes self-disclosure and derogatory comments.

a) Language of spirituality

Dearth of language to describe spirituality

The first layer of this **superordinate theme** concerns the dearth of language to describe spirituality. At the outset of the interviews, some of the responses elicited from the counsellors were short and succinct sentences, almost a ‘staccato burst’ of attempts to define spirituality. Lee called spirituality ‘*difficult to summarise*’ (P.1 L.9-10) while Finn ‘*never had the words for it* (P.1 L. 6)’. This latter comment spoke volumes with the use of the word ‘*never*’ as though this person had struggled previously to talk about this subject and using the past tense, there is an impression of continuing their quest for articulation.

As we have seen in the Literature Review, spirituality is described in academia as a multifaceted mysterious concept, almost beyond definition. This felt sense of the inexpressible preciousness of spirituality is alluded to by Cory when sharing an interesting perspective ‘*it’s almost like I don’t want to articulate it*’ (P.2 L.10-11) in contrast to Alex who expanded on the same theme.

‘I can’t honestly say...difficult... to use words to describe... I’m a bit impoverished around the explanation of it from simply a language point of view.’ Alex P.4 L.38-40

We discover Cory doesn’t want to speak while Alex is not actually capable of finding words. Here we experience the counsellors’ inability to give voice to the source of spirituality. The counsellor’s verbal expression was hesitant even ponderous with a dearth of words capable of communicating what is, as Jude said, ‘*hard to fit into words*’ (P.2 L.6). There was an underlying feeling of spirituality being almost too vast to be confined by mere language.

Indeed, how does one describe the indescribable? How does one know that it exists? This personal ‘knowing’ that spirituality is present as a palpable felt experience was introduced by Robin - ‘*it is very hard to define it but there is a knowing that there is something greater at work.*’ (P.3 L.32-33) Already at this initial stage of the research we can ‘hear’ the counsellors introduce the transpersonal element recognising that what is felt is beyond the mundane.

At the same time there is a certainty to the statement that ‘*something*’ does exist and not only that but is ‘*at work*’. As we shall see below and in a future theme – **Spirit in Clinic: Clinic in**

Spirit, this takes on another dimension when the counsellor experiences the ability to harness not only their own but also their client's sense of spirituality during the counselling process.

The use of metaphor is often employed to evoke the mysticism of spirituality and some of the counsellors' iterations bordered on the poetic from Fran's use of the word '*ineffable*' (P.15 L.24) and Cory's '*a land of imagination, a co-creation with... the infinite power of Spirit.*' (P.1 L. 22-24, 30). These terms conjured up images of not only the awe of Spirit but the aspect of union that fuels relationship between humanity and the transcendent.

Terminology used to describe spirituality

The second layer of this **superordinate theme** concerned the terminology used to describe spirituality. Certain expressions were utilised that spoke volumes of the broad spectrum of language used to describe spirituality in Ireland today. Whereas Jude affirmed that '*Divine presence*' was '*a force at work greater than me*' (P.1 L.35 P.2 L.15), Leslie identified as being '*spiritual rather than religious*'. (P.1 L.15)

Kim was quite specific with the terms '*Celtic Shamanist/Druid*' (P.1 L.14-15) while Finn qualified this by explaining that '*Shamanism is my own soul work.*' (P.1 L.14). Alex was more expansive describing spirituality as '*a gift received holistically.*' (P.1 L.25).

Difficulty in describing phenomena in the session

As the research interviews progressed, the subject of language was broached continually and an inability to describe phenomena experienced was mentioned by third of the counsellors. In these instances, another interconnected aspect followed as they began to relate spirituality to what was actually happening in their clinical room.

The following selection of verbatim quotes emphasise the elusive quality to their encounters:

'...there is a connection that is much deeper than, sort of, the physical, the emotional and you cannot describe it.' Terry P.5 L.8-11

For Terry there is almost an inexplicable element to the realisation that spirituality is both holistic and beyond words. The phrase '*you cannot*' brings finality to the understanding of this conundrum as if they have thought about and come to the conclusion that indeed there are no words for the immensity of the topic.

As the interview progressed and the questions moved to the experiences of using the chosen research energetic/spiritual tool, there was talk of their escalating connection with the transpersonal directly.

'...this piece [the technique] brings, for me, brings out more the core of myself...it's very hard to put it in words. Em, because it feels like, ah, there's more freedom inside to actually express. That's the only word that I can put on it. It's a freedom to be everything I need to be for that client and not have it separated out or segmented out into different boxes coming in.' Ger P.8 L.3-10.

We can 'hear' Ger speak of the dilemma of not only voicing the immensity of spirituality itself but the indefinable facet of which part of humanity connects most with it. Here it is '*the core of me*', for others it is their '*soul*' or their '*spirit*'. This again shows the many ways we grapple with describing the indescribable. The phrasing that '*there's more freedom inside to actually express*' is a fascinating way to address the spiritual within – the internal, personal connect -that can be harnessed in their counselling work.

b) Initiating spirituality with clients

This second **superordinate** theme concerns the answers to interview question 2 which related specifically to whether the counsellors discussed spirituality with their clients and if so, who initiated the topic. To understand and view how this impacted the counsellors I felt it was important to examine the various permutations of how that occurred:

Initiated by the counsellor

In all there were five counsellors who naturally instigated the subject of spirituality with their clients. Two explained that it came up in conversation specifically around client bereavement. This is often a poignant time in life where those who have experienced a loss through the death of a loved one come to counselling either to ease their grief or make sense of it.

Below Leslie speaks about how to broach the subject and the context. This counsellor was one of the few that actually shared their specific beliefs which brings us to an ensuing subset of this theme – self disclosure.

'I'd say it'd be more likely to be initiated by me, em, particularly working with a client who has lost somebody close to them...has died...I would often say 'in your mind, in your world where is your mother [deceased] now?...that's my opening and if they say "gone"...or "in Heaven"...or "I really don't know and it is killing me" I might say 'well, I like to believe that' and introduce my beliefs. So that is how spirituality comes into the room.' Leslie P.2 L.4-6, 14-16.

Not initiated by the counsellor

In two instances the conversation was not initiated by the counsellor. The first, Lee, was almost forceful in the strength of their reply.

'So, because I am accredited with the IACP, there would be strict rules about discussing religion and the idea of promulgating a particular point to clients. So, so, absolutely not!' Lee P. 2 L. 5-8.

Lee uses the words '*strict rules*' as opposed to guidelines, '*religion*' instead of spirituality (the term used in the question)' and '*promulgating*' in terms of disseminating religion with their clients. This was the only example of a counsellor who spoke of the authority of their professional association and the sense of underlying vigilance and possible intervention.

In total contrast, the second counsellor Robin's stance sounds like a philosophy that works without too much thought into its origins other than feeling natural.

'Yeah, so it is really just following their lead really. I would probably never bring it up myself.' Robin P.2 L.5-6

Initiated by the clients

Understandably the same two counsellors who did not initiate spirituality went on to share that their clients did raise the subject with Lee explaining that this was once again through bereavement issues. As we have seen above, the subject of death often induces a query about life and its meaning so if there is any topic that will naturally instigate a conversation on spirituality then bereavement is the obvious one.

'...I wait to hear from them and in various scenarios, rarely enough I suppose I'll say it will come up with a client [and if so] for example in cases of bereavement. Lee P.2 L.14-16, 25

There was an almost casual quality, a practical 'matter of factness' to Robin's comment below, as though this counsellor assumed that if the client wanted to bring this aspect into their session they would do so and in their terms.

'It would be initiated by them, em, and they would, I suppose, a couple of them would just talk in terms of their faith, in terms of a particular faith and their relationship with God.' Robin P.1 L. 23-25

Not initiated by the clients

No counsellor answered in the affirmative or negative for this option.

Initiated by both counsellors and clients

Six counsellors stated that spirituality was initiated both by them and their clients. Jude noticed that the number of clients bringing up spirituality has increased over the years and Terry estimated that 25% of their clients brought this topic into the clinical space. Kerry commented that this was particularly because of bereavement issues.

Yet again death, dying and the 'afterlife' emerged as popular topics which naturally brought up the subject of spirituality and for Leslie and Cory specifically around client bereavement. Many come to counselling to ponder the great meanings of life and this subject inevitably addresses these concepts with reference to belief systems and spirituality. This intricate 'dance' of initiating the subject of spirituality within the counselling sessions surfaced from both the counsellors themselves and their clients with elements of secrecy, nervousness and sense of 'is this permissible?'

The counsellors' key aim when working with clients is to conduct the therapeutic session in ways that are congruent with their particular beliefs. This perception of the tentativeness around this spiritual topic negotiation was observed by the counsellors as well as the clients. The following examples highlight this phenomenon.

'Maybe it is more about my level of comfort with my sense of spirit, you know and the greater sense of that and just allow, maybe it is the allowing piece, allowing people to come in and out as they want and to be in touch with that part of themselves.' Robin P.2 L.13-15

The *'allowing piece'* here refers not just to the *'comfort'* mentioned but the personal choice that both client and counsellor have to introduce the subject of their own volition - the *'dance'* of *'are you comfortable/am I comfortable/can we take this further?'* In the case of Terry there is the correct counselling protocol of backing off when the client clearly wishes to change the subject.

'I may broach the subject but if I feel any resistance, I wouldn't go any further. Em, definitely, if the client starts discussing it with me, oh, I'm very open to, em and I just love that, and I would talk, you know, about the spiritual aspect of things like, you know, for as long as somebody would listen to me but if I feel any resistance, definitely I wouldn't go there and step back'. Terry P.1 L.15-21

The term *'stepping back'* is redolent of the aforementioned *'dance'* in the parlance of *'one step forward'* as if testing the proverbial waters, then *'one step back'* if the answer or body language is negative.

The following quotes exemplify the occurrence of this intricate *'dance'* for Ger, followed then by Finn.

'They, kind of, can come around [spirituality] in a roundabout way. They almost test you to see, "Do you believe in energies?" or "Do you believe in something bigger than yourself?" But not, you know, they use all the words rather than use [spirituality], like "the universe, 'the divine', you know, they skirt around it a bit. Em, like, if they start talking about, you know, "I can hear sometimes, I can hear someone talking to me and is that okay?", like you know...to have it checked and see what my reaction would be.' Ger P.2 L. 12-19, 21

Ger uses the terms ‘test’, ‘skirt around’, ‘checked’ as a way to convey that this topic is not straightforward but a negotiation between both of them to see if there is a good fit that is mutually consensual. This is eloquently evoked by Finn who takes this a step further by bringing in the feature of animation.

‘Normally I would, I would wait until something comes up in the client that they begin to describe spirituality in some, kind of, shape or form. They mightn’t use those words...but, you know, they bring up something and I would recognise it as spirituality and I nurture it for a little bit until they get their own language around it and then I tip into it and then all of a sudden, they, kind of, get animated a bit about it because it is probably something that they know about themselves but nobody really goes there...like when they, kind of, give me little nuggets or little crumbs, I’d always take note of them mentally and they come back in organically.’ Finn P.2 L.15-29

The introduction of ‘nurturing’, following a trail of ‘nuggets’ and ‘crumbs’ gives a sense of the patience required to offer the clients time to reach a state of ease and indeed their own unique timing with the topic ‘organically’. In counselling, one is always given this space to bring in any relevant issue in an empowering manner. However, with this topic there is an added ‘secrecy’ or ‘potency’ due to both the sanctity of the subject and the questioning of its appropriateness within a counselling session.

Now that modern living is shifting to a more subjective stance, there are certain terminologies that facilitate the introduction of more esoteric matters. For example, Alex declares that:

‘I would probably introduce... mind, body, and soul and getting that triad into balance...And then, “Of course, you have to look after that other part of yourself. What do you call it?” And so, ‘soul’ would come up or ‘spiritual’ would come up or some names, and I would say “ok, that’s the thing.”’ Alex P.6 L.13-16, 19-32

An important aspect that emerged was *how* the counsellors responded to their client’s spirituality. Alex continues with very specific comments regarding the appropriateness of speaking of spirituality having completed both studies and research in this area.

'If someone wants to sit in the counselling room with me and says and wants to talk to me about spirituality, I'd be much more confident now in talking about it because I feel more grounded in it. Do you know? Whereas before I'd be wondering and not really being able to, or, or, or trying to explain something that's inexplicable, that doesn't lend itself to the kind of explanations that all the things can be explained by?'

Alex P.18 L.13-20

Self-disclosure

Another significant aspect of **Speaking the Unspoken** is self-disclosure. Clients may consciously choose a counsellor with the same spiritual or formal religious background as themselves. The topic of self-disclosure was mentioned in a previous subset of this section. It is important to note that with the technique a counsellor does not have to disclose their personal belief system unless they wish to.

However a counsellor does have the option to do so if comfortable as Pat reveals below.

'I listen to my clients very carefully...I really love working with clients for whom I can relate to on spiritual capacity. There's a whole enrichment, there's a whole language. It may not be the same philosophy. It may not be the same religion. ...it's so wonderful, it's a whole new layer. We can talk about, you know, 'footprints on the sand'. We can talk about 'handing it over to God'. We talk about finding nature you know, 'finding God in nature'...I find it very enriching, very empowering and extremely worthwhile.' Pat P.3 L. 4-5, 21-34

In expressing the above account Pat's whole demeanour changed and the choice of words 'enrichment', 'wonderful', 'empowering' were symptomatic of a good match carefully negotiated. The broad range of vocabulary used to delineate the type of spirituality forthcoming in a clinical situation were indicative of the changing times in Ireland from 'footprints on the sand', 'handing it over to God', 'finding God in nature'. These demonstrate the variety of expressions while also disclosing the use of personal terminology.

Derogatory comments

The final layer of this **superordinate theme** concerns derogatory comments. While none of the counsellors experienced their clients use derogatory terms to discuss or make allusion to

spirituality, both Jude, a practicing Catholic in tandem with energy-based spirituality and Alex, a nature-based sense of spirituality, were very conscious of this aspect.

'I was probably more hiding the spiritual part because people might think, that's a bit whacky whacky.' Jude P.8 L.20-22

and

'There was [sic] no negative reactions, so nobody, em, em disregarded it or nobody said this is baloney... or this is all bonkers or whatever, no disparaging remark passed.' Alex P.21 L. 33-37

The use of these terms, with specific reference to *'hiding'* and *'disregarded it'* highlights the consciousness of a very real concern the counsellors had in how they might sound to their clients. However, there are paths, as we have seen, that counsellors can traverse to smooth the way to these conversations. This was explained in detail during the technique training phase.

We will return to the question of language in the discussion section but I felt it was important to flag and highlight this issue as an early theme in the initial stages of the findings. These comments on the dearth of language, the difficulty in finding the right terminology to describe both spirituality and phenomena, initiating spirituality with clients and the issues of self-disclosure and derogatory comments brought up some very interesting data that were pertinent to the overall results.

4.5.2 Master theme 2: Evolution of counselling to holism

The second master theme, **Evolution to Holism**, addressed the question of clients and counsellors seeking a holistic - body, mind, and crucially, spirit - strategy and therefore required a focus early on in the findings. This was consistent with the fact that most of the corresponding answers to the subject of introducing spirituality with clients naturally led onto this topic.

This theme development was a good example of **abstraction** which involved putting 'like with like'. The recurrent **superordinate themes** that merged to form this cluster related to the counsellors' original training, the inclusion or lack thereof of the energetic/spiritual approach

and this category of work itself. Although ‘inclusivity’ had only 4 comments, it felt important to acknowledge that this method of clinical practice does recognise and embrace a divergence of clients, their issues and belief systems. The title of this master theme emerged spontaneously in a creative pursuit to capture the quintessence of both counsellors and clients striving towards a method of working that encapsulated a holistic viewpoint.

This second theme also presents the aspiration of both counsellors and the clients to incorporate spirituality into the traditional model of the mental and emotional of counselling sessions in a ‘bottom up’ manner. Once again as this is a large cohort and many different angles were present in the responses, the theme is presented in the **5 superordinate themes** as follows:

- a) Spirituality and religion
- b) Spirituality in counselling training
- c) The energetic/spiritual approach and counselling
- d) The energetic/spiritual approach
- e) Inclusivity

a) Spirituality and religion

Turning first to spirituality and religion, three counsellors, Jude, Finn and Pat had significant points to make on the topic of the differentiation between the terms ‘religion and ‘spirituality’ especially relevant to the Irish post-secular situation. Jude commenced with observances of certain clients who are adrift in their spiritual path.

‘I find clients bring it [spirituality] up themselves, yeah. I think most of them are very angry...so like everything has let them down, including God or including any belief system they ever had or including maybe the Angels they thought were protecting them or say St Martin or St Brigid, their Granny that is dead, you know – “She said she would look after me and look at the mess I am in now.” ...people who’ve, kind of, lost their way in life. That’s their words, that they have lost their way. They’re off their path some way and they don’t seem to be able to, trying to get back on it...just through life’s events I think and lack of trust in life like they can’t go on, you know...that’s their hunch that they have lost their path “I’d like to get back on my path.”’ Jude P.3 L. 8-14 P.12 L.11-14, 18-20

There is a poignancy to these comments – a felt sense of Jude’s clients being angry, let down and adrift in a childlike manner. This would tie in with an almost infantile sense of religion which presents an authoritarian God who rescues guileless worshippers from the woes of life. Interestingly these comments were made by Jude who is a practising Catholic and merges their faith with an energy-based spirituality in the way of St Brigid, St Francis and St Brendan.

There was a distinction between spirituality and religion offered by Finn and I felt it was of merit to include the full quote as it sums up the thinking of many of the counsellors and their clients.

‘Because a lot of people now, even in my work [counselling agency] have lost their religion, and [have come] to realise that spirituality isn’t religion. It is part of your religion if you are religious, but that you can be enriched by it [spirituality], you know, if you just link back in at a new level...I think what you do have to have is just a clear sense of, of soul. And, and when you begin to see where their [clients] soul is damaged or where the harm is in their soul, that is the spirituality piece. It has nothing to do with their religion, but it is around, it is around what has harmed their soul and how can they heal that piece of themselves and the soul is the real essence of who you are and you learn it through religion a lot of the time as a child... I think it is more to do with the soul and I think you meet that in the client at all different levels and you just go with whatever level they are able to manage, and, and nurture their spirituality...like with one or two of these [clients], it was important to actually name spirituality.

In that we, we, kind of, went to a place of not being afraid to name it... to say “look, look at what we have done here today around your spirituality and around the healing of that piece.” ‘cause otherwise you are, kind of, keeping it as a little nugget as if it was a secret. And it is not a secret. You know it is around opening them up to the value of spirituality in a different way. Em, so to me, it was exciting to, kind of, go there to say like, you know, to open them up to who they are, that spiritual side of themselves. Em, because a lot of times we don’t live in that part because people think it is religion. And it is not.’ Finn P.7 L.13-18 P.11 L.32-39 P.12 L.1-18

There is so much depth to this piece on what spirituality is and where it differs from formal religion. At the start of the interview Finn identified spirituality as personal ‘soulwork’ and here they extend this concept further to what can happen to one’s soul in a lifetime i.e. become ‘damaged’ or be harmed in some way. They view the job of the counsellor to assist their client not only heal that piece, but in the process, reclaim their sense of spirituality. Again, there is reference to the soul description in religion ‘learnt as children’ but this is prolonged further to a personal agency to convey it to ‘a new level’ and open to its value. The secret hidden aspect brought to the front by naming it linked in with the first theme ‘**Speaking the Unspoken**’ in having the courage to reclaim not simply spirituality but its self-healing empowerment.

Pat, who has not taken any shamanic training, talked about negative personal experience of religion as a child and currently how that has morphed into a felt sense of genuine connection with Spirit. This account gives an indication of the type of Catholic up-bringing received by many of the counsellors including this researcher.

‘I would have been a typical Catholic... growing up in rural Ireland where sin, be [sic] obedient, and Holy God, and keeping the rules and the regulations, and honour your parents and bad thoughts absolutely plagued me...My spirituality would be nature based [now] but I suppose, I do believe in a God whether she's being a male or female, I don't know. Eh, I do believe in the goodness of the human being...I think, we were born, all born good but society and our experience in society and what we're born into, really dictates a lot of what we become...today I find that, yes, they [clients] were brought up Catholic and, yes, they go to Mass but they really don't do religion.

You know, they might go to Mass now and again but, em, but they don't really, eh, sort of believe in God or pray as we [inaudible] in a sense they haven't moved on from adolescence.’ Pat P.1 L.18-22 P.2 L.33-38 P.3 L.28-34

Pat is the first counsellor to speak of the gender of God as either male or female. There are many who embrace spirituality, and shamanism, as opposed to religion for that very reason – the inclusivity of both genders as equal but different. The basic premise is that everyone is born with ‘goodness’ and that circumstance dictates what we morph into during life. Pat discovered that clients who identify as practising Catholics do not necessarily believe in God.

Unfortunately, the final piece (above) is inaudible but it seems as though this might have been *'as we do'* intimating that someone who understands spirituality may actually believe and pray as an empowered adult once more implying the frequent lack of personal maturity with regard to religion and spirituality.

In summation, Leslie ostensibly brought both their religion and spirituality together.

'What I have chosen to take from my religious education and my life experience – that's my spirituality now. That has evolved with age.' Leslie P.5 L.5-7

b) Spirituality in counselling training

Within the professional counselling training that every counsellor would have received, it was still conceivable that spirituality would not have been addressed up to this juncture. Given that counselling training would have taken 3 years minimum and require counsellors to subsequently undertake monthly supervision and continuous professional development (CPD), the fact that spirituality was not addressed for this cohort given their age and experience conveys some idea of the disconnect between mental healthcare and esotericism.

Two counsellors did study with a school that addresses spiritual techniques such as meditation and breathwork including a form of rebirthing. However over two thirds of the rest of the counsellors spoke of a dearth of spirituality in their core training. Fran began by explaining that they did not feel they could raise the subject at the training stage but in the field felt that a vital part of what they could offer clients was missing.

'I would never have brought that [spirituality] up with my tutors, never.' ... 'It's not that I didn't feel I was doing a good job with clients before [using the technique] but I was, kind of, going "Am I missing something that they are not moving on?" and now just by enabling them to go into their own source, they are moving on. And I am just facilitating that through this model.' Fran P.2 L. 4-5 P.14 L.1-4 P.15 L.1-5

From this we hear not simply what was *'missing'* but what that actually entailed now that their clients are empowered to *'move on'* themselves. Robin and Ger spoke about this phenomenon and how that directly affected their own sense of spirituality.

'I think that [in] a lot of the training that I had done, spirituality would never have come into it....it was like don't mention spirituality or em, 'cause it gets mixed up with religion and faith and all of that and that always jarred a bit with me because it felt like it was very much natural in my life.' Robin P.8 L. 35 P.9 L.1-6

While in the above quote we detect a possible theory as to why spirituality was not part of the core course curriculum, below we hear Ger's heartfelt yearning for its inclusion and again the time frame that separates two very different ways of observing this phenomenon.

'I felt in the course that I was actually put down. In the sense that I wanted to talk more about God and the spiritual side and they're saying "no, no, no... in some way it was, kind of, "No, don't go there!"...You know, when I started out which was 29 years ago. I felt I was battered in it. I felt like there was a witch hunt out [laugh] and now I kind of [feel], "Everyone's doing it."' Ger P.4 L. 2-7 L.13-24

Ger's use of the term *'battered'* and *'witch hunt'* and this vehement language speaks volumes in how they perceived their preference for spirituality's inclusion might be encountered. As a Christian but also holding an energy-based sense of spirituality through holistic practices, this counsellor appreciated the irony of how time changed the perception of religion/spirituality.

The statements in relation to the dearth of training in spirituality are significant. They specify that not only had the large majority of the counsellors not obtained any training in this area but that there had been a negative experience in broaching the subject. There is a growing sense that this is no longer permissible nor advisable with both counsellors and their clients seeking the inclusion of spirituality in their clinical work.

Interestingly Finn, also a trainer in a large facility has found their own resourceful way to address this deficiency. Although there is no spirituality on the course per se, Finn finds another way to familiarise the trainees with the concept.

'When I am teaching the theory and practice [of counselling]...I stick with the books and I do what I have to teach and then I say, the other bit [spirituality] is what makes you...you can learn everything in these books, but if you can't work from your soul, you won't, you won't be working for long because I really think you either burn out...or the people that come to you and look for that soul piece, if they cannot have it

[will not return]. *Not everyone looks for it but if you can't give it...you are, you, you, they are lost. So, I always say, like, it is not part of my core training to teach that, but it is part of my soul. Yeah, it is part of who I am and they know that about me. So, they get that piece as well because I think it's an important piece, a really important piece.* ' Finn P.4 L.30-36 P.5 L.1-9

There is a revolutionary angle to this statement, a defiance of '*sticking with the books*' and '*do what I have to teach*'. What this counsellor shares with their trainees is from the heart with a sense of one who has longevity and indeed maturity in the field offering judicious advice. There is an honesty and forthrightness that surely is appreciated by the students.

Two counsellors, as previously mentioned, had received some training in relation to spirituality using:

'images and colours and little visualisations, you know, but not in an intentional way, as with, you know, the Energy Therapy Technique.' Kim P.3 L.5-7

While there was an appreciation that this was a benefit, there was the sense that it was not in-depth enough to facilitate clients to move on significantly. This relates to the premise for this research in choosing a tool that could consciously bring a palpable sense of spirituality into the clinic space for both counsellor and their clients.

c) The energetic/spiritual approach and counselling

Having spoken about the lack of spirituality within their training the next obvious area of discussion was the incorporation of the energetic/spiritual within a counselling model.

There were 20 comments in total on this matter **in this superordinate theme**, spontaneously emerging during the interview without a specific question to prompt them. A most apposite observation of this from Fran was:

'...Its therapy done in the easy and right way. I wish I had done when I was going through my traumas. If it had been around then I would have...flourished because the therapists [counsellors] that I worked with were very, very good but they got me only to this far [indicates with their hands 6 inches] when I wanted to down this far [indicates 12 inches]. I just, kind of, couldn't reach it and talking was never going to bring me there, ever...I would never go back to just doing therapy [counselling]

again. It's, kind of, like, like always having a digestive biscuit and being introduced to chocolate. It's a different gravy!' Fran P.5 L. 1-7 P.8 L. 16-21

The very personal nature of this exchange is both poignant and insightful. It is thought-provoking that Fran talks about the energetic/spiritual approach in relation to their own 'traumas' rather than their clients'. The visual indication of what was required and what was received graphically symbolised the difference between the two methods. Finally, the analogy to 'just doing therapy' versus the inclusion of this research's energetic/spiritual tool in relation to biscuits was humorous yet highly informative.

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' system in mental healthcare, including the energetic/spiritual approach, yet one of the counsellors, Lee had much to say on this from a statistical point of view referring to the Energy Therapy Technique which emerged from Celtic Shamanism.

'...I have long thought that counselling is far from 100% successful. In fact, some studies say that only 25% successful. That, that at least one if not the missing element is spirituality. So, given that for me, myself, spirituality is so important and that it adds meaning to life...so I am very open to that and really looking for ways in which that can be done not finding very much in Ireland that seems to be predisposed to that in any conventional, formal, scientific way. It seemed as if shamanism, for example, was very much the strongest force or leading light doing that.' Lee P.3 L. 24-30 P.4 L.1-9

There was a realised poignant symmetry in the honest declarations of Finn and Jude, with the former speaking of being 'cowardly' in their work waiting for the impetus to come from the client side rather than from them and the latter speaking of 'courage' to embrace the energetic/spiritual way.

'I actually think that I have been cowardly in my work, that I was afraid to take this step...and then when you gave us a particular technique of using it, I, kind of, realise now that my spirituality does not have to be sitting, waiting all the time for some particular person to arrive into the room.' Jude P.7 L.34-35 P.8 L.1-4

'I just see so many people that are coming to therapy for a long time...even though it seems as if they've worked through every bit of emotional stuff in talk therapy...I often

think that there's something there that is stuck... it gives me the courage or that to try it [energetic/ spiritual approach] more...and to have it as another great tool probably greater than, you know, some of the theories and philosophies that I may have been working from.' Finn P.4 L.20-32 P.8 L.3-20

This introduction of theories and philosophies blends in with some of the other counsellors expounding a new appreciation of their formative training since using this energetic/spiritual tool. Terry shares being taught a particular foundational piece of training, common to the majority of counselling courses now grasping a new slant on its merits and origins.

'I remember years ago, em, person centred technique. I remember Carl Rogers, em, spoke about this...when there is complete unconditional positive regard that there's a connection that is much deeper...it's really a powerful work there's no two ways around it.' Terry P.4 L.24-30 P.5 L.1-3 P.16 L.3-11

Another theory of training, that of the unconscious is mentioned, this time by Ger, in relation to merging energetic spiritual with mental and emotional.

'I feel it's that inner sense of self, em, in all levels. It's touching the emotional, physical, everything. And I find, em, when people actually get to that core place inside of them that they can do some visualisation or they have an imagery piece so they have something. It's coming from the unconscious and it's coming from that place.' Ger P.3 L.25-34

Finn's observation made reference to an altered state of consciousness traditionally done in a supine position but also conducive to a sitting position which is an easy transition for a counselling client.

'I realised, there are different ways to do soul retrieval [part of energetic/spiritual work]. So, it doesn't have to be the real shamanic way where people are lying there and you are, you are doing things to them. You know modern psychotherapy [counselling] doesn't lend for that always. There are some people do not like to be touched. Even your room [clinic] doesn't lend for it and you just have to learn to tweak it to fit the measure so when you taught us that technique, then I said, "Jesus,

that's a magical way of just doing it". It is really easy and uncomplicated for the client. ' Finn P.3 L.24-36

This counsellor and tutor, Finn, introduces the evolution of techniques to *'fit the measure'* so that both the trained professionals and their clients are comfortable in the environment most advantageous to the work. As this was originally one of the reasons for developing the technique in the first instance, this was very gratifying to hear.

Four of the counsellors, Ger, Finn, Pat and Cory, spoke of the reasons for requiring either classical 'pure' counselling versus the energetic/spiritual way and sometimes the need for both combined.

'Some clients will only be able to do the counselling bit and they need you just to help them with basic life skills, right? And you really are just helping them to get through each day and that is the only depth they can get and it is enough for them. It is enough, but when you actually really find a client that is able to really step into the psychotherapy [counselling] piece, then you find the spirituality comes in organically. ' Finn P.4 L.6-14

'I think it's [energetic/spiritual and counselling] wonderful. I think it's very enriching. I think it can liberate the person; it can move, eh, the therapy forward very quickly and very...It keeps them very grounded, it connects them sometimes to their roots and sometimes it might separate them from the cruelty of their roots. It's, it's very healing. ' Pat P.5 L.3-9

'I think it's a, an integration both of the psychotherapy [counselling] and the spirituality piece. It's almost like for me I kept them separate. Eh, whereas now I feel like I can bring them together...no matter where the client goes whether that's a birth script...whether an emotional trauma...I think it's a lovely way to bring it in because it's not intrusive it's just coming organically out of the client. ' Ger P.7 L.21-33

There was a note of restraint from Cory in discussing when to incorporate the energetic/spiritual tool within the counselling session which brought up the sense of its mindful application. There are times when, as with any techniques, it is not appropriate to use.

'It's not even caution or concern...they can work together if used properly...If not used properly, it just goes back to simple basics... one of the aspects in doing this training or in using this was, was around when to use it. If, if I was to introduce this or use this, is that a way of colluding or avoiding what the client maybe avoiding? ...that it can facilitate and support the issue but not, kind of, sidestep something else.'
Cory P.5 L.20-3

However, in contrast, Cory and Kerry spoke meaningfully about the instances when the energetic/spiritual and counselling can support each other and provide a collaborative structure that mutually benefits their clients.

'There's an inner scaffolding, eh, so that psychotherapy [counselling] in a way has, has helped deconstruct that and reconstruct that, and the energetic is very much supporting of...that the two of them can work together and support each other.' Cory P.6 L.9-21

The use of the word '*scaffolding*' above evokes a sustained construct that supports and ostensibly frames the clients' issue. In the following quote from Kerry, the use of the word '*wholeness*' brings a tangible sense of completion.

'I suppose it's that bit about mind, body spirit... It can allow that to be accessed in a safe way... because if people don't have an opportunity or don't have an awareness of it, there's a poverty there, there's a bit that's missing. And you know sometimes that's the work of counselling to, kind of, bring a wholeness to it.' Kerry P.3 L.1-3, 17-29

d) The energetic/spiritual approach

Turning now to the energetic/spiritual approach, there were 21 comments in this large **superordinate theme**. These ranged from the wonder that the client's sense of spirituality matched that of the counsellors' to fulfilling a dream to work transpersonally and the satisfaction of counselling in a holistic manner. This was one of the topics most spoken of.

As previously discussed, the recognition that spirituality and energy are inextricably linked was voiced by Terry who agreed that to access the spiritual '*you have to go into the energy.*' (P.3 L.27)

For Leslie, it was back to the paucity of language yet with an utterance of the inextricable link between the two:

“God, I find it difficult to define energetic and then spiritual, without them being close. I would say they're very much interchangeable phrases for the same thing.”

Leslie P.3 L.27-30

The majority of the comments were from Lee, Terry, Kim, Finn and Cory who were quite verbose on this point, waxing lyrical on the matter of uniting the energetic/spiritual in their work.

‘I am relating to people with spiritual concepts but it clearly isn’t only true for me but it would appear to be true for others as well and...there would have been a degree of realisation there...There was a degree of “Oh, wow, it is true for them as well...I remember a sense of delight that “Oh, I am finally working this way”, you know, with people, somebody who is willing to work that way... I dare say I worked better because I was already accepting of the presuppositions that are inherent in the technique that I was ok with all of them, that there was nothing new in those.’

Lee P.7 L. 7-10 L. 23-24 P.7 L. 28-30 P.8 L.29-30

The felt sense of excitement in Lee’s realisation that all the ‘*presuppositions*’ they had about energy and spirituality were matched by and ‘*true*’ for the clients brings in a new relationship in counselling work. There was almost an incredulity that these esoteric values and experiences were open to the man and woman walking in off the street to work through their processes with the counsellor who has studied for years to achieve the ability within their profession.

Although spirituality is recognised as deeply personal especially when searching for a naming term, as we have seen in the previous theme, now the counsellors when speaking of their clinical work bring in the interconnecting aspect of ‘other’. They had a recognition that this relational capacity opens up the potential for release and forward momentum. This interactive side of the energetic/spiritual work was spoken of by Terry who likened it to a journey taken in tandem with their clients.

‘I think you are on a bank. When you get in and start talking, em, about revisiting as in the counselling...it’s like you are getting into the river and it’s like, almost like, the river being the emotions. You’re getting into the emotions and you’re talking about it.

But I think unless you actually get into the energetic side of it which is to jump onto the bank of [the] river. I think to get to the other side, you need to go into the energy and you need to release it... I also found that letting someone go [psychopomp – energetic/spiritual death work]. Huge! Really releasing, and that attachment to that person and how hard it was to let them go...you can't do that when you are in your ego. You can't, you know, to let your father go to the Light that's so spiritual and so deep. It's huge, absolutely huge.' Terry P.3 L.19-25 P.9 L.4-12

The talk of actually going '*into the energy*' and actively working with it says much about the comparison between counselling and the energetic/spiritual methods. In this case Terry refers to what is known as 'Psychopomp' process where the client releases the stuck energy of a loved one who has died but they feel is not where they need to be. Depending on the belief system of the client this could be 'Heaven' or the 'Spiritworld'. Once again, we note that bereavement, death and dying are areas that this energetic/spiritual work not only arises but actually provides a space to bring in the technique and move, not just the client but the 'soul' of the person who has died to a place of peace.

This lived experience of the energetic/spiritual was further iterated by Kim allowing access to the '*unconscious*' and '*stuck*' areas. They referred to this as a '*creation*' approach which was an interesting personal construct as this term had not been used in the technique training or in the manual.

'I think there's a place for, I suppose, all kinds of approaches. But there is something about the 'other than' or the creation approach that allows gentler access to, to tough material... using the energy technique, em, it was gentle but it also, I suppose... It invites in the unconscious, you know, that unconscious piece... it, em, allowed the defences, kind of, rest and move aside and therefore... it has shifted something quite old and stuck and set for her [their client].' Kim P.2 L.29-32 P.5 L.28-32 L.36-38

The comment about this approach giving '*gentler access to tough material*' was quite insightful from this counsellor. It was clear that, for them this new method of working lent itself to admittance of previously uncharted territories due to the nature of the trauma. Finn brought in another facet to this when sharing that the '*damaged*' part of not just the client but themselves as the counsellor is the spiritual piece.

'You know that now I am realising that, you know, people are craving this bit [energetic/spiritual piece]. It is often that missing bit, that if they go into certain therapies that are very focus-based, they never going to meet this bit, and usually, it is the spiritual part of ourselves that is damaged...it is the practical bits you, kind of, you get through with but it is the other bit...I think this is a way of real healing... I realised that, this isn't...em, weird stuff. It is just stuff that I have been putting on a backburner that I have never really stepped in to not knowing the proper tools around it and actually it is just another bit of who I am. Finn P.7 L.4-8 L.25-28

We circle back to both previous comments relating to the connection between the energetic and the spiritual as Cory below alludes to the classic Jungian analogy of the 'veils between the worlds' of ordinary and non-ordinary reality as engagement with the unconscious.

'So, the connection with the energy work and spirituality...It's offering much more transparency. Eh, it's, it is like a veil has, has lifted and sometimes it comes down, or even just the acknowledgment of a veil...And even being with that, and the kind of awkwardness and the unsurety of it...and just it's, kind of, like there's...the existence of the 'otherness', another reality' Cory P.6 L.23-27, 32-33 P.9 L.2-18

Once more the counsellors bring in the acknowledgement of the 'existence' of the energetic/spiritual when given the opportunity to work with their clients in this way. However, the sheer honesty in the hesitancy and the use of 'unsurety' and 'awkwardness' in expressing the incredulity that actually there is another world of 'otherness'. We shall explore this concept further in the final **Divine Presence** theme later in this chapter.

e) Inclusivity

A key feature of the particular energetic/spiritual tool chosen for this research is that although it has emanated from shamanic and in particular Celtic roots, it is 'lay' in its nature in that it works with whatever belief system or sense of spirituality is held by both the counsellor and their clients. This 'inclusivity' enables its use with a plethora of issues was evidenced below by Fran's comments.

'I am noticing that this work [energetic spiritual] can work with any group...I've never come across such a compassionate way of working with people, as I

experienced it, that can reach a wide range...it is so moving [tears in eyes] that can reach peoples' issues, problems.' Fran P.5 L. 27-28 P.9 L. 34-37

In Ireland today there has been, as we have seen in both the Introduction and Literature Review, a significant shift in the belief systems of the population. With the recent Equality referendum May 2017 which enabled same sex marriage, there has been a public embrace of different ways of living on this island. This has been reflected in the issues people are bringing to counselling therapy. Therefore, any approach or technique that facilitates a way of working in an inclusive manner is welcomed as verified by these supervening comments from Robin.

'It didn't matter really what their religious background, if they had one or didn't have one. Em, once they had that strong connection of Spirit, and em, and they were willing to trust that and I was willing to trust it and it's like, it is the unspoken piece really...I think that it didn't really matter so much what the person's background or faith...[was].' Robin P.13 L.1-5, 7-11

For this counsellor the verbalisation of the '*unspoken piece*' subsequent to naming a '*person's background*' as two ends of a spectrum with '*strong connection to spirit*' as the fulcrum is the essential piece that enables the work to happen. The semantics of naming something intangible in different forms but essentially meaning and importantly, feeling the same was heard in this account.

In contrast Ger touches on another angle of inclusivity, the willingness of a range of clients to try a new technique due to the variety of preceding modalities in the healing arena.

'it's amazing the different clients...em, some of them were very open. You know and probably they were open because they had done other healing techniques.' Ger P.8 L.21-23

In these initial stages of the findings, the above comments on brought up some very interesting data on the subjects of spirituality and religion, spirituality in counselling training, the energetic/spiritual approach and its relevance and combination with counselling as well as

inclusivity with clients and their issues. These comments offered insight to how the counsellors viewed this key theme of **Evolution to Holism**.

4.5.3 Master theme 3: Paradigm of trust

Master theme 3 is entitled **Paradigm of Trust** and followed the principle of **subsumption** which facilitates a superordinate theme to become a master theme in its own right, acquiring a higher status due to its importance. This theme title from its **two superordinate** themes - the responsibility of trust and multiple layers of trust - 'speaks' of the inherent flow of both these phenomena in the meanings of the counsellors.

Concerning the many layers of trust, this noteworthy feature arose as a significant phenomenon for the majority of the counsellors with multiple comments and in several guises. In academia, the researcher as a peer may have an indication of the variables that may emerge. There is, of course, always the hope that new and unforeseen results will come to awareness and this theme, indeed, fit those circumstances.

In tandem with this was the phenomenon of responsibility, distinct yet related as we will see below. The many layers of trust ranged from the energetic/spiritual as a safe approach, self-trust to be able to smoothly introduce this new concept and the technique itself to their clients. Counsellors are trained to trust the 'process' in session, however now they were required to trust their own spiritual helpers, those of their clients and ultimately trust in Spirit.

There were differing aspects of this phenomenon and its meanings for the counsellors. I feel it is important to state that the 26 references to trust were much more than mere mentions.

All 13 counsellors had full discussions on this fundamental attribute particularly Robin who spoke about trust throughout the whole interview in relation to every question asked. **We begin this master theme with the responsibility of trust followed by the longer second superordinate theme which has many layers to the counsellors' depth of meaning.**

a) The responsibility of trust

Six of the counsellors in the research specifically raised the responsibility of introducing a new energetic/spiritual tool into their client sessions. Fran speaks of consciously '*handing over*' the responsibility and the empowering is palpable.

'When I am doing therapy [counselling]...I wonder will they [the clients] come back. Now with this stuff [energetic spiritual work] I am here but I am handing it over...I am much more empowered coming into work. I love coming in here...it is a place of healing and I do very little in it...I am here and I trust it and then it flows through me.' Fran P.7 L.13 P.13 L. 2-8

Robin shared the wonder of stepping back to let the energetic flow occur naturally and evokes a sharing of the responsibility between not only the counsellor and the client but with Spirit.

'It is the person who is in front of me who is doing the work and I am there to support them and by bringing that aspect of Spirit into the room, it is almost like having to, I can let go in a sense, that I don't have to work so hard or em, if I notice myself working hard then I can just say right, step back here and "what does this person need to do?" or "what can I do to support them?" or, something shifts or changes, do you know, instead of me trying to make something happen... and it was just like, you know, walking with them, you know and I thought that was really lovely that sense of being so in tune, you know, with the process that they were already there and doing the work they needed to do.' Robin P.2 L.13-17 P.5 L.7-16 P.14 L31-33

There is a palpable sense of relief in the distribution of responsibility in the *'I can let go'* and *'I don't have to work so hard'* and this is evocatively expressed in the *'sense of being so in tune'* not only with the approach but also with the client.

The effort and angst experienced by so many counsellors when dealing with the multiple variabilities in their clients' lives can be highly stressful and chronicle early burn-out syndrome. Robin's words in the above quote and use of the pronoun *'I'* with expressions of support rather than work enhances this liberation.

This was echoed by the perspicacity and wonderous tone of the *'all'* in Terry's experience.

'You're so much in awe of the power of what exists here and, and the power of this... all you're doing is facilitating. Really, like I know you have to hold it but you're just facilitating. The person is doing this themselves. Yeah. They're doing it themselves. They really, you know, they are the releasing, they are travelling, they are going and they are, you know, they are doing the healing themselves.' Terry P.12 L.25-30

Alex concludes with the dynamic ‘*autonomy*’ of the client.

‘What's the most powerful thing about this? Complete responsibility of the client, I think for me that was for me of all the therapies [I have done]...This really did give the client full autonomy. I thought that was, that bit I liked and I, kind of, soothed myself with that.’ Alex P.23 L.7-16

Bringing in the concept of soothing is interesting and ushers in how the counsellor can and does hold huge responsibility when working with vulnerable clients. Alex has done much academic study in the area of spirituality and has had a long career as a professional counsellor. However, as we will see, confidence was not Alex’s best trait. During a long successful career there was a feeling of being thwarted by the profession, adhering to the rules and regulations. The summation of the meaning of this energetic/spiritual approach was one of ease and calm.

b) Multiple layers of trust

This large second superordinate theme is chronicled in its’ numerous layers of complexity:

- Client trusting the counsellor
- Counsellor trusting their spiritual help
- Counsellors trust for their client and their spiritual helpers
- Counsellors trusting that clients seek to work with them
- Counsellor’s self-trust

Client trusting the counsellor

The first layer is concerned with the trust the client has for the counsellor in using this new energetic/spiritual technique. Fran, an experienced counsellor and supervisor of many years, succinctly offers examples of this phenomenon.

‘If you are not with them [the clients] for a while it won’t work because you’ve to build up the trust because people get scared. It [the energetic spiritual approach] is not what they signed up for initially...If the client connects they will go for it if they trust you...I think when it is explained clearly, slowly, directly, allowing them to ask questions, putting it back to them when they feel secure in themselves to go there.’
Fran P.5 L.14-18 P.8 L. 12-13 L. 32-33

Addressing the issue of the addition of a very different approach, Fran speaks of the fact that it is not a known essential feature of the classic counselling mental and emotional stance. A trusting relationship between counsellor and client is a crucial feature of this profession. Fran uses the word '*scared*' which is very honest and reflects the innate transparency and experience of this counsellor who has been working in the field for over 2 decades. Trust underpins not simply the working relationship but the potential to introduce new techniques and approaches.

Counsellor trusting their spiritual help

The second layer relates to the trust the counsellor has for the chosen technique itself with Spirit working through their helpers as validated by Robin. This counsellor, though a mature adult is fairly new to the profession, yet their meanings of working with the energetic/spiritual approach are similar to Fran's previous quote.

'I suppose trusting a pull within myself that is about something that is bigger, you know and I think that is what really came through in terms of the work, you know, the energy work. Em, was that piece of trusting that I wasn't on my own doing this, that this wasn't a piece I was responsible for. That it was really, you know, by bringing in my, em, guide [helper] and by handing over to God, in a sense that, I just had to trust and go with the flow.' Robin P.1 L. 11-20

The terms '*a pull within myself*' and '*go with the flow*' indicate the difference in this way of working for the counsellors. Usually they are used to introducing specific techniques such as the 'Wheel of Life' or the 'Timeline' where they need to facilitate the client throughout holding intense focus. This work is rewarding but ultimately expedited fully by the counsellor. Robin's terminology invokes a knowing that there is a spiritual holding through their helpers as well as their clients. Their work was no longer a solo activity but a tri-part venture with Spirit.

The force of that trust and the process it facilitated was voiced by Jude, another very experienced counsellor, who has been in the field for many years in various agencies as well as in private practise.

'For me [it] was a greater trust for me in Spirit...and so I think there was something in that trusting that, that process is a lot stronger in me than I believed before I started this [technique]...I was shocked by how strong it [the trust] was in some of the clients and so were they shocked themselves...you know, they had this great, very spiritual belief system...it has made me trust more. Em, yeah, a lot of it is around just trusting and believing...it gives me the courage or that to try it more and to bring it more into the therapy room.' Jude P.6 L.4 10, 12-13, 20, 29-34

The level of 'shock', the strength experienced not only by this counsellor but by their clients compelled them to trust more and crucially bringing 'courage' into their way of working. On the same theme of trust within the energetic/spiritual model, Cory spoke of finding the strength and guidance needed to trust intuitively when working with a colleague. Cory admitted to never before having had the courage to admit that the issue to be explored did not 'seem right' for that day. In this instance when Cory did, their client colleague completely concurred and there was the sense of synergy between them.

'I was working with...a peer and there was [sic] funny energies coming up, up to this session. So, so I was aware of them and I was, I was observing them and also actually getting pulled in... we were in session and we got into a place where, em the individual said... they didn't actually say it but I was aware that they were struggling. Em, and I was aware even in the very, very beginning that I was emphasising a lot on this about empowering and they have the choice to stop this session, if they wanted.

I was aware that I was emphasising that more than usual. And so, I was tracking that and but this individual was getting a very strong 'no' and there was something internally I could actually feel. I was aware that it may actually be saying "no" to the whole space, to the whole space. Em, and so before if that have happened to me, I believe I would have went "Oh, fuck!" Before [using the technique] I would have gone, "what the fuck am I going to do here now?" I would've probably panic [sic]...I didn't, it was like, okay, I'm not in charge here. I am not in charge here and that, that's what, that's the biggest thing that, that, that has come up for me. Is that, is that introducing calling on the assistance of my helpers and if they're helpers and being aware of, of that support and that holding has, has been huge. Though, I reminded the, the individual of, of, of I named all of their helpers. I named every single one of the helpers and then I gave them the option that if they wanted to finish. If they want

us to stop the session they could. Now... they stopped the session and we spoke afterwards...Eh, my, in, in, in a therapy session before I would've felt I would've been aware of feeling very much on my own and I'm not as aware of "I've helpers, I've angels, I've Spirit Guides, I've ancestors, I've Spirit" you know, "I have power animals". So, that's it, that has been a real support for me on the work.' Cory P.7 L.7-9, 15-19, 23-33, 36-42

This long piece of commentary shows the escalating panic in Cory realising that something is not quite 'right' and highlighting the difference in the way of working due to the immense 'support' and trust of the spiritual forces available.

The rising sense of alarm and the soothing remembrance of 'okay, I'm not in charge here' repeated twice gave the distinct impression of someone who palpably felt the presence of help at hand. The fact that Cory was working with a peer could be seen as an unfortunate blow or a serendipitous boon. This particular counsellor is only recently accredited and while eligible for inclusion in the research, does not have the same length of experience as the majority of others partaking in the research. Their sense of panic 'what do I do here?' would be consistent with one who has spent approximately 2 years in the profession building up their professional hours.

Counsellors trust for their client and their spiritual helpers

This third layer highlights the counsellors trusting their client to process their issue assisted by their own personal spiritual helpers/guides.

Robin had many contributions to this matter.

'The more I trusted myself to trust them [the clients], they were able to go with it. It just really, it flowed...I suppose I was just trying to be there and trust it was happening...I had to trust a lot, you know and then it was the wonder of "wow, look what happened."...I think I trust my clients more...because I know that as much as I have helpers and guides, they have helpers and guides in whatever way they understand that... So, something is happening and it is that word again - trust. It's, em, I am definitely trusting my clients more because it is not just me having to work in the room. There's a lot more happening in the room and I don't know that I would

have had that before I started doing this energy work, I don't know that I would have acknowledged it as such. ' Robin P.7 L.9-11, L.23-28

Of all the contributors to this research, Robin mentioned trust the most and throughout the whole interview. There is almost a childlike wonder to this above quote especially in the earlier section with the awareness of '*it was happening*' and specifically '*in the room*' referring to the clinical space. The acknowledgement of the huge support structure available through this work is substantially tangible and a source of sustenance.

Finally, Kim introduced a new angle to trusting the clients, that of the issue to be brought to the fore at each treatment. Of course, counsellors do this in all sessions but here Kim voices whether the client chooses to work with an energetic/spiritual input using the euphemism of 'deep'.

'It is not like you're saying "let's go deep to today", you know, when you're working on that, it's like whatever pops up...so it is that trusting that wherever the client goes with it, is something - that's the place they are ready to go to.' Kim P.2 L.33-37

Counsellors trusting that clients seek to work with them

This layer is unique to Robin and although we have seen many contributions from Robin in this theme section, I feel it is relevant to bring it in. This is especially apt for those recently accredited after their 2 years working with clients to build up their hours, or as in this case, setting up their own clinic having worked in an agency previously.

'I think that the energy work has helped me, you know, in terms of, of, I know I keep using that word trust again it is that, kind of, piece of work of letting go and of just, you know, trusting, in terms of clients coming in and out of my life. Em, trusting when there's, when things seem to dry up a little bit [referring to lack of clients] and em, trusting the work that's happening.' Robin. P.5 L.34-38 P.6 L.1-2

This issue of the worry, when setting up a private practise, of clients booking in is a very real dilemma for counsellors. Robin was only one of two counsellors in the research in this situation but it seems that this predicament is eased greatly by trust in the energy of Spirit.

Counsellor's self-trust

This final layer relates to the counsellors' self-trust. In this instance the counsellors talk about trusting both their intuition and themselves and ultimately the clients trust in them to receive this type of energetic/spiritual work within their counselling sessions. I felt it was highly relevant that Jude and Ger brought this self-trust connection into their answers to the question relating to any developments in the meanings of their spirituality. In the case of Jude, it was the tangibility of the energy of spirituality.

'It is probably that belief that I know now after trying this that there is something there that I can really feel. I can trust more. So, I know there is something there greater than me, you know, there's an energy there that can help me...I think it is back to trust and I think it is back to just holding my own belief and my own sense of spirituality, right? And owning that more so I can, kind of, be more present then with that for the client rather than, kind of, trying to hide it.' Jude P.7 L.9-12 P.8 L.7-11

The use of the term '*something greater than me*' addresses of the transpersonal element of the energetic/spiritual. Once again, we can hear the 'coming out of the closet' in common vernacular to describe not having to hide this away but to openly harness it for client work.

Ger refers to this personal energetic/spiritual form as their '*intuition*' and have begun to concentrate on how they bring it out into their world for others as well as for self.

'I started to trust my own intuition...I am getting more easier [sic] in putting that aspect of myself out, where I felt I was hiding it...I think I'm actually more focused, more focused on what it is I'm bringing out. What is that message for me to others? What it does for me.' Ger P.4 L.26 P.6 L.6-8, 13-15

This second master theme was divided into its' two superordinate themes a) the responsibility of trust and b) the multiple layers of trust. The latter involved 5 layers of meaning which ranging from the client trusting the counsellor to counsellor trusting their spiritual help and their client and their spiritual helpers. There was Robin's contribution of counsellors trusting that clients seek to work with them and finally counsellor's self-trust. These comments offered crucial insights into how the counsellors viewed this key theme of **Paradigm of Trust**.

4.5.4 Master theme 4: Spirit in clinic: clinic in spirit

We now turn to the 4th master theme **Spirit in Clinic: Clinic in Spirit**. This relates to the dynamics of holistic counselling with the spiritual aspect in action. In **Spirit in Clinic: Clinic in Spirit**, a name that captures its essence, we begin to perceive these dynamics from the energetic/spiritual approach to the counsellor/client relationship and their connection including any requirements for this unique bond.

This large theme is divided into its 5 **superordinate themes**.

These are:

- a) Energy flow/movement specifically:
 - The counsellors' perspective of energy
 - The counsellors' observation of the client's energy
 - The energy of the therapeutic space
- b) Counsellor/client spiritual dynamic
- c) Requirements of energetic/spiritual work
- d) Connection
- e) Innate energetic/spiritual ways

a) Energy flow/movement

The concept of energy in the Western world resided for many years in the scientific domain particularly physics. Indigenous cultures had a very different understanding as we have discussed in the Literature Review. The counsellors from a white middle class educational background in modern Ireland have not only an interpretation that is similar but now with this research an experience of its far-reaching effects.

In this context it refers to the currency of spirit and the human energy field or aura as it is also known. There were 13 references to energy from 6 counsellors in particular Fran, Robin, Jude, Terry and Leslie from the several perspectives.

The counsellor's perspective of energy

Both of these first two comments are from the counsellor's standpoint of energy which offers a very personal view and a key insight into their perceptions bringing a visceral sense of their holding of 'energy'.

'I connect energy with spirit.' Robin P.5 L. 22

and

'my sense of spirituality is that spiritual is energy. Em, I am fundamentally, I'm a, I'm an energy being...my spirit is my energy and there is no end or beginning to that energy and it's there before I came on Earth, it'll be there when I leave Earth again. I just need to take off my 'overcoat' and leave it on the ground as I'm leaving [dying]. That's my sense of spiritual...For me energy and spirit are the one thing. So that's yeah, I do see it as spiritual. It's spiritual, it's energetic, it's all one. It's one thing to me 'cause I feel like our energy field is our spirit.' Terry P.1 L. 8-17 P.4 L.15-19

Robin, the first of these counsellors, a Christian, is not shamanic and although aware of shamanism from discussions with colleagues has not received any training so this statement is interesting. The next counsellor Terry has completed 2 separate shamanic training courses and therefore their answer would be consistent with this spiritual path. Yet Kerry, who does identify as a church going Catholic said:

'the energy, yes, is, very present when you're doing, when you are doing the work.'
Kerry P.3 L.25-28

These quotes demonstrate once again that the awareness of energy, the chakra system and meridians is becoming part of common parlance and ties in with the subjective worldview previously deliberated.

The counsellor's observation of the client's energy

The next perspective on energy is from the counsellors' observation of their clients and also the relationship between energy and the therapeutic alliance.

The first from Fran is a direct quote from the client.

'I says [sic] "How is that with you? ...now what did she say? "I've much more energy and I am much more solid."' Fran P.10 L. 2-3

This is worth noting as this client is as familiar with the concept of energy as their counsellor and speaks of it in the correct context i.e. my health at the end of a session is related to being energised yet more solid. In this same vein, Jude gives corporeal examples of how the movement of energy translates during a session.

'I think when there's been that shift in energy for people whether it has been tears or anger or yawning that's, kind of, like the piercing of the soul that, like, there's almost like concrete around it and that this [energetic spiritual tool], kind of, bores a hole in some way.' Jude P.6 L. 8-17

Jude continues with the poetic metaphor of this energetic work like a '*piercing of the soul*' and the analogy that this approach is capable of removing blockages to shift the energy. Staying with this Pat delves into the corporeal element even more with the phenomenon of an invitation *into* the energy as we see in this relevant quote.

'[with this technique] you're invited into the energy of the body and you energise the body... Yes, it is energising.' Pat P.5 L.30-32

Leslie explains that there are different expressions of holistic energy and some are emotional rather than physical in origin.

'...I have felt working with the client when they're getting very, very, very anxious, maybe in the scene [of their original wounding]...and that's palpable and that's an energy. I'm not just sitting here taking notes. I actually get it. And then when they come to their, their special place, that was their nature place, and you can nearly feel it. And to me, that's, that's the energy that's there.' Leslie P.4 L.19-32

The fact that Leslie says that the energy can be felt by the counsellor who is sitting in the room gives the sense of the '*something bigger in the room*' that was expressed earlier. We will return to the interpretation of these words in the final theme of Divine Presence.

The final comment on this section goes to Kerry who introduces yet another angle on the substance of energy relating to the kinetic vibrational quality which may be fast or slow depending on the client's energy field and their interaction with it.

‘Em, the energy, yes, is, I think, very present when you're doing, when you're doing the work. Em, I think there's a pace to the energy, em, depending on the engagement with the client.’ Kerry P.4 L.1-4

The energy of the therapeutic space

The counsellors had a perception of energy not just from their own perspective and that of their clients but the feeling of its presence in their clinical environment where the sessions took place as evidenced by Fran and Robin.

‘I am changed, the room has changed, there is more energy in the room.’ Fran P.12 L.1-4

Fran's above comments on the 'change' within as well as in the clinical space called the change 'more energy'. Whereas Robin below, directly attributes this to the counsellor's input, in this case their own 'level of comfort'. Also, as we have seen in an earlier theme, this counsellor views spirituality and energy as inextricably linked and uses the phrases interchangeably for the same principle.

‘The spirituality, that's just, it's, is always in the room anyway...I think it comes back to my level of comfort, the more comfortable I am, the more it, kind of, creates a space in the room.’ Robin P.3 L. 24-28

b) Counsellor/client spiritual dynamics

The unique energetic/spiritual dynamic underpinning the working relationship was highlighted by 12 of the counsellors. These conditions surfaced spontaneously, were not asked directly during the interview nor were they remarked on in the training.

This gave an impression of the counsellors really understanding and owning the energetic/spiritual approach and indeed the inner workings of the Energy Therapy Technique.

Fran, Lee and Terry voiced their comprehension of the requirements for both the counsellors and their clients when the energetic/spiritual approach is a good match.

‘I think the model could fit anyone if they were vulnerable enough and strong enough to risk it.’ Fran P.8 L.2-4

In this first case of Fran's, the words 'vulnerable' and 'risk' stand out. I interpret these meanings as the need for openness without guile or any inhibitions. There are those who would argue that all clients need to present for process in this way or counselling simply wouldn't work. However, it often requires many sessions to reach this stage of mutual respect and regard to be capable of introducing advanced techniques and concepts. Fran is a practitioner of many years standing and studied counselling on a foundation of other healthcare modalities. This counsellor was the only one to completely embrace the Energy Therapy Technique in their clinic practise using it in the same way as I, the founder and both pilot colleagues do with approximately 7 out of 10 clients after a suitability assessment.

In contrast Lee was one of three counsellors who had challenges in receiving the technique in training. There are a number of divergent explanations as to why this could be – natural wariness in exposing personal issues amongst peers, the difficulty in transition from student to 'client' in a short space of time during an intense weekend training or becoming entrenched in counsellor mode and unable to return to willing client. Whichever it might be, it may have given Lee very good insight to be able to voice this discerning comment below.

'I think this is quite deep work and I think certain people are more open to it than others. And I think it does require quite a broad-mindedness.' Lee P.13 L. 39-42

It is worth reiterating Terry's very apt reservation along this rich seam of enquiry.

'If I haven't done, maybe if I haven't gone that journey [receiving the technique] myself that I wouldn't be, I wouldn't be as capable of holding it. Maybe I could facilitate it but to understand it and to be comfortable in it. I think you may need to have gone the journey yourself.' Terry P.14 L.14-18

Technically one could facilitate the technique in a paint-by-numbers manner. However, this work is experiential in nature and therefore the counsellor does require prior personal experience. This knowledge is particularly apt so as to know when it is not suitable for a client and how to gently extract them from the protocol as evidenced by Leslie.

'I think it's very valuable, extremely valuable but it depends on the client...I had one client, I started work with and... she chose not to continue and she's just... so closed, private, nervous and not really sure, that she resisted every step of the way. She

thought she was open to it. She wanted to be facilitating and everything else but it was going against every core of her...to be so open about her beliefs, her spirituality.'

Leslie P.3 L.11-12, 15-20

This note of caution from Leslie highlights some of the requirements from the client. We hear that this woman wanted to participate but yet was resistant to *'be so open'* about her personal holding of her belief system. This returns to the first theme of **Speaking the Unspoken**. To engage in counselling, one needs to trust and be completely open with the counsellor to proceed in a therapeutic manner. This does not necessarily apply when the usual counselling topic begins to verge on the more esoteric and this is not an expected modality for the client.

c) Requirements of energetic/spiritual work

Staying with the subject of communication, the language used by the counsellors to describe the relationship in the energetic/spiritual work was both significant and evocative. Fran spoke of *'fusion'* (P.7 L.34-36) while for Robin it was a *'transaction'* (P.8 L.23-26). Leslie talked of a *'co-operative'* (P.5 L.5-15) alliance and Kim introduced a *'leading/ following'* (P.3 L.14-21) cooperation whereas Pat felt *'fluidity'* (P.8 L.23-25) in their client counsellor team work.

'...I've done my best and they have, that is the fusion. It's amazing, it is quite moving even discussing it.' Fran P.7 L.34-36

Fran charts the relationship between counsellor and client as both turning up to do their best and that in itself is the *'fusion'* – the unique dynamic that powers the energetic/spiritual way. I was struck by how quietly emotional this counsellor was during certain segments of the interview indicating the depth of meaning for this type of approach. The active interpersonal dynamic of this relationship between counsellor and client was evocatively captured by Robin.

'Something is happening for them and something is happening for me and there's a transaction going on that is not visible and there is a movement back and forth and definitely my guides are with me and whatever way they understand them.' Robin P.8 L.23-26

The *'transaction'* and the conjoining *'movement'* were understood by this counsellor to be held and supported by both their spiritual guidance (helpers in the technique parlance) in an invisible linkage. This back and forth dynamic movement is also spoken of by Leslie but in a

different context, that of their sense of spirituality itself and how it correlates with the clients. This longer comment circles back to the previous sub-section where privacy was paramount.

'...my spirituality was always, I admit very private. When I say private, not that I didn't talk to anybody about it, it never got mixed with anybody else's. You know it, it was mine in my space and everything else but in this work, I bring my spirituality. They bring theirs and they interact, and I don't know if merge is the correct word, but they definitely dip in and out of each other. And that's different now because now it's, it's a cooperative thing or shared. It's a shared process, but previously, my spirituality was always mine. I don't know if the spirituality itself has changed or is it how I view it...has changed. It doesn't mean my own spirituality has changed too much but I now see it as a facilitating tool where before I would have never considered it that.' Leslie P.5 L.5-15 L. 20-24

This eloquent passage is rich with meaning. From the stance of very private holding of spirituality to using it to interact with their clients – ‘merging’ or ‘dipping in and out’ in a shared ‘cooperative’ manner this is a huge leap of faith for this counsellor. The recognition that their sense of spirituality has not ‘changed too much’ but that it has a place at the therapeutic table in the form of a ‘facilitating tool’ says much about how the energetic/spiritual dynamic works.

Kim has a slightly different viewpoint referring to this negotiation between the counsellor and client which is reminiscent of the ‘dance’ to introduce spirituality in the first instance.

'I'd see the client as their own director, if you like or, or leader into it so when you create a space like that, em, I suppose anything can happen then, you know. You can go anywhere with it... It is wherever they would go with it... You are following them and you are waiting for what they're going to come up with...it gave you that, kind of, a doorway into it [spirituality] without actually putting a name...putting it up [on] the table. We, kind of, slid gently into it without saying "let's do spirituality today".' Kim P.3 L.14-21 P.5 L.5-8

Here Kim sees this relational dynamic as a follow-the-leader scenario where the counsellor waits at the ‘doorway’ to enter once the client opens it ‘gently’. There is profound feeling of holding the unknown within the safe space the counsellor has created. This practitioner has

shamanic training and is both in private and agency practice so would be aware of a wide range of client issues and what is required to bring them into the therapeutic space ready to be processed. In slight contrast, yet on the same theme Pat had an almost humorous analogy.

‘she [client] really took to it like a duck to water and I felt that I had a fluidity there and a freedom.’ Pat P.8 L.23-25

This speaks of flow and again movement in a forward momentum of the session. Yet inherent in the word *‘freedom’* is a feeling of this counsellor enjoying their work and its smooth execution in a symbiotic relationship.

d) Connection

This **fourth superordinate theme** pertains to connection in a variety of forms. Four of the 13 counsellors voiced an opinion of the various connections at play. These ranged from connection to ‘self’, ‘Spirit’, ‘others’ including clients and also to their ‘soul’. Fran brought up this alliance when asked if there were any developments in the meanings of their spirituality.

‘I am more connected to myself...my Guides are near. That Spirit is very close to me, em, that I am doing the right thing...I know when they [clients] leave the room, I know there has been a worthwhile connection and something very spiritual has happened.’
Fran P.7 L.4, 8-9 P.14 L. 31-33

Interestingly for this counsellor, the connection with self translates not only as their guides and Spirit being *‘close’* but means that they are doing the right work, in the right way with the right approach. In the New Age movement there is the expression ‘in the best possible way for the highest possible good’ and here there is a sense of that flow.

If one is connected then ergo the right path is opened and good work may be done in the flow of creation. The conclusion, in this quote, is that a *‘worthwhile’* bond has been forged and meaningful work of a transcendent nature has occurred because of it.

This theme is furthered by Terry, again in answer to the question of any developments in their spirituality.

'...using the technique, I would have felt a very close connection with the client. I would've felt our two energies were sort of, you know, understanding each other...I've become a lot more aware.' Terry P.4 L.5-9

The poetic metaphor of their two energies coming to know each other and ultimately '*understanding each other*' demonstrates how much more intimate this approach is when compared to classic counselling. There was a felt sense of awareness of what is possible in this profession when opening up to eliciting the full holistic spectrum to embrace spirituality. This profound phenomenon of connection with self is a key tenet of spirituality for Cory but it also manifests with others.

'It [spirituality] manifests for me through practice, through daily practice... writing and sometimes it can involve just, sitting meditating, looking at a candle...it's connecting with my, myself and everything else, if that, and I, if that, that makes sense. But it also manifests through connection with others as well.' Cory P.1 L.33-34
P.2 L.1-3, 6-7

Cory has a strong daily practice and gives several examples of how this manifests through various spiritual techniques. Although these practices are solitary and bring self-connection there is an acknowledgment that there is a union with Spirit through correlation with others.

The final piece of this section is an articulate disclosure from Kerry, a church-going Catholic counsellor and supervisor with many years of working in the field both privately and in agency which brings a summation to this sub-section.

'If you can get there [spirituality] with the client I think that's real therapy. There's a connection, there's a connection with soul, there's a connection with that spirit, and I think it can be... what is a very privileged place to be, it's very, I hold it to be something sacred. Em, and I think it can be hugely transformative.' Kerry P.3 L.31-35

There is a recognition here that '*real therapy*' occurs when a holistic model comes to the fore with the inclusion of spirituality. The connections are made with the client's soul and with Spirit. I note that for some the word 'soul' means the personal aspect of spirituality and 'Spirit' means God/the Divine Source. However sometimes this is interchangeable with, as in this case, it would seem, '*that spirit*' means the personal aspect and '*soul*' refers to the

Godhead. The way Kerry holds this spiritual connection as '*privileged*' and '*something sacred*' demonstrates the esteem with which they hold the energetic/spiritual approach.

e) **Innate energetic/spiritual ways**

To conclude this section on the presence of **Spirit in Clinic: Clinic in Spirit** there were a number of explanations on the innate abilities of the counsellors. Fran was quite loquacious –

'I am a, kind of, a channel... So, I think it [the channel] is innate but, em, the more I ever chase it, the more it goes away. When I just allow it to come, it is there...it just came to me, I just got it [spiritual based work]'. Fran P.3 L.26-27 P.4 L.23-24

Here we comprehend exactly how the energetic/spiritual works for this counsellor. The 'channel' has always been there as a natural intrinsic way of connection for Fran but there is a sense that its activation or indeed retreat is tenuous and must be nurtured.

Ger voiced surprise that not all counsellors had or were using this skillset.

'I would have gone to lots of trainings but it [energetic/spiritual ability] was already there. I was doing it anyway, but I did not understand what I was doing! [laugh] 'cause I thought everybody was doing it.... I'm suddenly realising, "Oh, not everybody does this. Not everybody has this connection, this insight to bring this piece in" and that's when I started.' Ger P.4 L.26-32

Again, we hear of an innate ability this time described as a '*connection*' and Ger has the insight to bring this into work by broaching the subject and offering spiritual tools such as visualisation and imagery to tap into the unconscious. The effusive manner in which this counsellor spoke of truly believing that everyone worked in this way until formal training courses revealed that this was not the case. There was a feeling of 'coming home' when offered an opportunity to partake in this research.

Alex had a similar experience of discovering that they were already doing a form of the energetic/spiritual but now in a more focused manner.

I think seeing how, seeing, how other people reacted to what I was doing helped me to understand that maybe I was doing this before but I didn't realise it. I didn't have a name for it, I didn't have whatever a framework, which is a good way to describe it.

So that was another confidence booster 'cause I said to myself "Gee Whiz! I used to do this stuff!" Now I know...but I never knew what it was, and now I do...that was another piece of a transformational learning.' Alex P.14-20

This theme **Spirit in Clinic: Clinic in Spirit** was divided into 5 superordinate themes. The first – ‘energy’ involved the counsellor’s perspective of energy and their observation of the client’s energy and also their perception of the energy of the therapeutic space. The second - ‘counsellor/client spiritual dynamics’ flowed into the third - ‘requirements for counsellors and clients’, with the fourth - their ‘connection’ together and fifth - their ‘innate energetic/spiritual ways’ concluding this master theme.

4.5.5 Master theme 5: Empowered Awakening

The fifth master theme is **Empowered Awakening** and surfaced from honing several emergent themes reducing them to a succinct superordinate title for a place within their matching cluster. This was an excellent example showing how several smaller emergent themes clustered to form a new more significant one.

For example, the **emergent themes** of:

Counsellor’s view of client reaction – 8

Counsellor’s reaction to the energetic/spiritual tool – 3

Change/progress – 2

Client’s reaction – 5

merged to become the **superordinate theme**: ‘reaction to the counsellor’s facilitation’ – 18.

Emergent themes of both ‘confidence and empowerment’ plus ‘surprises and insights’, became the next superordinate themes and contributed directly to the awakening to the potency of the energetic/spiritual way and the resultant empowerment of both counsellor and client. The final superordinate theme revealed itself the ‘ripple effect in the counsellor’s lives and together they informed the master theme title as **Empowered Awakening**.

The name of this theme encapsulates the overarching response of the counsellors and their clients to their new energetic spiritual way of working. This penultimate theme contains the reaction of the counsellors and their clients to energetic/spiritual work and charts a modicum of the changes and progress spoken of during the research.

I have explored these four superordinate themes below:

- a) Reaction to the counsellor's facilitation
- b) Confidence and empowerment
- c) Insights and surprises
- d) Ripple effects in the counsellors' lives

a) Reaction to the counsellor's facilitation

Reaction to the counsellors' facilitation with an energetic/spiritual tool included a sense of delight and satisfaction as they talked about their client feedback after the clinical sessions. The majority of people would not be aware of the healing capacity of their spirituality and the counsellors' unmitigated response to their clients' gratification was illuminating.

When the counsellor is firmly rooted in their own sense of spirituality, they are in a good standing to reassure and assist their client navigate these types of transformative experiences. Reactions can be sub-divided into three sections – the client's and the counsellor's reaction to their clinical work and the counsellor's own personal reaction. Turning to the first of these below here are some of the client's verbatim comments which arose unprompted from the interviews.

Client's reaction:

'I'm light, full of joy, I'm aware and I'm alive.' Fran P.6, L. 5-6

'I can't believe how happy I feel, this is deep shit.' Fran P.6 L. 36-37

'So empowered, [Counsellor's name], I am not gagged anymore.' Fran P.10 L.40

The first three reactions are all from Fran who took an inordinate delight in sharing the direct quotes of their clients. The use of the pronoun 'I' gives an owning quality to these sentences and links in with the theme above of the counsellor bringing awareness to their client of the healing facility of their spirituality.

Finn shared an example of a client of theirs questioning if counselling would actually help with their process and their comments after using the technique.

...he [the client had] said "I keep saying, how is talking about this going to make it any better? It is just going to make it worse." And so, the technique has actually given

him such, it has soothed him, that is actually a word he used, he said "I felt soothed on the inside, really soothed" ...and I was amazed.' Finn P.12 L.28-35 P.13 L.1

The volte face from 'make it worse' with talking therapy as counselling is often referred to and 'soothed on the inside' when bringing the energetic/spiritual to work in the session had the effect of astounding the counsellor. Finn is not only a seasoned counsellor of many years and a lecturer but works with people from a disadvantaged background so for them to have this reaction to their clients' utterances says much about the power of the energetic/spiritual approach.

Counsellor's reaction to their client work:

A second and fundamental aspect was the counsellors' reaction to their client work. I felt it important to allow the counsellors' words speak for themselves in this section rather than over impose my interpretations other than the fact that as stated above these mature adults are trained to be discreet and not show emotion in session and at this stage of their careers have seen much in the form of client issues and their resolution in 'talk therapy'. Therefore, their heartfelt, joyous reaction said it all from the expressions of sheer unadulterated joy from Fran to the delightedness of Lee when their client began to explore shamanism inspired by their work together:

'It's magical but it is healing... I have never seen such a shift with a client who was so long term [clicks fingers] Instant! And he hopped down the stairs and [before] this guy was riddled with stiffness.' Fran P.15 L.17, 30-33

'The effect was so dramatic that it opened her [the client's] mind to the idea of shamanism and she, em, went on a course...and went on a fairly dramatic enlightenment and growth within herself...she now saw things from a very different, very dramatically different point of view.

It has been a much, a very narrow scope of looking at the issue and now she was looking at it from a much, much broader point of view... I was absolutely thrilled and delighted with that [client session]. Yes, I felt that I had done some very, very useful work for this particular client and that I had been a catalyst in getting her to go on a journey of growth and alignment. So, it was tremendously satisfying as a therapist to have been a part of that.' Lee P.9 L. 26-28, 34-35 P.10 L.4-8, 10-15

Lee shared not simply the energetic effect but also the embodied while below Terry's poignant *'her soul was visible'* spoke of the immensity of the co-creation the counsellor and their clients were capable of with the energetic/spiritual approach.

'She really engaged with the work. She found it very powerful. Her soul was visible. Her pain and her loss for mother... Everything was visible, everything was just, everything from the inside just came out...the clients that availed of this, they were really absolutely like blown away by it, by the powerfulness of it.' Terry P.12 L.30-34 P.18 L.1-5

Leslie brought it to the emotional level as well as the tangibility of literally seeing the effects happen in real time, whereas Ger draws the effects back to the energetic.

'There's a felt sense of ...what's going on in them [the clients] and you can see things shifting and settling and everything else, and it's not just an Aha! moment, it's really as if emotions and beliefs and possibilities and potentials...it's like seeing cogs falling into place. I mean you can see it and you can feel it.' Leslie P.4 L.19-32

'How they change...how they changed from what they were...the energy in them. They're walking out the door lighter, much lighter.' Ger P.6 L. 26-30

Kerry speaks of seeing a visible change and one that has the ability to transcend time. Their client had a trauma at the age of 3 and could heal that wound 50 years later in their clinic room. The word 'authentic' is often used in the field of new age therapies, counselling and spirituality terminology in relation to the 'higher Self' sometimes referred to as the 'Authentic Self' and here below we receive a clear sense of that with Kerry's comment on witnessing this in their client.

'For the clients I think I can visibly see a growth or see a shift to a more balanced place for them or more authentic. '...he cried like a three-year-old...that was something that touched me but I think there was something of a release for him and kind of, something that made sense for him that he was... able to acknowledge having carried it as a 53-year-old man.' Kerry P.4 L.12-14 P.5 L.25-30

Counsellor's personal reaction:

Both Kim and Pat were very honest and this reassured me that indeed the counsellor cohort were able to speak openly about their experiences and meanings without feeling a need to impress me, their peer.

'I don't know about develop as much as, validate it [my spirituality]... this [the energetic/spiritual] really is... a powerful way to work...I don't think it changed, you know. Probably it confirmed a little bit more, I suppose.' Kim P.4 L.3-8

'It's a reawakening and confirmation of the grounding in, in that spirituality and in touch with Nature...I think it is liberating...putting it into practice...it [the energetic/spiritual] probably hasn't impacted on my spirituality...it's been a, kind of, a confirmation really.' Pat P.5 L.23-24 L.29 P.6 L.3, 12-15

Whereas for Kerry and Alex, there was a growing expansion, confirmation and transformation in their day-to-day lives having completed the research.

'Developments are coming into a deeper awareness... how would I say, authenticity in it... Ok, for me - an awakening... '[The energetic/spiritual approach] allows me to honour that Spirit more, I suppose and creating the time to honour the Spirit, in the business of life or in our secular world. Or whatever, yeah, so that certainly is something that I am more acutely aware of.' Kerry P.4 L.4-6 P.5 L.9-11

'So, I didn't think this was going to enhance my understanding of myself or being or having a spiritual nature...that aspect was fairly deeply rooted in me anyway, this was just sort of confirming it, reaffirming it...So, yes, it was enhanced. You know, I didn't know how to do this, now I do so I'm transformed.'

'I'm a different person...I suppose another thing is curiosity about more... there's always more to find out so it's done that to me...So that's, that will be the most significant thing, a curiosity about it...I feel that my sense of spirituality, whatever that means, has been enhanced and will continue to be.' Alex P.14 L.1-11 P.19 L.1-4

b) Confidence and empowerment

Counsellor confidence and empowerment is the third **superordinate** theme of **Empowered Awakening** and there were 6 comments from 4 counsellors, Fran, Lee, Robin and Alex, on

the subject of their personal growth in both. The use of a new tool and, in some cases, the use of a spiritual one for the first time gave a sense of achievement and trust.

'I feel, more confident as a professional, more present, more held, more minded...by Spirit, that once the intention is pure it'll be ok...I am much more empowered coming into work. I love coming in here...it is a place of healing and I do very little in it...I am here and I trust it and then it flows through me.' Fran P.12 L. 18-21, 28-34.

While Fran above experiences confidence and empowerment and considers those held by Spirit and therefore a development in their spirituality, Lee had a different outlook below.

'I am not sure there was a lot of development, eh [laughs] which would not be a criticism of the system... I am not sure there was a change in meaning as such probably a change in confidence, in "oh, yes this can be used" and so this is more of, kind of, a confidence...there wouldn't be flashes of insight at this stage. It would be an awareness that this [energetic /spiritual approach] works too... But it wasn't a blinding metaphysical insight [laughs].' Lee P.6 L. 27-30, 35-36 P.8 L. 5-7 L.39-40

So, while some counsellors regard their spirituality as ever evolving especially the relational context with their clients, others view this as somewhat established with tools such as the chosen technique providing worthwhile means to bring it into their working environment. This naturally escalated the impact on the counsellors' outlook as divulged by Alex below.

'Confidence to me would be a very delicate flower, I wouldn't describe myself as a person brimming in confidence. I think the idea of learning how to do it...and the reactions I was getting, that, eh, gave me a boost. I let it boost me.

I took it as a pat on the back for what it was worth. I said to myself "Yes this is good" This gave me a sense of confidence...to me it is transformative learning.' Alex P.12 L.19-26, 30-35

This very honest comment gave an insight into how new techniques can affect not simply the clients' progression but also garner justification for its inclusion by providing the counsellor with an enhanced personal benefit. It is often the case that counsellors have a propensity to view continuous professional development as a means to client enhancement as opposed to self-enrichment. The use of a new technique also brought insights and surprises, a fourth heading in this theme.

c) Insights and surprises

From the counsellor's standpoint some features brought an awareness of both insight and even some unforeseen surprises. A key facet was the 'scene' of the original wounding that the counsellors facilitate their clients to enter as part of the technique's protocol. Often this is an earlier, quite innocuous childhood realisation or occurrence that sets the scenario for future issues. Both Ger and Kim give examples below.

'when I do the technique, em, I'm surprised and they're [clients] surprised. They start off with the intention but the scene that comes out [origin of the issue] always surprises them.' Ger P.6 L.15-18

'One thing that really jumped out of me was how surprised the client was where she went, really surprised... actually she's a therapist [counsellor] herself...that I know, not very well but enough that I could do it with her. She was absolutely shocked at where she went [scene of the origin of issue]. It was stuff that had never come up in her own years of therapy. So, it is very, very powerful.' Kim P.6 L.2-10

This last piece is very thought-provoking as counsellors have to undergo rigorous personal therapy for at least 30 hours (in recent years this has been extended to 50 hours). The fact that Kim's client had not delved into this issue during that personal work either shows the extent of the energetic/spiritual approach or highlights how it springboards on the back of previous work to bring these issues to light.

For Finn, there was an interesting account of their clients attempting to 'outwit' the technique by anticipating their helpers before they let their unconscious allow these to naturally emerge.

'...two of them [clients], in particular, were very surprised at who [helpers/guides] arrived because one of them said "When you started to say it, I had little plan in my head, and then it just did not happen", and then I felt that is the realness of it that they try to manipulate a little bit as we do to stay safe and did not work. I love that bit, absolutely.' Finn P.10 L.7-16

On the same theme, Kerry shared an amusing anecdote where they assumed that the helpers had one particular origin when in fact it was completely different and in contrast to what they assumed their client might imagine.

'I was intrigued sometimes, yeah, you know, ok Granny and whatever but bringing in a dog? And bringing, em, let's see what did one woman client bring in? An American Indian. [She] who was somebody who, well, would've conveyed to me what [she] had been brought up in the Roman Catholic faith and very traditional in that, kind of, an outlook. So, when... she said it first - the Indian. I was going "East?" [from India] [laughter]' Kerry P.6 L.33-34 P.7 L.1-9

Findings reveal that the use of the holistic approach not only brought insight and surprise but it also created a ripple effect in the counsellors' lives and this is chronicled below.

d) Ripple effect in the counsellor's life

Question 7 in the interview asked if using an energetic/spiritual tool in their work had an effect on the counsellor's personal lives outside their working hours. All answered in the affirmative with some more vociferous than others. With many counselling techniques, the counsellor attends the relevant course, receives and gives the tool then returns to their clinic space. After with discernment they may apply it when appropriate although there may not be the opportunity or the inclination to ever employ it again personally. I was curious as to what might happen for the counsellors outside their professional practise and if energetic/spiritual work might permeate their own personal belief system and daily lives.

Both Fran and Robin spoke of their growing awareness of spending more quality 'me-time' in natural settings.

'I also notice since I am doing this [spiritual work] that I am spending more time in nature and connecting to my own stuff...I find myself going to the sea more and more after doing this work.' Fran P.14 L. 28-30 P.15 L.23-24

'...recognising, I suppose, reminding again the need to nourish myself in terms of creating that bit of space, that piece of reflective space of just being out in nature and just being able to...walk and breathe in and out...I think the element of bringing in spirit, spirituality, it...doesn't begin or end in a sense, do you know, that it, kind of, flows from client work to outside the client work to just walking along the Liffey ... with being more clued into my sense of spirituality there is more of a flow, you know, and it's, it definitely has a ripple effect outside of my life, in all aspects of my life,

outside of the room as well and that has been good. ' Robin P.6 L.29-34 P.7 L.33-36
P.8.L1-8

This theme was reaffirmed by Jude not only personally but also for their clients.

'I can look at the tree out the back and ask it "what should I do/can I do." So, I can rely more on that kind of strength and resources...I have found it [the clients through the technique] has brought a lot more bits of twigs into the room and stones and that! So, I am bringing nature in, yeah.' Jude P.9 L.2-9

For Kerry this not only included nature but also their own religious practise.

'I suppose it kind of makes me pay attention, honour the Spirit in myself. Em and creating space with that Spirit. So, whether it is to go to church or go for a walk or doing something creative... giving the Spirit expression.' Kerry P.5 L.9-14

These counsellors all related the ripple effect to nature from walks by the river and sea to reflective time and connection with trees. As we might expect two of these counsellors identify as shamanic practitioners. Nevertheless, in these comments they are directly linking their nature time to their work practises. So, the corollary of this is, if you are spending more time daily with Spirit in your working environment this enhances your life outside in a positive manner.

In a related but different effect, Terry, Finn and Cory found that there was an enhancement in personal outlook.

'I am becoming more aware that there's, there is a lot more out there to call upon, right, in my everyday life and I have seen these little miracles...it is happening in my every life apart from the therapy work.' Terry P.6 L.9-13, 17-18

While for Terry this translates as an awareness of spiritual guidance in all aspects of their life and the effect of that, Finn and Cory were conscious of using certain components of the technique on themselves.

'God, you know, these techniques! I am using them on myself!' Finn P.9 L.17-18

'there's times, the situations in my life where I, where I find myself going, "okay, what fairy tale character [part of the technique] would I'd be in this?" So, there's different ways that, that I'm adapting it in my own life.' Cory P.11 L.7-9

This master theme **Empowered Awakening** has been explored under four **superordinate themes** - reaction to the counsellor's facilitation, confidence and empowerment, insights and surprises and any ripple effects in the counsellors' lives.

4.5.6 Master theme 6: Divine presence

The final and sixth master theme is **Divine Presence**. There was an instinctive flow to the development of this theme which had a very different numinous quality than previous counsellor comments. This cluster was one of fluidity and natural formation leading to a title with intrinsic significance. This theme highlights the ways in which the counsellors spoke of the experience of spiritual presence and the privilege of holding, facilitating and witnessing their clients' connection to their perception of the divine.

As we see from the forthcoming examples, the terms engaged instil a palpable sense of awe and the mystery of spiritual occurrences. These findings are presented under the following superordinate themes:

- a) Manifestations of spiritual presence
- b) Divine light or brightness
- c) Witnessing

a) Manifestations of spiritual presence

The first superordinate theme to be discussed is called manifestations of spiritual presence. The terminology of the counsellors altered considerably when speaking about what occurred in the sessions. Their language took on a different coherency to explain the tangible immersion into and of Spirit with words such as *'aliveness'* *'movement'*, *'strength'*, *'calmness'* and *'featherlike'*, *'power'* and *'magnitude'*. The key feature of this energetic/spiritual work is the fact that both counsellor and their clients are in a conscious sacred space created in advance of the session privately. Also, through the protocol of the technique they have invited in spiritual helpers who may be Deities, Saints, Angels, shamanic Power Animals and ancestors who are deceased.

There are various ways in which the counsellors felt the manifestation of this energetic/spiritual presence. Fran, a counsellor and supervisor of many years standing with a strong shamanic practise captures the essence of this phenomenon.

‘...the aliveness I feel after a session is great because I’ve been in the ‘Presence.’

Fran P.15 L. 16-17

There is an impression of Fran having flourished as well as the client by merely being in the presence of Spirit. This is a definite contrast to classic counselling where after a successful session there may be a feeling of the satisfaction of having done a good job. In this scenario, Fran introduces a new aspect, by consciously calling in Spirit, the room itself becomes a sacred and nurturing environment. This is further echoed by Robin who equivocates ‘movement’ to the ‘strength’ of Spirit.

‘...it was just that movement all the way through, you know, that was more than just talking, do you know, em. Yeah, to me that was where Spirit was very strong, yeah, through all the different parts of the sessions.’ Robin P.8 L.23-27

Robin, a Christian and an agency counsellor starting up their own practise, recognised that Spirit is present throughout in the ‘movement’ of the work – the ‘more than’ present in the clinical space. Jude, a shamanic practitioner and very experienced counsellor, added a very special analogy redolent of a synesthetic experience where there is sensory overlap in the perception of phenomena.

‘there was some kind of a calmness that I couldn’t describe, couldn’t put a word on it but it was almost like as if, almost like - ‘featherlike’. It was like were you ever in a room and the air, and there was no window open but you, kind of, felt the breeze?’

Jude P.12 L.8-13

The perceptible observance of the presence of Spirit is difficult to verbalise reducing the counsellor’s utterances to analogy and metaphor and so we circle back to the first theme **Speaking the Unspoken**. Cory apprises us with their understanding of the immense power of this discernible yet invisible presence with a fear which has tones of the religious ‘fear of God’ concept.

‘when I say letting go... into the, eh, infinite power of Spirit...that is there for me to access if we so wish to. It, it, it scares me...the magnitude of it, the magnitude.’ Cory P.1 L.25-34

Here, Cory, a newly accredited counsellor with no formal shamanic training, introduces an awe to the immensity of spiritual presence – the intense and veneration of something so transpersonal that if there is no reference it may induce feelings of fright.

b) Divine light/brightness

The second superordinate theme of **Divine Presence** is that of divine light and brightness. Several of the counsellors had observed phenomena, in their client sessions that they described with the words *‘light’* and *‘brightness’* in the context of experiencing Spirit. In common vernacular the term ‘Divine Light’ is known but it is not often that one receives the opportunity to hear it enunciated in the appropriate circumstances.

We discussed previously how energy was a scientific concept based in physics with light holding a distinctive kinetic energy and vibration. In this example below there is astonishment from Fran and their client where death, dying and the release of her deceased father was the pivotal focus.

‘...she just experienced this huge light in front of her and she thought I was shining a torch into her... and she went “I couldn’t believe it” and her father [deceased] stopped, turned around and waved and I could feel a lump in my throat. It [the experience] is unreal.’ Fran P.8 L.38 P.9 L.1-11

Here the counsellor has the honour of hearing their client announce the presence of the ineffable in the clinic room and attributes this to their intervention. Fran who has not intruded in any way is greatly moved by this experience having witnessed the client’s experience of their father’s presence bathed in *‘huge light’*.

This is echoed by a very personal sharing from Jude spoken in a reverential hushed tone and culminating in a poetic metaphor.

‘...an innocence came back to her – a childlike innocence. And it was almost like in the room, it was just with her eyes closed, it was almost like a flash of light came over her face like a little child’s face, right? ...that was really moving, that was one of the

ones [sessions] where I really felt like this is working because this person has been in therapy for a long, long time with many therapists...so I suppose it was one of those God-like moments. ' Jude P.9 L.9-12, 24-27, 31.

Jude equates the innocence of this client with light and a '*God-like moment*' thereby establishing that this is the kernel of the energetic/spiritual approach for them – the essence of how a counsellor can facilitate a long-term client to return to a '*childlike innocence*'. Then Jude further elucidates not only the experience but where they feel this light originates from and how it works in a spiritual framework.

Terry reveals their client's encounter of this occurrence.

'She spoke of this, about this brightness and it was a brightness like she had never seen before... She said "I have never seen brightness like that before." So, it's just lovely, you know. It's just beautiful. It's [a] beautiful session.' Terry P.10 L.3-6

With a background working with highly traumatised clients, Terry maintains a very grounded, calm demeanour yet once again the almost devotional quality to this exchange is telling. All of the counsellors adopted a different mien when talking about the phenomenon of energetic/spiritual presence which was a privilege to encounter. The fact that this was occurring in their clinic space with their clients made it even more rich and exceptional, no less because their clients experienced and spoke of it as a very real and tangible manifestation.

'In that session, she was an abandoned child...so she spoke to the man and she spoke to him at length [technique protocol]...“You know it's okay. All you have to do is hold this child. You just have to take this little child and hold it. Don't be afraid”. And this went on for the long, long time and so eventually the man took the child. And he held the child. And she come back out [of the shamanic state after the technique ended] then she said there was [sic] flashes. There were flashes all around the place...flashes of light.' Terry P.12 L.12-29

To put this quote in context I would like to explain a modicum of the setting. In the scene of the original wounding the Adult Self client is beside their Inner Child Self observing the dynamic and able to converse with the protagonist/s, in this case the man. Afterwards this

client shares that as the energetic/spiritual work occurs she experiences *'flashes of light'* in a similar vein to the previous example from Fran and Jude.

c) Witnessing

The third and final superordinate theme of **Divine Presence** is the phenomenon of witnessing. There were 8 references from the counsellors concerning their understandings of witnessing the energetic/spiritual work during the clinical sessions. The word *'privilege'* was employed many times and a number spoke of *'accompanying'* their client in this work. Leslie gives a pithy account of why they felt this was the case.

'I suppose you feel privileged. You know, it is a privilege...to see this woman; the pain, the anguish, all of that literally like words written across her face, to have given the opportunity to make a connection which to my knowledge she would have never had in any other place, not safely anyway, and for her to get the resolution she wanted. That was the most spiritual thing I've ever seen.' Leslie P.5 L.27 P.6 L.21-26

The acknowledgement that this client would not have been able, in Leslie's opinion, to make a connection in any other place in safety was of paramount significance and a meaningful addendum to this quote.

'I think it is what comes up for clients...it just comes up from wherever...that's the piece for me. Em, because I know it's coming so organically from the person and it's coming, it's being delivered by Spirit. That's the way I would put it. Yeah, it's being delivered by Spirit.' Ger P.8 L.18-21

This phrase *'organic'* to describe the element of the work emerging from their client *'delivered by Spirit'* had a resonance with Kim who talked, below, of the experience of what happens in their clinic space.

'I mean, amazing, powerful, and privileged all of that. All of those words, it's like again, sacred space. I'm not using it glibly there when I say but like really, really powerful it was. I felt very honoured. I suppose privileged to be witnessing what's happening for the client at the time, you know, during the session. It was, she had a very powerful experience.' Kim P.4 L.34-35 P.5 L.1-5

Again, the word *'powerful'* has a reverberation with Cory's aforementioned utterance of *'magnitude'*. It was significant for me, as a supervisor especially, to remember that these seasoned professionals are not prone to effusive outpourings of the inner workings of their client sessions. This meant that their comments and the particular use of language took on another layer of meaning both as testament to the extraordinary shifts that were happening but also their direct experience of Spirit in their work space.

Finn had an eloquent exchange on what was the actual quintessence of witnessing and therefore is worthy of a lengthy verbatim quote.

'I think that [it] is really spiritual to be able to sit with a person and encourage them and stay with them while they go to a place that has actually, they have probably avoided for 30, 40, 50 years. The holding space bit and the reconnection bit. When they are reconnecting with the people, at that level, that has brought me to a place when you are sitting watching somebody physically changing sometimes, em, as they are reconnecting with somebody from the past, somebody that was well, somebody that cause a lot of pain, or love, whatever. That reconnection I think that is when the healing begins...you just feel so privileged to sit with people in that place.' Finn P.8 L.9-19 P.11 L.18-19

The honour of this witnessing and the privilege of facilitating the client to return safely to places from their past is keenly felt in Finn's poignant exchange. For a highly experienced counsellor and trainer to reveal this opinion says much about this holistic approach. While others spoke about what they actually witnessed occurring, Cory contributed an overview and expressed what was felt both as a *'union'* and/or a *'communion'*.

'I feel that I'm witnessing something, em, so rewarding, fulfilling... it's actually I feel like, I feel like I'm witnessing, I'm witnessing. I'm, I'm privileged that I'm, that I'm... being shown or I'm allowed witness, witness a, a union or communion.' Cory P.9 L.15-19

This counsellor almost tripping over their words with enthusiasm conjures up two crucial words, *'union'* with its connotations of New Age and Yoga speak and *'communion'* with its religious sensibilities. I find it interesting that as this counsellor came to speak of the presence of Spirit their terminology extended to a religious phrase. Perhaps when faced with the

paucity of language, there was a reversion to an older term that was once familiar. Interestingly this was one of the few counsellors not to mention any religious up-bringing.

Finally, Alex, who had studied various models of counselling and spirituality for many years, introduces the physical change in clients and conjectures what might be transpiring for their client behind closed eyes.

'I suppose the most important thing is witnessing what it does to people...I was witnessing change, a very obvious change, a very physical change in one or two cases the person moved, definitely moved, sat up straight...eyes are closed. I think they were, they were, eh, eh almost having visions nearly. They were saying things so vividly.' Alex P.11 L.18-22

Alex's descriptions of the client, in an altered state, using vivid language invites allusion to someone in a visionary mildly ecstatic state.

This concludes the presentation of findings for all six of the master themes. However, some unusual comments arose during the interviews which revealed the flexibility and fluidity of the energetic/spiritual approach which are now considered.

4.5.7 Unusual comments in the research findings

During the interviews, the counsellors made a number of observations that were unexpected and unforeseen. For example, Fran noticed that the form the 'helpers' took was often related to the age and spiritual background of the clients.

'Mother, Father, [Mother] Mary, St Francis came here in one of the [sessions]. So yeah, now I wonder does the age have anything to do with that? Whereas the three I had [clients]...they would have been all other stuff, you know, Angels, Guides...New Age, if that makes sense, it's a newer Spirituality. And one you can connect with which is interesting as opposed to one you look up to.' Fran P.11 L. 21-23 P.12 L.2-4

In this case, an older Catholic person experienced the presence of 'Saints' whereas a younger New Age client tended to see/sense 'Angels' or 'Deities' according to their belief system.

The shamanic technique used as an energetic/spiritual tool operates at the level that is most accessible to the individual whether that be visual, aural, kinaesthetic or a combination of all three. Lee who has an academic awareness of many forms of spirituality expressed a new awareness of how to 'track' what was happening energetically in the clinical sessions.

'I could learn to become aware or tune into those shifts by being aware of what is happening in my body. Actually, that is quite an important realisation for me.' Lee P.11 L.10-14

The felt sense of the phenomenon of being able to chart the flow of the client in their own body kinaesthetically was a revelation for Lee. Although this was dealt with on the training course, it was not until this counsellor was in the field surveilling their own reactions that this observation became apparent. Finn brought this observance to another level with the acknowledgment that although there was a strong understanding and indeed owning of the energetic/spiritual approach, that there had been a dearth of safe, simple and practical tools.

'I realised that, this [energetic/spiritual approach] isn't, em, weird stuff. It is just stuff that I have been putting on the backburner that I have never really stepped into not knowing the proper tools around it and actually, it is kind of very much who I am as a therapist...I didn't allow myself to do for maybe feeling a bit corny or, you know, feeling a bit like strange. This one now [the technique] I don't because it is, it's very organic, very normal, and I have been able to use it. And I am a very down to earth and normal person myself. If it did not sit right me, I wouldn't be able to do it. I would not pretend to like it because it wouldn't work. Em, so it has worked and it is very much a part of my life in that...I, kind of, I realised, "God, you know, these techniques, actually, I am using them on myself.' Finn P.7 L.25-32 P.8 L.1-4

There was a keen sense of a good match between this 'normal' counsellor and 'normal' technique to the point that they are using it personally. Jude extended the concept of the techniques 'homework/soulwork' to become an integral part of the clinical sessions by inviting the clients to become more aware of nature and source tangible pieces directly relevant to their issues.

'I'm getting people to bring in stuff...their nature bits. I just say "maybe tomorrow or over the next week, if you see something that reminds you or stopped you or talks to you about your anger or whatever's going on for them. Maybe pick it up and if you

want bring it in the next day...that's tangible and they can do it and they can connect to it and they can feel something. ' Jude P.12 L.22, 26-29 P.13 L. 2-3

There were a couple of apposite observations yet only Terry, Cory and Kerry actually voiced them as personally self-evident.

'I mean a lot of people are not open to [the] spiritual side, I suppose and if they're not, they're not. Terry P.10 L.31-32

'...also, I am aware that, that psychotherapy [counselling] can also be loving there's a lot of love. ' Cory P.4 L.31-32

Kerry's remark below links in with the observation that many clients brought up spirituality in relation to death, dying and bereavement. At a certain stage in life this subject becomes more prevalent in relation to life experience.

'Yeah, as I've got older, I suppose I'm just more aware of Spirit' Kerry P.1 L. 9

And finally, the same counsellor acknowledges the innate spirituality of the Irish as an indigenous people.

'I think if we are Irish, we have a spirituality there.' Kerry P.1 L. 24

The findings of the final master theme **Divine Presence** were presented under three headings -

The counsellors' manifestations of spiritual presence, experience of the phenomenon of divine light or brightness and the awareness of witnessing these. **I now explore the emergent patterns and inter-relationality to my interpretations of these findings.**

4.6 A new conceptual framework

I observed a distinct pattern emerging as the final hermeneutic circling took place from the idiographic to the overarching viewpoint. The inter-relationality of these master themes with each other surfaced as I stepped back for the final time from the idiographic to a wide-ranging perspective in the hermeneutic circle.

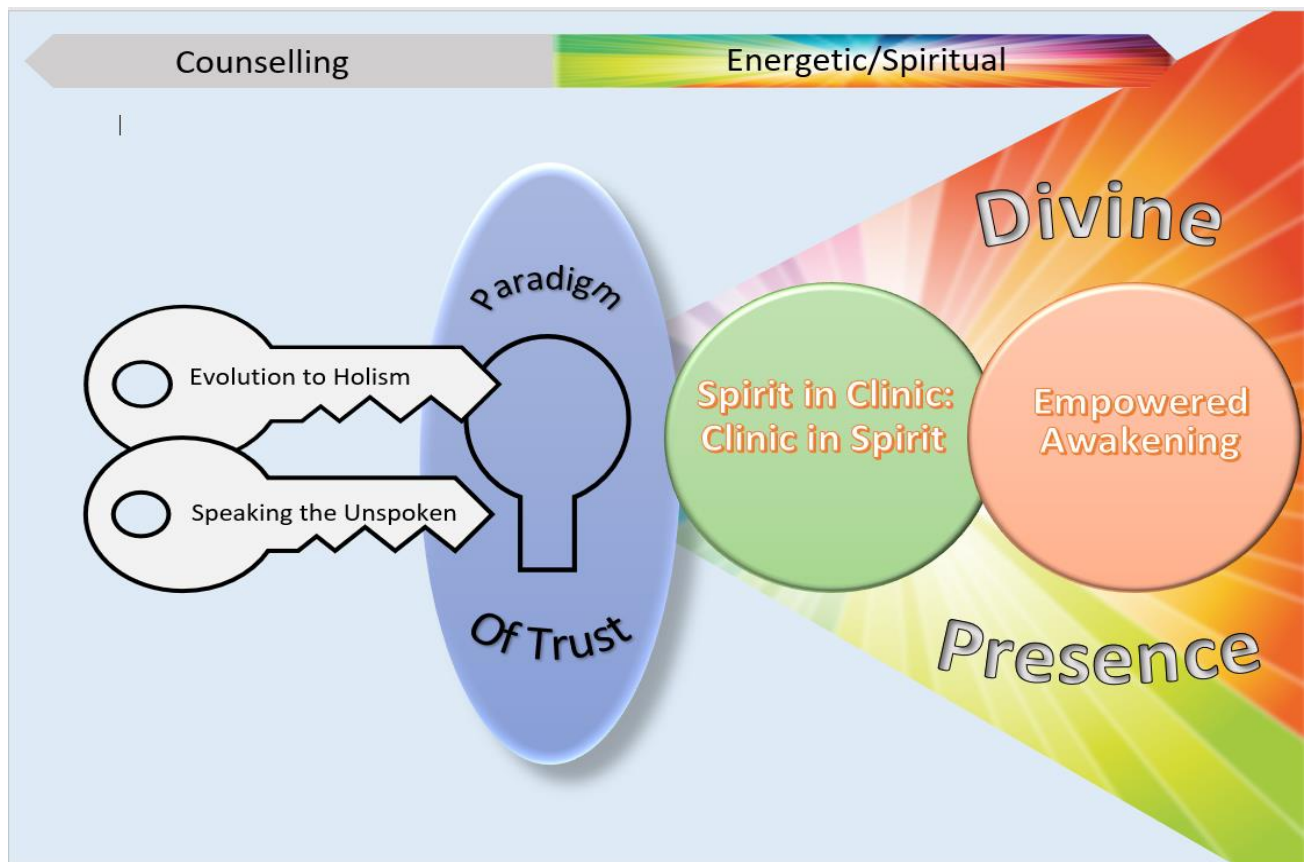
The first two themes **Evolution to Holism** and **Speaking the Unspoken** needed to be in place before the counsellors could proceed to introducing a new energetic/spiritual approach into their client group. The third theme **Paradigm of Trust** was a portal to unlocking the ability to move into a higher realm of working and facilitating the fourth theme of **Spirit in Clinic: Clinic in Spirit**. Therefore, this was a causal instrument that provided the milieu for the previous two themes to flourish. This then also became the translation piece to access the final themes – the fifth was a direct consequence of this access - an **Empowered Awakening** for the counsellors. The final theme **Divine Presence** was an immersion of the Spirit realm in which **Spirit in Clinic: Clinic in Spirit** and **Empowered Awakening** could flourish. The crucial revelation was the patterned weaving of these themes *together* and *how* they inter-related. Along with the new paradigm of trust, this was an important revelation in the research findings for me.

The person-centred approach to counselling and the subjective stance of the modern Western world has led to a public broadening of outlook to that of the holistic which incorporates the spiritual with the mind and body. This was the crux of the interpretation – the extrapolation of the research findings and their relationship with each other and the order in which the counsellors needed to access them to unlock the nuanced understandings of the expanse of the comparative experiences available to them.

As discussed, the counsellors' tone and language changed conspicuously when they spoke about what they understood to be divine presence in their clinic room. This was not solely witnessed but palpably felt by each as they facilitated the technique with their clients. For both the counsellor and their clients the way to access the possibility of this lived experience was trust in a myriad of forms which then led to the opening of energetic/spiritual work.

The implications for practice mean that if the counsellor and their clients were aware of and open to the **Evolution to Holism** and discovered a way to **Speak the Unspoken** safely and confidently then they had a key to unlock a multi-layered **Paradigm of Trust**. This revealed a portal to the quintessence of **Spirit in Clinic: Clinic in Spirit** which led to **Empowered Awakening** for both and **Divine Presence** was palpably felt. All of this flowing dynamic ushered in and was inextricably linked with potentiating the developments in the meanings of their spirituality - some major and some minor. These will be discussed in the next final chapter Discussion and Conclusion in detail.

Figure 9: Depiction of the Master Themes inter-relationship



I now explore my reflexive reaction to my interpretations of these findings.

4.7 Reflexivity

In this chapter, which charts the data from the counsellor interviews, there was another overlay of the reflexive component. I became acutely aware of the dual element parallel between an initial structured beginning leading to a transition of a more unconscious spiritual stance in three principle capacities namely:

1. The thesis itself with its adherence to the rigours of academic requirements versus acquisition to the liminal space of spiritual connection with this chosen topic.
2. The Energy Therapy Technique initially providing a foundational platform (with a place, helpers and intention for the session) to allow the counsellors' client 'leap into the unknown' of their unconsciousness.

3. The IPA approach starting with a tight thematic framework to delve into the deep interpretations of the rich phenomenon of the counsellors.

This tripartite overlap provided a huge insight into the form and timing of this work having emanated from a ‘dark night of the soul’ experience that this and indeed many PhD researchers face along the journey to submitting the final thesis. As the research neared the finale, I became vividly aware of the parallel between the Energy Therapy Technique, IPA and the write up process. Both techniques are built on strong foundations of a practical nature in ‘setting-up’ the premise for the work. In the case of the technique, the counsellor and the client are safe in the boundaries of the understanding in how the bridge between their mundane world and spirituality can be traversed.

Like-wise with IPA, there is an initial formality to the systematic establishment of the methodology which is a key launch pad for the interpretation of the phenomena. In the write up process I discovered that the first 3 chapters followed the format of this establishment practical stage to be followed by the mystical, soul searching interpretative stage of the data findings and analysis. This aspect brought a creative challenge to the intense process of personal interpretation and although demanding resulted in much satisfaction and fulfilment.

4.7 Conclusion

Now that we have seen the emergent patterns relating to the counsellors’ developments when using the chosen energetic/spiritual technique with their clients, in the next chapter I discuss theoretically and philosophically the implications of these and what the correlation may be with both supporting and critical view literature.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this final chapter I discuss the overarching breadth of the findings and significantly how they correlate together. While remaining grounded in the counsellors’ accounts, I incorporate theoretical concepts from other research - both supportive and critical. The strengths and

limitations are considered followed by future implications for practise with potential investigations in the field. To commence this final discussion chapter, I reiterate the research aims and objectives:

Aim

To investigate how the meanings of spirituality develop among accredited counsellors when practicing a new shamanic energy therapy technique.

Objectives

The aim of the study were achieved through the following objectives:

1. **To conduct a targeted Literature Review relevant to the aspects of counselling, spirituality and shamanism pertinent to the research.**
2. To train and monitor 13 accredited counsellors to practise a new shamanic energy therapy technique with their clients.
3. To explore any developments in the meanings of spirituality of the accredited counsellors practising the technique.

To recap the 6 Master Themes are:

- 1) Speaking the unspoken
- 2) Evolution of counselling to holism
- 3) Paradigm of trust
- 4) Spirit in clinic: clinic in Spirit
- 5) Empowered awakening
- 6) Divine presence

The aims and objectives of this research study were met in that all counsellors experienced developments in the meanings of their spirituality, some major and some minor. These, reflected in the Master Themes titles are detailed below.

The major developments comprised of:

- deep spiritual connection and fulfilment (Fran, Robin, Finn);
- enhanced confidence (Lee and Alex);
- a profound shift within to believe, feel and trust more (Jude, Robin, Ger);

- the ability to live spiritually everyday as an integral part of life (Finn, Terry);
- the competence to facilitate profound changes in their clients often holding issues for many decades (all counsellors);
- the knowledge that there is a myriad of spiritual support available when working this way in counselling (Cory, Pat, Kerry);
- an altered way of understanding counselling work (Kim and Leslie)
- A felt sense of Spirit in their clinic room (all counsellors).

The minor developments occurred where Lee, Kim and Alex spoke about a change in confidence, confirmation and awareness but with no major metaphysical insights. Leslie and Pat acknowledged that whereas their spirituality had been awakened and liberated, essentially their belief systems remained the same. There did not seem to be any correlation between these minor developments and their sense of spirituality as these four counsellors were a mix of Celtic shaman, lapsed Catholic with eclectic outlook, nature based and Christian.

The Master Themes themselves encompassed the iteration of these fundamental phenomenological experiences of the counsellors and as we have seen in the Literature Review not only agreed with but crucially enhanced their findings. Having met the aims and objectives we now focus on the pertinent elements before these developments will be further discussed in section 5.5 Counsellors experience of spirituality.

5.2 Theoretical contribution to knowledge

This was an experiential research study that set out to investigate if the meanings of spirituality for accredited counsellors would develop when using an energetic/spiritual tool. The findings from the entire academic research process demonstrate that indeed the aims and objectives were met, whereby each one of the cohort divulged their personal developments.

This discussion chapter takes the form of my reflections based on the interpretations of the counsellors' comments using IPA methodology and both supportive and critical literature. The master themes gave rich data and spoke of the depth and broad range of phenomena experienced by the counsellors during the research period. These encapsulated the developments in the meanings of their spirituality.

The precepts that surfaced over the course of the research are differentiated from the master themes for presentational purposes and are discussed below under the following headings.

- Counsellors' perspectives of spirituality
- Counsellors' practises of spirituality
- Counsellors' experience of spirituality

5.3 Counsellors' perspectives of spirituality

Under this first over-arching category we discuss the broad strokes of *how* the counsellors view this topic from language to training to outlook. Shafranske and Malony (1990) repeatedly found that it is the counsellor's personal openness and orientation to spirituality that is the elemental factor which predetermines facilitating its inclusion in the clinical forum.

The cohort of accredited counsellors consisted of both practising and lapsed Catholics with some holding a Christian perspective. Others held a nature-based spirituality which in one case overlapped with those emanating from an energy outlook. Several added further views of having an eclectic/broad standpoint while certain counsellors spoke of being spiritual rather than religious. The only formal religion from an historical viewpoint as well as a contemporary one was Catholicism which is consistent which is typical statistically of the population of Ireland at the time of the research.

This mixed variety of stances is interesting considering the history of religion/spirituality in Ireland. In the 5th century Christianity, arriving from mainland Europe, amalgamated with the already burgeoning Celtic monasticism in Ireland. In the 12th century, Catholicism gained a considerable hold with the decrees from the Synod of Ráth Breasail (Corish, 1985). Even during the suppression of Catholicism when it was outlawed by the British Empire, the practise went underground to survive and gain significant social and political influence in the creation of the Irish Free State.

The 2016 census statistics indicated that 78% of the population identify as Catholic in the Irish Republic. This has declined by almost 6% since 2011 (BBC, 2017). In light of this, the terminology used by the cross section of educated experienced counsellors to identify their spirituality is thought-provoking.

5.3.1 Broaching spirituality

Within the first theme, **Speaking the Unspoken**, two strands emerged namely - the paucity of language to describe spirituality and the inherent dilemma of initiating this topic with clients. An inhibiting factor in the verbalisation of spirituality related to the perceived lack of communication skills required when attempting to converse about the indefinable. This concurred with Crossley and Salter's (2005) research examining the experiences of counsellors addressing spiritual beliefs in therapy. One of their two core themes was spirituality as an elusive concept and the cultural level of discomfort and embarrassment surrounding spirituality. Their research culminated in citing inadequacy of language as a reason for their participants feeling confused and unable to grasp the fundamental nature of spirituality and completely concurred with the findings in this research.

However, more than a lack of words emerged within this topic. The felt sense of the frustration and even helplessness in how to portray something numinous was tangible among the counsellors (Van Manen, 1990). It was not solely about the paucity of language but the underlying reason behind this tying in with the indigenous description of 'Spirit' as the 'Great Unnameable One' (Alberto Villoldo, 2001). I could hear this dilemma voiced by the counsellors and I recognised that the acknowledgement of this was enough to allow them find a way to respectfully initiate the conversation with their clients in a manner that would honour all.

Taking this further with the second topic of initiating spirituality with clients, the findings from this research did corroborate with similar percentages to Rosmarin et al. (2013) who found that in their large survey of counsellors, there were reports of 36% being uncomfortable addressing religion/spirituality with their clients and a small cohort of 19% 'never/rarely asked' them of their spiritual beliefs. Similarly, death, dying and the 'afterlife' were popular themes which naturally instigated the subject. Many come to counselling to ponder the great meanings of life and inevitably this broaches these concepts with reference to belief systems and spirituality.

The counsellors' key aim was to conduct the therapeutic session in ways that are congruent with their client's particular beliefs. They were concerned with how to address spirituality and find harmony within which agreed with the results of Crossley and Salter's (2005) study. The two specific aspects which addressed this sensitive process were understanding and ultimately respecting the client's spiritual philosophy. Crossley and Salter's participants were

equally divided in ways to broach the subject of spirituality with their clients whether to address it in the entrance interview or to wait until the client broaches the topic.

This perception of the tentativeness around the spiritual topic 'dance' was observed by both counsellors, particularly Robin, Jude and Kerry, and their clients. West (2000) points out that the client may open up the topic or not, depending even subconsciously on whether they perceive their counsellor to be open to this. It may be concluded that ascertaining if the client holds any beliefs at the entrance interview stage would facilitate their knowing if their counsellor was open to its inclusion in their work together (Hathaway, Scott and Garver, 2004). From listening to the counsellors' developments, it would seem that for some, their new confidence has given them the ability to discern what is appropriate during the sessions rather than potentially upset a new client with a question that could be too much too soon.

The nursing profession is currently leading the research field into religion/spirituality in healthcare. McSherry and Ross (2010) found that patients of a certain age were unfamiliar with spirituality as a concept and perceived it as a synonym for religion whereas nursing staff, in general, had a more clarity on the difference between the two. Comparably, the same research team found that in an early study, younger and middle-aged clients expected their counsellors to hold a holistic viewpoint including spirituality (McSherry and Draper, 1998). There is recognition of the importance of adopting a mind-body-spirit approach as the ongoing commitment for holistic child-centred development in Ireland at government level means that this may generate a need for more holistic based counselling for future generations (Kiernan and Walsh, 2004).

It is incumbent for full ethical protocol that counsellors retain the ability to eschew their own bias, assumptions and seek whatever relevant information they may need to be able to facilitate their clients process their issues (Worthington, 2011). It would be imperative for any counsellors who may have personal adverse issues with religion/spirituality experiencing disillusionment to receive whatever therapeutic help they may require to be able to facilitate at least this conversation if not the various techniques available with clients (Lynch, 2007).

The main summation of this section is the difficulty in finding the language to speak of the numinous nature of spirituality and the possible risk of opening up areas that clients might not be prepared to explore. These findings show that it is not solely about the dearth of language but the inexpressible nature of spirituality itself.

5.3.2 Training in spirituality

The second master theme **Evolution of Counselling to Holism** introduced the matter of training in the subject of spirituality. Two thirds of the counsellors spoke of a dearth of spirituality in their core training which had an impact on their professional lives. They spoke of having to find their *own* harmony between their theoretical orientation and the ability to introduce the subject and felt sense of spirituality into the clinic room. Fran, in particular, explained that they could never bring up spirituality with their tutors but felt that a vital part of what they could offer clients was missing in the field. Whereas Cory and Jude spoke about how this phenomenon affected their own personal sense of spirituality and that something '*very natural*' was not welcome in their training. This relates with Rosmarin et al. (2013) who found that a large percentage - 71% of their 262 counsellors, described little or no training in this area while Lynch (2007) argued that this deficit may highlight predominating professional attitudes towards the intrinsic value of spirituality in counselling.

There is a secondary aspect to this predicament in that the counsellors' supervisors (who they must attend monthly for insurance and best practice reasons) may not be comfortable working with those who either a) seek to discuss their client work which includes spirituality or b) wish to engage with their own spirituality in the supervisory sessions (Lynch, 2007; Blair, 2015). This was mirrored by Gubi and Jacobs (2009) who also revealed a dearth of supervision adequacy in the area of spirituality in their UK research.

Blair (2015) found that an important sub theme in *how* the counsellors responded to their client's spirituality was careful therapeutic skill as well as perceptive cognisance of the possible influence of their own spirituality. For this reason, counsellors who have a spiritual or religious practise are more inclined to favourable attitudes towards religion/ spirituality and mental health treatment according to Rosmarin et al. (2013). This matched initiating spirituality with clients as articulated by Pat who spoke of listening carefully for the ability to relate on a spiritual capacity, sharing that the counsellor and the client may be using different terminology from different approaches but in essence it is the same sense of spirituality.

The contribution of Finn as a tutor in a large facility was particularly apt. Although there is no spirituality on the Course per se, this counsellor finds a way to familiarise the trainees with the concept. By sharing their personal philosophy of bringing their sense of spirituality into each client session privately, they thus open the way for clients to bring theirs too.

However, this means that although the cohort, from this school do receive spirituality as a topic informally, there are no spiritual tools offered for use.

Fran, Jude, Terry and Finn particularly emphasised that given the lack of training and the shortage of adequate theoretical frameworks, counsellors are left in a quandary as to their approach when clients, in a grassroots capacity, introduce the topic into the therapeutic space. Although academic institutions and core Courses may be answering the needs of current students, this introduces a concern for the counsellors who trained in the past and the effect on their present working environment.

In contrast, Exline and Rose's (2005) research findings discovered that for some, religion/spiritual issues do not belong in generic counselling but solely in pastoral and Christian counselling using core techniques with the tenets of the values, morality, rituals and scriptures of the relevant religion. As the participants were of predominantly Christian background this could be extrapolated to the version of whatever faith the respondents may be from i.e. Jewish or Muslim or Shamanic counselling. However, Rose et al. (2002) and their participants were not actually espousing the use of segregated spiritual counselling but considering the ethical implications. These are major considerations when counsellors are using spiritual techniques in their client sessions where they may not have been adequately and competently trained (Aten and Leach, 2009).

There is another aspect in that all accredited counsellors must adhere to continuous professional development (CPD), which is a requirement of legal practice soon to be statutorily regulated by the Irish Government in line with EU codes. With this protocol as a given, counsellors may need to assume personal responsibility to seek and attend psycho-spiritual trainings. This would also include familiarisation with alternate beliefs systems of faith and no faith that may be practiced by their current and future clients. Considering the diversity of expressions used by the counsellors in this research, whether they and their clients agree or not, it would seem that all need to be aware of and prepared to address religion/spirituality in their clinic room finding techniques that enable them to do this and that are congruent with their clinical practise.

5.3.3 Cultural environment

In relation to Ireland in this post-secular age, three counsellors Jude, Finn and Pat had significant points to make on the topic of religion/spirituality which were especially relevant.

They spoke about their observances of certain clients being adrift in their spiritual path from an historical reason or a lack of education on how to harness their spirituality as a healing practice. Pat talked about negative personal experience of religion as a child and currently how that has morphed over the years into a felt sense of genuine connection with Spirit.

Counsellor and client are embedded in an all-encompassing cultural meaning system that profoundly influences thoughts, feelings, behaviour and social interactions. These cultural influences also affect counsellors' interventions, interactions and spiritual disclosure. Training highlights the importance of awareness of verbal and also non-verbal body language. As we have seen from the counsellors' comments, they and their clients are both highly conscious of the atmospheric energy in the room which may be affected by how the individuals view the topic.

According to Moane (2014), the Irish psyche has strengths such as imagination, (ideal to be harnessed in visualisation techniques) but also weaknesses such as inferiority (which frequently are brought into client issues). Her summation of empirical studies highlighting the attributes of the Irish as a people, singled out McDonnell's (2012) findings of over two thirds of her sample of mental health professionals. These included obtuse communication and religion/spirituality issues. Moane (2010) in her own Irish post-colonial and gender research identified three principle resources which could be harnessed for transformation. Two of these, creativity and spirituality (the third is community) are relevant to this study in that the shamanic energetic/spiritual technique is inherently creative in the use of imagination to access consciousness. Her work brought to light a recurring theme in more recent psychological concerns that of the loss of the Irish peoples indigenous healing practices.

Eunice McCarthy (2009), an Irish psychologist argued for both the retention of these older natural ways and the burgeoning of the Irish psychological discipline in Ireland, with the common denominator of the deep unconscious as a resource. This theme was further expounded by a group of counsellors styling themselves 'the fifth Province Associates'. Their foray into the use of Irish myths and storytelling in the context of therapy harnesses dream-work, and connections to the land and ancestors and invites a transpersonal space to emerge. Speaking of direct experience with shamanism and neo-pagan spirituality, therapeutic professionals do not appear to be mining this rich seam of Irish resources to integrate with evidenced based practices of psychology (Moane, 2014).

Both Fran and Jude yearned for the inclusion of their indigenous culture in their professional work and recognised that the research technique gave them this opportunity. More importantly Kerry recognised that inherently we Irish are innately spiritual. Having been privy to the counsellors' direct comments in relation to the above question, I would advocate for the inclusion of indigenous spirituality within counselling sessions and as we have seen throughout this thesis, there are many energetic/spiritual techniques to incorporate this safely from a shamanic basis. There is a momentum of interest building in spirituality through creativity and contemplation (Flanagan and O'Sullivan, 2012) reflected in the formation of the Spirituality Institute for Research and Education (SpIRE), formed in 2016 and inclusive of Celtic monasticism and Irish indigenous ways.

5.4 Counsellors' practises of spirituality

As we have discussed, the classic counselling model is concerned with the mental and emotional expressions of the clients' issue. Since the 1960s bodywork and the concept of the 'issue is in the tissues' has been readily accepted (Kripal and Shuck, 2005). Considering the immense spiritual integrative movements from Assagioli's Psychosynthesis from the 1930s and Wilber's Transpersonal Psychology from the 1960s, incorporating the spiritual widely has been slower to assimilate. Since 1990's Alberto Villolodo, Michael Harner, Sandra Ingerman and Barbara Tedlock have brought major credence to including shamanic based energetic/spiritual techniques within professional healthcare settings.

Brockman (2006) and MacKinnon (2012) in particular, in the last two decades, have brought these techniques to the forefront of the modern counselling establishment. Again, while welcomed and effective, there has been only been a relatively protracted uptake in Ireland to incorporate these techniques. This may be due to the various schools not formally embracing these methods or the reticence of the profession to introduce ideas that are difficult to articulate for the Western mind into a profession that is relatively new and has struggled in the past to achieve official sanction and authorisation from the public.

5.4.1 Current trends in counselling

In Ireland today, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is perceived as the most popular form of counselling either as a complete therapy framework or as a clinical technique. The basic premise understands that how we think and feel is not automatic or involuntary but

within our control to change. This is achieved using problem and action focused techniques aimed at reclaiming thoughts and beliefs from systems that are no longer, if ever, productive.

Originally started in the UK and the US in the 1950s, its focus was purely behavioural, until the 1960s when a cognitive orientation was incorporated. In the 1980s, CBT finally emerged to claim increasing attention due to its rigorous medical/scientific evidence-based research with randomised control trial and laboratory experimental studies. In Ireland, the Institute of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (ICBT) was established in 1999 and many members trained in the Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) modality of CBT pioneered by Albert Ellis. It has proved hugely popular with the medical fraternity and indeed the public due to the practical nature and proven effectiveness (ICP, 2018). Interestingly, the latest incarnation of CBT incorporates mindfulness techniques and a new element, termed ‘Acceptance and Commitment Therapy’ which leans towards the non-contextual (Hayes, 2016).

There is much to be said for energetic/spiritual techniques needing a ‘champion’ such as a leading school or well-known figure to promote it within the counselling profession in Ireland. It would appear that, similar to the so called ‘spiritual revolution’ (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005), it is taking its own natural slow and steady time in a client-led bottom up manner. The findings in this research indicate that if there were training modules providing diversity in language and spiritual approaches, then an increasing number of counsellors would supply the growing client demand. More research in this area and articles written on this phenomenon in an Irish context in peer reviewed literature and the relevant counselling magazines would further highlight this deficiency and promote a greater uptake.

5.4.2 Paradigm of trust

Within this master theme, the concept of trust rose as a significant phenomenon for the majority of the counsellors with multiple comments in several guises spoken of frequently and in great detail. These ranged from the counsellors’ trust in the energetic/spiritual as a safe approach and self-trust to smoothly introduce this new concept and the technique with their client cohort.

Trust is a multi-dimensional, complex concept and is a basic pre-condition for establishing any counselling relationship (Simpson, 2004). Foremost is the justification for not merely protecting the interests of counsellors but increasing the psychological safety available to clients (Corey, 1996). Professional relationships of trust that maintain good boundaries help

to create a sense of safety in which clients can reveal their vulnerabilities without worrying about the impact on the counsellor (Bondi, 2009). Trust is seen to be cognitive (an opinion), affective (a feeling) or conative (a choice) (Koehn, 2003; Fletcher-Tomenius and Vossler, 2009).

There are differing aspects to this manifold phenomenon and there is an extra layer of trust required between the counsellor and the client when religion/spirituality enters the frame. For the dynamic of counselling to work there is a necessity of mutual trust - trust in the integrity of the counsellor, trust in the credibility of the client and trust in that what is being said, even if not factual truth, is of meaningful value, and of some subjective truth. Trust is even more a necessity when a formal religion or sense of spirituality that reflects the perceived relationship between humans and God is introduced (Brandner, 2013).

In this research, the counsellors trained to trust the process of counselling, had been asked in addition to trust not only their own spiritual helpers but also those of their clients and ultimately trust in Spirit. Every counsellor subsequently spoke of the new paradigm of trust they experienced to be able to access the belief that they could indeed usher the energetic/spiritual into their clinic space with confidence and assurance. This went above and beyond the trust that they had been accustomed to within the counselling relationship. With the shamanic-based technique they were now communing with their spiritual guides, trusting that their clients were with theirs and that Spirit was present.

For Robin there was a significant shift, a change movement within as they tentatively then wholeheartedly trusted themselves, their intuition and Spirit. This slight trepidation to unlock a new aspect of trust may seem unusual given the age and professional maturity of the counsellors where 'trust in the process' is of paramount importance at training level. We must remember though the very prescient comment by Ger about having to hide their views on spirituality in the early days of their counselling due to their perceived 'witch hunt'.

In any new learning circumstance, there is the necessity of harnessing the initial belief, confidence and self-trust required to absorb the material and facilitate its use. In this capacity, the counsellor must be confident of their tools when describing and using them with their client base. All of the counsellors expressed that the technique chosen for the research was robust yet simple enough to trust that they could explain and facilitate with their clients new

to this approach. In the case of Leslie's client, no matter how strong the trust between them, she could not progress any further due to how she held her very private religious beliefs.

The aspect of responsibility when introducing the technique into their client sessions was specifically mentioned by more than half the counsellors. The concept of consciously handing over the responsibility and the subsequent empowerment palpably felt led to the counsellors stepping back intentionally and trusting the process. This was echoed by Kim in stating the satisfaction of facilitating and guiding while the client is ultimately self-healing. I heard the felt sense of the counsellors recognising that now their clinical sessions had been fortified and indeed amplified by working in a manner that is totally supported by the complete responsibility of the client themselves and the spiritual component of their value system.

Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2003) study discussed the anxieties frequently experienced in the formative years of counsellors' careers as they struggle to become more confident and familiar with the inner workings of the relationship and various techniques within their repertoire. The IACP, Ireland's largest professional counselling body, has made great strides in scheduling community events to overcome this recognised early issue among counsellors. The need for these was poignantly declared by Cory who warmly welcomed the spiritual support both in practise and their own life in recognition of no longer 'working alone'. In Rønnestad and Skovholt's study, spirituality was also shown as an optimal differentiator during the developmental lifespan of a counsellor and Delaney et al.'s (2013) research concurs with this.

During the interviews, I was particularly struck by hearing the counsellors voice the trust they had for Spirit working through their guides/helpers, speaking of the phenomenon of being 'held' and knowing that they were not solely responsible for the outcome of the clinical session. In essence there was a parallel with the spiritual expression to 'Let go and let God'.

5.4.3 The energetic/spiritual within counselling

Every counsellor in the study explicitly articulated that using the shamanic based energetic/spiritual technique chosen for the research had a profound effect on their trust, confidence, way of working, leading to a felt experience of the palpable presence of Spirit. Many had undergone dissatisfaction with classic counselling, often referred to

euphemistically as ‘talk therapy’ and yearned to investigate more broad ranging holistic processes. The counsellors believed that steady gradual change is possible through counselling but that rapid, deep shifts are viable by actuating a holistic approach into their client work. These dramatic changes were mirrored by other qualitative studies also using similar metaphysical tools (Rosmarin et al., 2013; Verbeck et al., 2015; White, 2016).

This differentiates the process of change using energetic/spiritual techniques from classic counselling which is founded on attaining fresh insights, altering negative thinking and acquiring alternate ways of behaviour. There are those in long term counselling who are of the opinion that the process must be slow, gradual and angst-ridden (White, 2016). The counsellors in this research came to the understanding that the two are not mutually exclusive and that often both occur in classical counselling *and* in holistic counselling. On the basis of their comments the holistic approach seems to facilitate deep rapid shifts more often. This stance rings true with Fran’s very visual analogy of counselling being a plain ‘*digestive biscuit*’ as opposed to the shamanic energetic/spiritual technique’s upper echelon ‘*chocolate*’.

Gaudiano and Miller (2013) conducted their empirical study with counsellors practising Energy Psychology whose form and origins eschew scientific evidence-based research. They conjectured that if the cohort had received critical thinking instruction in their formative training then they may have been more open to making scientific choices. However, in the case of Savage (2014), her direct experience of Spirit through her shamanic treatment led her to study further and eventually incorporate these techniques into her clinic work. Indeed, personal experience is perceived as more influential than impersonal data when choosing a new theoretical orientated practise (Heffler and Sandell, 2009). The counsellors agreed with the latter sentiment, as once they had experienced the technique during training, 13 out of 14 made the conscious decision to undertake the research over a 3 – 6 month period. Indeed, both Lee and Alex professed their satisfaction in fulfilling a dream to work in this holistic manner. I conjecture that this type of approach needs to be experienced by the counsellor prior to adequately and successfully facilitating with clients.

It is also important to consider that Lambert (1986) concluded his work into the effectiveness of therapeutic models with a 15% rate of variance in their efficacy. The type of technique, he researched included those which fit under the remit of the energetic/spiritual such as biofeedback and hypnosis. In 1952, Eysenck undertook a ground-breaking study which showed that clients who underwent long term counselling improved as much as those who

received none. The placebo effect raises another key principle as in successful technique usage, both counsellor and client believe in the restorative power of the treatment's procedures or rituals. The main rationale being that most therapeutic methods prepare the client to take some action to help themselves.

In contrast, the counsellors in this research found that they were able to facilitate their clients move forward in their issues in a new and prescient manner. Finn, an experienced counsellor and lecturer spoke of witnessing a client self-heal an issue buried for many decades. This concurs with the conclusion reached by Stuber and Horn (2012) that energetic/ spiritual approaches should be studied at face value and in the context of their popularity while 'maintaining critical curiosity'.

For counselling as a therapy to work, the client needs to believe implicitly in the abilities of their counsellor so they may focus on their issue in complete safety and assurance that they are held in their life challenges. There is a given that in appropriate circumstances new tools in the form of techniques may be introduced i.e. stress management mindfulness or anti-panic attack breathing. This brings a new level of reliance and indeed responsibility for both counsellor and client. As Ger put it concisely if there is a good connection between both, then the client is more likely to give permission to try a new technique.

Much of the research on this 'relationship factor' has originated in the person-centred tradition based around Roger's (1942) core conditions of empathy, positive regard and congruence. Najavits & Strupp's (1994) study results indicated that the display of more positive behaviour towards their clients could explain the counsellors' effectiveness. There was a possibility that the clients in this study might have trusted and believed in their counsellors so much so that any new technique was likely to be a good intervention.

However, the findings of this research show that the counsellors did observe their clients not only energetically release, realign and restore issues decades old but do so from a positionality of empowerment. Thus, it was the clients that did the self-healing work albeit facilitated by the counsellor therefore the aforementioned possibility does not appear to be valid in these findings. As Fran stated, this compassionate way of working permitted clients reach a wide range of issues by accessing their spirituality.

The plethora of comments by the counsellors on the matter of the energetic/spiritual approach combined with counselling spontaneously emerged during the interview without a particular question to prompt them. Terry specifically talked about how Carl Rogers' principle of 'unconditional positive regard' went much deeper with clients than ordinarily. For some, using the technique brought an appreciation of other aspects of their formative training such as 'consciousness' - a key theory of Carl Jung. This related to Scott's (2014) work and the use of shamanic techniques within a psychological framework. Scott references Jung's analytical psychology - his introduction to the concept of the psyche as the origin of 'numinous' experiences within his concepts of the collective unconscious, archetypes and the individuation process (Jung and Riklin, 1973).

This phenomenon of numinous experiences brought a palpable sense of intuitive awareness from a third of the counsellors, who spoke of their reasons for requiring a synergy of classical counselling with the energetic/spiritual way. They recognised the benefits of integrating both and acknowledged the promptness of the therapeutic outcomes that occurred. However, Kim spoke of the importance of knowing when the clients *only* required classic counselling, while Cory introduced a note of restraint in querying if incorporating an energetic spiritual tool within the counselling session might actually be an avoidance concern. Even though the counsellors were only using the technique for a short period of time 3-6 months, due to the in-depth training and mentorship, there was a real sense of them becoming quickly proficient and able to recognise when it was appropriate or inappropriate to use.

The findings suggest that once a new level of trust was established in their own abilities and in an energetic/spiritual technique a safe framework was provided to allow their clients process any issues. This new paradigm brought innovative meaning to their working lives and developed their meanings of spirituality.

5.4.4 Working with an energetic/spiritual tool

The use of an energetic/spiritual tool brought about a shift from the scientific and rational to a place of ease with the unknowable. Spiritual tools are not new - humans have used them for millennia. Since the early 20th century, Jung, Assagioli and Rogers among many within the counselling fraternity have pioneered the development of spiritual tools.

However, in the context of this research it is the ability to provide a means for the clients to heal energetically from a place of empowerment that is pertinent. Cahill, O'Shea and Pierce (2012) sound a note of caution in their research into nurses' perspectives in providing spiritual care. They found that in the absence of guidelines provision of any spiritual tools is open to the individual's elucidation which could be erroneous, causing upset and harm. As highlighted by MacGabhann (2004) there is a need to develop clinically effective treatment approaches that specifically fit the context of Irish people and their healthcare system.

In White's (2016, p.38) research the counsellors began to distinguish between their practise of counselling and Energy Psychology techniques as distinctly different. They cited TAT – 'as a total therapeutic technique' in some cases formally letting go their role as counsellor. In direct contrast, the Energy Therapy Technique was intentionally designed for inclusion in and building on the strong foundations of counselling practice. This shamanic based energetic/spiritual technique was chosen as an integral tool *within* the counselling inventory and not an alternate therapy. Lee spoke of this approach being a stronger force or leading light within counselling.

In the Literature Review, we saw that in a wide variety of approaches, the premise of using visualisation, stones and spiritual helpers is not unique. However, the fundamental key with this technique as an intervention is that it is the sum of parts in a package easily accessible in an Irish context. The technique as a framework may easily facilitate counsellors to not only introduce but to expedite their clients tap into their own sense of spirituality for empowered healing. This type of holistic work is a collaborative union between the counsellor, their client and crucially both parties' spiritual helpers.

This relationship draws an analogy with the concept of 'Open Dialogue' - as a collaboration that brings people together in a mutual temporary experience of benefit within mental health nursing care service provision. Participants must enter the dynamic of their own volition and be willing to engage in the interchange.

According to Piippo and MacGabhann (2016) this reflective discussion allows one to be amenable and accepting of another person's way of viewing the world and their reality which may differ from one's own understanding. They cite Seikkula and Olson (2003) who include in the main principles of Open Dialogue, the flexibility to adapt the therapeutic response to the specific and changing needs of each client using methods which best suit each case. These ideologies also apply to many energetic/spiritual techniques and especially in the case of

Robin who spoke of the '*visible transaction*' and '*movement*' between them, their client and their spiritual helpers

There was a felt sense of witnessing something new, fresh and different - a significant move from the mental and emotional model of classic counselling. Three of the counsellors had trained in a Psychodynamic methodology and would have been used to a more transpersonal approach. However it was the use of a specific tool which provided a safe framework to facilitate the clients tap into their innate spirituality that was new for all participants. Researchers and key movers in the profession have been advocating the progression of the practise of counselling beyond the epistemological knowledge culture of therapeutic approaches. Recognising the importance of respecting the clients' preferences over the therapists' allegiances, this privileges the client rather than the counsellor as the hero/heroine in the therapeutic relationship, (McLeod and Cooper, 2012). Historically the counsellor was seen as the 'hero/heroine' who with knowledge and techniques intervened in their clients' lives to mend unhealthy behaviours and thinking (White, 2016).

In our modern secular world, counselling is evolving so that the client is regarded as the 'expert' and their active input in the sessions is vital to real change occurring in their lives. They come to counselling not solely to process the insights that may emerge but to creatively and actively transform their lives of their own volition (Tallman and Bohart, 1999). As they proceeded to use the technique, the counsellors could visibly see a physical change in their clients. After 3 sessions Kerry spoke with awe of observing a long-term client become empowered in their own healing. Ger could perceive this energetically by the lightness in their energy field. There was a felt sense in their descriptions of witnessing a new phenomenon in their working lives due to the inclusion of a shamanic-based energetic/spiritual technique.

The role of the counsellor is 'decentralised' to prioritise the empowerment of the client, no longer the 'expert/fixer/healer' but now a co-facilitator with Spirit. The role of the counsellor in this instance was to stand back and allow a co-creation between counsellor, client and Spirit. In a profession, where for many decades, the counsellor was believed to be the expert, the growth of the humanistic and integrative perspectives has ushered in a new era where this is no longer the norm. The energetic/spiritual approach turns this on its head in a paradigm shift where the client and their spiritual guidance are proficient in any healing that needs to

occur. However, there may be a twist in that the ‘energy’ itself becomes the ‘expert’ and again we might have the placebo effect rear its head (White, 2016). However, we have seen that according to the counsellors the shift that occurred moved them more appropriately into the role of facilitator and witness.

This final and important layer of trust was where the counsellor held the belief that their client with their own spiritual helpers could process their issue completely while they simply held sacred space and trusted the process. In essence they added not simply a new technique into their clinical toolkit but a completely new way of viewing the framework of the proceedings by trusting that there was a team working in the session consisting of both counsellor and client, both sets of ‘helper/guides’ and Spirit.

5.4.5 Further reflections

It could be expected that any comments relating to confidence would have been focused on the counsellors observing the self-autonomy of their clients. This would ultimately herald the beginning of the end of their treatment and the start of living life with the necessary tools to heal. There was a palpable expression of *personal* confidence in the ability of a third of the counsellors to facilitate a holistic complement of synergistic strategies empowering their clients aligned with their spirituality. Their personal growth in both self-confidence and sense of personal empowerment was evident especially since all research participants were many years from their core training. There was an aspect of ingenuous delight in their tone and expression which leads onto the subsequent supposition. The majority of counsellors spoke of a ripple effect in their lives from taking part in the research. This translated as spending more time in nature and enhancing their current spiritual practise. This is consistent with the findings of Koenig et al. (2012) who discovered that those who are involved in religious/spiritual practise are on average healthier and happier than previously.

If a counsellor believes in the therapeutic benefits of these techniques then to allow enough personal vulnerability to risk working with another professional to receive the techniques themselves is a boon. We have seen that for some of the cohort this was a difficult position and conversely, these were the ones who had studied spirituality most academically but had a dearth of practical experience in nature and energy-based spirituality. Both Lee and Alex expressed amazement that they were both ‘*actually doing it*’ whereas the others - Fran, Terry

and Cory who had a more experiential daily habit were gratified with the outcomes but were less surprised.

5.5 Counsellors' experiences of spirituality

IPA comes from a double hermeneutic stance and wants to know in detail about experiences and the sense someone makes of what is happening to them. Ultimately the researcher is making sense of the interviewee making sense of their experiences (Smith, 1996). The transformational developments the counsellors experienced were multi-faceted. While the meanings did develop for all, there were major transformations for some and minor experiences for others.

The major developments ranged from a deep spiritual connection and fulfilment to enhanced confidence and a profound shift within to believe, feel and trust more. The ability to live spiritually everyday as an integral part of life and the competence to facilitate profound changes in their clients often holding issues for many decades was enhanced by the knowledge that there is a myriad of spiritual support available when working this way in counselling. Finally, an altered way of understanding counselling work emanated from a felt sense of Spirit in their clinic room.

The minor developments were significant - a change in confidence, confirmation and awareness - but crucially these counsellors spoke of no major metaphysical insights. While some did acknowledge that their spirituality had been awakened and liberated, essentially their belief systems remained the same.

The terms '*connected*', '*fulfilled*' and '*authentic awareness*' were accessed through the new paradigm of trust to experience working at a deeper unity consciousness within the counsellors' lives. The shift in perception – the opportunity to be a part of something greater than self was palpable.

The counsellors voiced a new growth and maturity which aligned with the journey of a human life transformed from basic needs to escalating awareness and transpersonal connection (Maslow, 1956; Assagioli, 1959). Every counsellor felt the presence of the entity of Spirit in their clinic room and this had a profound effect on their meanings of spirituality which entered a new dimension.

The shifts occurred within as well as without – a deepening of personal beliefs no matter the origins alluded to the ‘secular sacred’ aspect of the technique and the ripple effect on the lives of the counsellors outside their working life. The confidence to emerge from hiding their eclectic mix of beliefs as well as combination of the spiritual with the mental and emotional brought an immense appreciation for this methodology. They voiced gratitude for recognising that they are capable of being an actual evolving part of *‘something bigger’* that is lived at all times and not simply at specified ritualistic times in the week.

Divine presence is described as going beyond the physical and psychological into a mystical manifestation. This experience mirrors descriptions of the transcendent presence by Carl Rogers in which he talks about being in an altered state of consciousness and his presence in the room reaches out to the other - ‘I can relax and be close to the transcendental core of me...it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other.’ (Farber, Brink and Raskin, 1996, p.129). This eloquent description is reminiscent of Fran’s *‘alive presence’*, Jude’s *‘featherlike calmness’* and Cory’s *‘infinite power’* of Spirit. These descriptions, while awe inducing are not theatrically dramatic and so fit into Maslow’s (1994) ‘plateau experience’ of a sustained, calm response to the mystical in contrast to the intensity of a ‘peak experience’.

A particular major development was the ability and often incredulity of having a safe and uncomplicated way to unite the counsellors’ sense of spirituality in their working life in a manner that held sacred the personal beliefs of their clients. This conscious shift for counsellors (and for clients) deepened their spirituality and enriched and heightened the mystical in their lives. It was their eloquent expressions of the experience rather than simply an intellectual awareness or believing in a dogmatic or philosophical construct. I felt it more prosaic to use their words here rather than anything I could apply to explain these judicious discoveries.

Jude’s *‘I can feel so I can believe, feel & trust more...an energy that can help me - all of it not something apart’* spoke volumes of the tangible quality of what occurred for the counsellors in their working life. Leslie has the last words which sum up the new way of thinking *‘how I view it [my spirituality] changed. Now a facilitating tool is not just mine but mine for everyone who wants to work this way.’*

The nuanced illustrations of their immersive experiences brought the research deep into the realms of phenomena and a way to awakening a profound sense of amazement at the mystery of life itself. This was reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty who spoke of Phenomenology as the primal voice of the experience in a language that ‘sings the world’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). As we see from the terms applied by the counsellors such as ‘*blessed*’, ‘*light*’ and ‘*God-like moments*’ these instil a profound sense of awe and mystery. Indeed as we have seen, this is evocative of IPA’s more esoteric aims which exceed the objectives of most phenomenologists in order to gaze in wonder at consciousness itself. Indeed, the infectious joy and incredulity is evident in frequent comments illustrating the essence of phenomenology.

5.5.2 Knowing the unknown

The **Divine Presence** theme emphasised the ways in which the counsellors spoke of the experience and the privilege of holding, facilitating and witnessing their clients’ connection to their perception of the divine. Porter (1995) established that the essential foundation of spirituality is the experience of knowing something that is unknowable and the metaphysical aspect of ‘Self’. Spirituality cannot be felt through intellectual thinking or emotional feeling but only transcendent experience ‘in the now’.

Fritz Perls (1973) the co-founder of Gestalt Therapy concurred speaking of the power of being present and ‘going inside’ to connect to the spiritual. The terminology of the counsellors in this research altered when speaking about what actually occurred in the sessions. It took on a different coherency to explain the tangible immersion into and of Spirit. Words such as ‘*power*’ and ‘*magnitude*’ undeniably make allusion to the connection between energy work and spirituality in the classic Jungian analogy of lifting a ‘veil between the worlds’ of ordinary and non-ordinary reality as engagement with the unconscious.

These immanent responses accord with Rich (2012) who incorporates shamanic techniques with transpersonal psychology as an integrative approach. She blended both modern and ancient tools together to great effect. Citing Wilber (2000), she states that in her opinion transpersonal theory paves the way for a pure holistic, integrative approach incorporating the mind, body, spirit trinity gifting the counsellor with a comprehensive path to the human psyche. The findings of this research implicitly align with this perception as the counsellors corroborated in their responses.

In the **Empowered Awakening** theme, we saw the overarching reaction of the counsellor and their clients to the energetic spiritual way noting that working with this new framework does require that a level of connection has been established in the manner of Roger's 'unconditional positive regard'. As we saw in the Literature Review, Porter (1995) highlights the importance of the counsellor being stable enough in their own spirituality to recognise when a client is experiencing spiritual emergence (an awakening of the transcendent within). When the counsellor is firmly rooted in their own sense of the spiritual they are in a good standing to reassure and assist their client navigate these types of transformative experiences.

The findings were congruent with this internal perception and all counsellors presented as comfortable in their sense of spirituality enough to be able to facilitate the technique with their clients in all circumstances when appropriate. However, there was a perception that not all participants 'lived' their spirituality to the same extent. While every counsellor attested to the alleviation of symptoms of their clients and the positive effects of the tool, two of the cohort seemed to be commenting from a head as opposed to heart perspective.

The concept of aligning with consciousness to the extent of realising that 'the more you know – the less you know' was evident from those who had a daily spiritual practice in nature as opposed to the counsellors who had excellent academic knowledge but less empirical fieldwork in their own spiritual holding. While in every case bar two (mutually postponed session with colleague and client who '*could not go there*'), the clients expedited their self-healing. However, the ability of the counsellor to receive the transformative energies themselves had its limits.

The use of the energetic/spiritual tool chosen gave the counsellors an opportunity to bring spirituality into their clinical space. The **Evolution to Holism** in itself is not new as we have seen in the Literature Review chapter, the concept of **Speaking the Unspoken** has been charted in other research studies. However, the **Paradigm of Trust** introduced a new layer to this key aspect of counselling as the counsellors felt an **Empowered Awakening** in harnessing their own sense of spirituality in their work setting. Ultimately this led to a profound experience of **Divine Presence** for every counsellor within their clinic which affected their meanings of spirituality with both major and minor developments.

5.6 Limitation and strengths of the research

In all qualitative research the findings are heavily influenced by the researcher's subjectivity who proffers their specific interpretation of the data which might not be possible to replicate by another researcher. While I did all that I could to remain as unbiased as possible I was highly aware of being an '*insider outsider*' as a counsellor, colleague and the founder of the Energy Therapy Technique.

During the course of the research, I was the counsellors' trainer, mentor and finally their interviewer. Consequentially there was always the potential that these relationships affected the respondents' comments due to an aspiration to please me. Nonetheless, a quarter of the cohort did specifically state that their meanings of spirituality changed in minor ways i.e. Lee with '*no blinding metaphysical insight*' so it was deemed the counsellors were speaking their truth and this was not a factor. This also lends credence to the fact that the counsellors adhering to their code of ethics and conduct did reflect their actual experience. There is also the assertion that the counsellors were a very select group and the topic, spirituality and counselling, was of consequence to them. Therefore, their comments might have been compliant to the research questions if not amplified. There could also have been a strong social desirability factor at play.

Although typically representative of the profession, all the accredited counsellors were white, middle class, middle aged and Irish and the findings reflect this. If the participants had been younger or immigrants to Ireland and/or more multi-faith orientated, then their experience of religion/spirituality in Ireland might have been very different.

All of the counsellors were formerly Catholics, some lapsed, some practising and some identified as solely Christian. Others professed to a different form of spiritual path that of shamanism which comes under the banner of Paganism. Nevertheless, as a group they were all open to spirituality and there was the maximum likelihood of an inclination to expound on the subject readily. The mere opening of the door to spirituality and a new Irish technique with me as the founder was likely to provoke an assenting reaction.

This research was thorough, rigorous and systematic in its procedure. The large quantity of rich data was presented in a meticulous, comprehensible manner aided by a unique new theoretical framework diagram (see figure 9). The work presents findings that are relevant to

counsellors intending to consider the addition of energetic/spiritual tools in their repertoire. It highlights gaps in existing research on counsellors' experiences in general and specifically in relation to trust, spirituality and use of new techniques brought to the fore since core Course training. The sample was chosen carefully to include a good mix of mature accredited counsellors from a range of different backgrounds geographically spread countrywide and proportionately representative in terms of gender and age.

5.7 Implications

The implications of this research study will be discussed under three related headings: theory, practise and research.

Theory:

There are key implications for the Irish counselling fraternity in regards to theories offered in training. From this research, it is recommended that all Irish core counselling courses introduce a module on religion/spirituality to offer the trainees appropriate and accessible language plus a range of suitable secular spiritual tools to be conversant in spiritual issues. This may or may not include ascertaining if the client holds any beliefs at the entrance interview stage which would facilitate their knowing that the counsellor was open to its inclusion in their work together. Alternatively, more counsellors could be encouraged to add the word 'spirituality' to their relevant association/society profile classification in their areas of specialisation. Since I named mine in this way, supervisees now travel long distances to avail of this service due to a dearth in their local area.

I would also recommend subsequently that the major Irish associations and societies organise training in this topic for their supervisors to be capable of meeting the demands of the future. Both individual counsellors and schools may consider looking into professional training in the burgeoning area of Irish and Celtic shamanism and paganism as an addendum to their repertoire of spiritual tools. In this way, counsellors would have the opportunity to encounter the various phenomena experienced in this research while making the decision whether to include such techniques in their repertoire.

Research:

A substantive conclusion that indicates scope for further research arising out of this study is the investigation of shamanic-based energetic/spiritual techniques using measures and

approaches employed in research on mindfulness and meditation. Alternatively, there could be opportunities for more study in the vein of CBT such as brain scans when conducting shamanic journeying and the visualisation aspect of the Energy Therapy Technique.

IPA is subjective which was an easy fit in the quest for participants' meanings and lived experiences. I recommend more qualitative research be conducted using this evolving and flexible methodology which while burgeoning in the UK has yet to extend more broadly worldwide. We are fortunate in Ireland through the auspices of DCU to welcome several of the key pioneers to the annual Methodology Research Summer School.

While this researcher is a proponent of qualitative work, there is an opening for a quantitative study on the effects and merits of these energetic/spiritual techniques especially from shamanic principles. There is the potential for a comparative longitudinal study highlighting the usefulness of these and other forms of therapeutic approaches with the phenomenology of transformation. The impact of energetic/spiritual involvement on the therapeutic relationship with a counsellor and a client cohort could elicit meaningful ways to introduce this topic more fluidly. The resultant impact on the meanings of spirituality for the counsellors indicate that this may be a good match for a humanistic and/or integrative framework and could be a consideration for these schools in Ireland if following the 'spiritual revolution' zeitgeist and seeking a secular spiritual tool.

Practice:

The new conceptual framework depicted at the end of the Findings Chapter shows that a defined energetic/spiritual technique designed to elicit spirituality in counselling can usher in new developments in the meanings of spirituality for accredited counsellors.

Finally, counsellors could familiarise themselves with alternate beliefs systems of faith and no faith that may be practiced by their current and future clients. In all qualitative research the findings are heavily influenced by the researcher's subjectivity who proffers their specific interpretation of the data which might not be possible to replicate by another researcher. While I did all that I could to remain as unbiased as possible I was highly aware of being a counsellor peer, an IACP colleague and the founder of the Energy Therapy Technique.

5.8 Conclusion

It is unusual to generate a concluding section for an IPA process which by its very nature is both cyclical and iterative therefore characteristically has no conclusions. Nevertheless, through the lens of IPA methodology, the meanings of spirituality for the counsellor cohort have developed in ways that substantiate and reflect the aspirations of the research question.

5.8.1 Importance of this research

As we have seen, Ireland is changing and in Dublin today, the increasing number of holistic centres and mindfulness practices signals a slow and steady rise in a ‘spiritual revolution’ (Heelas et al., 2005). Many Irish people have left their former religious practice for a variety of reasons yet still yearn for spiritual connection. When they attend counselling, gradually more and more clients are seeking to explore their issues from a holistic standpoint importantly including spirituality.

Counsellors aware of this trend are conscious of how to address this issue and crucially how it may affect their own sense of spirituality. This research was devised to answer that fundamental question - *how* counsellors respond personally to using a spiritual tool within their client work. The particular technique used enabled the counsellors to incorporate their *own* spiritual meanings while offering their clients an inclusive way to tap into theirs during a clinic session.

The process has increased understanding of how introducing spirituality into the work of counsellors develops their meanings of this highly personal topic and the requirements therein. Their process of personal growth was facilitated by the unlocking of a portal to empowered awakening and experiencing divine presence in their clinic by a conscious paradigm of trust connected to the evolution of the counselling profession towards inclusion of energetic/spiritual tools and the ability to introduce these confidently. The Energy Therapy Technique acts as a safe and practical ‘secular sacred’ transformational agent.

5.8.2 Contributing to academic literature

As indicated, in recent years there have been a number of research studies documenting the effects of counsellors introducing spirituality to their client work and the Literature Review

detailed the ones most relevant to this thesis question. However, within academia, investigations from counsellors' perspectives in this milieu have not been as prevalent. Internationally there is scant documentation focusing on the meanings of spirituality for counsellors and also a lack of research into counsellors' experience relating to the use of spiritual tools and specifically shamanic techniques within a counselling model.

Although Sandra Ingerman, in the US and Christa Mackinnon, in the UK, have documented their adjusted shamanic healing techniques as key tools within therapeutic practice (Ingerman, 2010; Mackinnon, 2012) there has been no Irish equivalent. I contend that this research work has contributed to a specific gap in the literature.

5.8.3 Concluding sentiments

The dynamics of the inter-relational process in this research context through the perceptual framework of the energetic/spiritual template has unearthed the profound personal changes in the lives of the counsellors. An appropriate core Course and/or CPD training can usher in a multi-layered paradigm of trust to unlock the way for the energetic/spiritual approach. The increasing number of articles in the IACP's quarterly magazine, the largest of its kind in Ireland, ahead of imminent statutory regulation, augurs well. Shamanic energetic/spiritual techniques fit with current humanistic and integrative approaches to counselling which privilege the client, rather than the counsellor as the 'adept' in the therapeutic alliance. In my view this is unique and original work within the biopsychospiritual field and this research cultivates new ground within this sphere providing new theoretical and practical insights in an Irish context.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Client consent form

Informed Consent Form for Clients of the Accredited Counsellors

Research Study Title

To investigate how the meanings of spirituality develop among accredited counsellors practicing a new shamanic energy therapy technique conducted by Karen Ward, PhD candidate of Dublin City University (DCU).

Clarification of the purpose of the research.

“This technique, referred to as the Energy Therapy Technique, brings a spiritual and energetic aspect based on shamanic, holistic (mind, body, spirit) principles to a counselling psychotherapeutic model to offer you the opportunity to breakthrough any energetic blockages and/or restore any disassociated parts that may hinder you moving forward from your presenting issue. My research is with your Counsellor to explore if any developments in the meanings of

spirituality after using this technique with you. I have both developed and used this technique, under supervision, for the last 3 years with my clients, safely and with their positive feedback.”

Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Participant Information Sheet.

The requirements for participation include:

1. Reading the Participant Information Sheet and asking any questions you may have.
2. Giving your consent to take part by signing this form.

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

Have you read or had read to you the Participant Information Sheet	Yes	No
Do you understand the information provided?	Yes	No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this research study?	Yes	No
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	Yes	No

Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary.

It is important to note that you may withdraw from the Research Study at any time and without the need to justify or otherwise explain that decision. There will be no penalty for withdrawing from the Research Study. So, if you do not like the Energy Therapy Technique at the first session you may choose not to continue with the final two. In the highly unlikely event that your counsellor does not wish to continue after the first session but you do the researcher will then refer you to another counsellor who can facilitate this but it will not be part of the research.

Date Protection and Confidentiality of all material (consent form)

This will be retained by your counsellor and stored in a secure private place and is subject to legal limitations (*confidentiality of information provided cannot always be guaranteed by researchers and can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions.*) and the DCU and IACP Code of Ethics.

Any other relevant information

You will remain completely anonymous throughout this research as your name will not appear any forms so full privacy is maintained.

Your Counsellor will be interviewed after the 3 sessions, and if they wish to mention an aspect of your sessions, then a “fictitious code first name” will be used to identify to keep you anonymous. Your age range and a 1-2 word description of your issue will be also used i.e. 40-50 years of age, relationship issue.

The information gleaned from the interviews will be used in the researcher’s final thesis and published papers. On awarding of the PhD all of this documentation will be shredded by the researcher. The final thesis will be available for reading by request.

There is no cost for taking part in the research and neither is there a fee paid.

If you find the Technique beneficial you may request its use as part of any subsequent Counselling sessions once your counsellor is happy to facilitate that after the research is finished.

Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the Counsellor representing the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

Participants Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2 Client information sheet

Short Information Sheet for Clients of Accredited Counsellors

Introductory Statement

You are being invited to be part of a research study in which I - your Counsellor, am a participant entitled:

‘To investigate how the meanings of spirituality develop among accredited counsellors when practising a new shamanic energy therapy technique.’ **being conducted** by Karen Ward, MA, BSc (Hons), Dip. Counselling Psychotherapy, Cert., Supervisor, Shamanic Therapist. Ph: 087 2399571. **who is** a current student of Dublin City University (DCU) required to conduct research for her PhD candidacy **under the supervision** of Dr Liam MacGabhann, School of Nursing, DCU (liam.macgabhann@dcu.ie) and Dr Ger Moane, Dept. of Psychology, UCD (gmoane@ucd.ie)

For your information, the researcher, Karen Ward, has provided me as your Counsellor, with a description below about her research study, including its purpose, procedures, and participation, as well as the arrangements for confidentiality, anonymity, and the preservation of privacy. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me - your Counsellor.

What is the research about and why is it being conducted?

A Brief Description of the Research Energy Therapy Technique

This technique was developed by Karen Ward, an IACP accredited Counselling Psychotherapist, Supervisor and Shamanic Therapist who found that often clients ask to bring their sense of spirituality into their therapeutic sessions. Shamanism is a name given to holistic healing with particular emphasis on the spiritual as it is experienced energetically (many contemporary understandings of spirituality are expressed in terms of energies) (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005; Cantwell, 2013). She noticed that some clients who are holistically aware (mind, body, spirit), sense that they are holding an energetic blockage and/or missing a vital aspect of themselves relating to their issue.

Classic statements relating to these include “I feel sick to my stomach”, “he broke my heart”, “I’ve the weight of the world on my shoulders”, “I don’t feel whole/complete/all there” which can be psychosomatic often with no basis in medical terms. In another Clinic room with a plinth, Karen used many simple shamanic techniques to assist clients safely and easily release these blockages and/or return missing aspects of their own volition within the sessions.

She came to the conclusion that if any of these shamanic energy techniques could be adapted for use within a counselling psychotherapy setting, the client would have a way to break through the blockage, return vital aspects of themselves, process their issue and move forward in their life without having to resort to a separate therapy such as shamanic energy healing.

With supervision, over the last four years Karen began to research and introduce a simple shamanic technique for use within a peer group using visualisation and breathwork. This 50 minute treatment involves me - your Counsellor, facilitating you - the client, seated opposite with closed eyes in a deeply relaxed state, to connect within yourself and visually ‘self-

facilitate' the remove of any blockages or return of any 'missing' aspects of yourself. For example with the support of visualised helpers (such as angels, saints, ancestors, family members) in a nature place of your choosing, you can 'remove' the weight off your shoulders and 'bring back' the 'missing aspect of yourself' (i.e. self-trust, safety) perceived lost to gain insight of your issue. There is also the opportunity to cut any 'unhealthy energetic ties' with anyone living or deceased. Once again this is gently facilitated by me - your Counsellor, by asking questions and inviting you to sense what you feel needs to be done through visualisation to release the blockages. You would be involved in the technique at all stages and can stop any time you wish by letting me know so I can safely and gently talk you out of the visualisation.

The advantage of this 'Energy Therapy Technique' is that it can be incorporated smoothly and safely into a Counselling session in the same way I would introduce Breathing or Stress Management Techniques. It doesn't suit every client but anyone open to holistic (mind, body, spirit) ways or who has experienced Reiki or Bio-Energy is usually very receptive.

What will happen if you decide to be part of the research study in which I am a participant? You will:

1. Read this short information sheet and ask any questions you may have.
2. We will work together during 3 sessions using the Energy Therapy Technique as outlined above.

How will your privacy be protected? You will remain completely anonymous throughout this research as your name will not appear on any research literature so privacy is maintained.

As your Counsellor, I will be interviewed after the 3 sessions, and if I wish to mention any aspects of your sessions, then a 'fictitious code first name' will be used to identify you and to keep you anonymous. Your age range and a 1-2 word description of your issue will be also used i.e. 40-50 years of age, relationship issue.

What are the benefits of taking part in the research study (if any)? If you find the Technique beneficial you may request its use as part of any subsequent Counselling sessions.

Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary. It is important to note that there will be no penalty for withdrawing from the Research Study. So if you do not like the

Energy Therapy Technique , you have the right to withdraw, at any time and without the need to justify or otherwise explain that decision. In the highly unlikely event that I, as your counsellor do not wish to continue after the first session but you do then I will refer you to a another counsellor who can facilitate this but it will not be part of the research.

Thank you

Appendix 3 Counsellor consent form

Informed Consent Form for Accredited Counsellors

Research Study Title:

To investigate how the meanings of spirituality develop among accredited counsellors when practising a new shamanic energy therapy technique.

Clarification of the purpose of the research.

This technique, referred to as the Energy Therapy Technique, brings a spiritual energetic aspect based on shamanic principles to a counselling psychotherapeutic model to assist your clients breakthrough any energetic blockages and/or restore any disassociated parts which may help them work through their issue and move on with their life.

Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Participant Information Sheet.

The requirements for participation include:

1. Participation in a 2 day Workshop to learn the Energy Therapy Technique with 1 day mentoring follow-up session (which may be by phone/skype or email or in person as you wish).
2. Filling in a self-report form (after the two day training) to ascertain if you feel competent to use the technique with suitable clients.
3. The recruitment of 1-5 suitable clients with regular issues only (i.e. no multiple issues, medicated clients) from your client base to receive the Energy Therapy Technique during 3 sessions each.
2. Offering these clients the short information sheet so they can agree to you using the technique with them.
3. Taking part in a semi-structured audio-taped interview with me, the researcher, to ascertain your meanings (thoughts, attitudes, comments) of spirituality, having used the technique with your clients. Once the tape has been transcribed and coded with a number to ensure your anonymity, the tape will be erased.

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

Have you read or had read to you the Participant Information Sheet	Yes	No
Do you understand the information provided?	Yes	No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	Yes	No
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	Yes	No
Are you aware that your interview will be audiotaped?	Yes	No

Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary.

It is important to note that you may withdraw from the Research Study at any time without the need to justify or otherwise explain that decision. There is no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed as this will also provide valuable research data.

Data Protection and Confidentiality of all material (consent forms, outcome and session rating scales, audio tapes of interview and subsequent transcribed material).

Data Protection and confidentiality will be adhered to by storing, in secure private separate places, your Consent Form, your audio-taped Interview and your Self Report form within my Clinic and is subject to legal limitations limitations (*confidentiality of information provided cannot always be guaranteed by researchers and can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions.*)

and the College and IACP Code of Ethics. On awarding of the PhD all of this documentation will be shredded by me, the researcher after 3 years (to allow for the publication of the research).

Any other relevant information

The brief description of all participating counsellors in my thesis will have a unique identifier code and no names or other details will be divulged that might compromise anonymity. The final thesis will be available for reading at your request.

There is no cost for the training and you may use the Technique as part of your practice if you find it beneficial after the research is finished.

Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project in three specific ways:

1. To participate in a training workshop (2 days with a 1 day follow up mentoring session (this may be by one-to-one meeting, phone or Skype as you wish) and fill in the self-report form after.
2. To facilitate the Energy Therapy Technique with 1-5 suitable clients during 3 therapy sessions.
3. To take part in an interview subsequent to the above sessions.

Participants Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 4 Counsellor information sheet

Information Statement/Plain Language Statement for Accredited Counsellors

Introductory Statement

You are being invited to participate in a research study entitled:

To investigate how the meanings of spirituality develop among accredited counsellors when practising a new shamanic energy therapy technique.

being conducted by me - Karen Ward, MA, BSc (Hons), Dip. Counselling Psychotherapy, Cert. Supervisor, Shamanic Therapist. Ph: 087 2399571

who is a current student of Dublin City University (DCU) required to conduct research for her PhD candidacy

under the supervision of Dr. Liam MacGabhann, School of Nursing and Human Sciences (liam.macgabhann@dcu.ie) and Dr. Ger Moane, Dept. of Psychology, UCD (ger.moane@ucd.ie).

For your information, I, Karen Ward (the researcher) am providing you (the counsellor) with a description below about my research study including its purpose, procedures and participation, as well as the arrangements for confidentiality, anonymity and the preservation of privacy in the attached Consent Form. Participation by you as a counsellor and your clients is entirely voluntary, and you and they would be free to withdraw at any time. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me, the researcher, or contact my Supervisor (email above). This project has been reviewed and approved by the Programme Board for the degree and the Research Ethics Committee of DCU.

What is the research about and why is it being conducted?

A Brief Description of the Research Energy Therapy Technique

This technique was developed, by me, Karen Ward, an IACP accredited Counselling Psychotherapist, Supervisor and Shamanic Therapist who found that often clients ask to bring their sense of spirituality into their therapeutic sessions.

Shamanism is a name given to holistic healing with particular emphasis on the spiritual as it is experienced energetically (many contemporary understandings of spirituality are expressed in terms of energies) (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005; Cantwell, 2013). I noticed that some clients who are holistically aware (mind, body, spirit), sensed that they are holding an energetic blockage and/or missing a vital aspect of themselves relating to their issue. Classic statements relating to these include “I feel sick to my stomach”, “he broke my heart”, “I’ve the weight of the world on my shoulders”, “I don’t feel whole/complete/all there” which can be psychosomatic often with no basis in medical terms. In another Clinic room with a plinth, I used many simple shamanic techniques to assist clients safely and easily release these blockages and /or return missing aspects of their own volition within the sessions.

I came to the conclusion that if any of these shamanic energy techniques could be adapted for use within a counselling psychotherapy setting, the client would have a way to break through the blockage, return vital aspects of themselves, process their issue and move forward in their life without having to resort to a separate therapy such as shamanic energy healing.

With supervision, I began to research and introduce a simple shamanic technique for use within a peer group using visualisation and breathwork. This 50 minute treatment involves you, the counsellor,

facilitating the client, who is seated opposite with closed eyes in a deeply relaxed state, to connect with their interiority and self-facilitate the remove of any blockages or return of any ‘missing’ aspects of themselves. For example with the ‘support’ of visualised helpers (such as angels, saints, ancestors, holy people) in a nature place of their choosing, they can ‘remove’ the weight off their shoulders and ‘bring back’ the ‘missing aspect of themselves (i.e. self-trust, safety) perceived lost to gain insight to their issue. There is also the opportunity to cut any ‘unhealthy energetic ties’ that are sensed with anyone living or deceased. Once again this is gently facilitated by you, the counsellor, by asking questions and inviting the client to sense what they feel needs to be done through visualisation to release the blockages. Your client would be involved in the technique at all stages and can stop any time they wish by letting you know so you can safely and gently talk them out of the visualisation.

The advantage of this ‘Energy Therapy Technique’ is that it can be incorporated smoothly and safely into a Counselling session in the same way you would introduce Breathing or Stress Management Techniques. It doesn’t suit every client but anyone open to holistic (mind, body, spirit) ways or who has experienced Reiki or Bio-Energy is usually very receptive.

What will happen if you decide to participate in the research study?

You will consent to:

1. Participate in a training workshop (2 days with a 1 day follow up mentoring session which may be one-to-one by meeting, phone or Skype as you wish).
2. Recruit and inform 1-5 suitable clients before facilitating the Energy Therapy Technique with them during 3 sessions.
3. Fill in the self-report form subsequent to the above sessions to ascertain if you feel competent to facilitate the technique and take part in an interview which will be audio-taped after the client sessions are complete.

How will your privacy be protected?

The brief description of all participating counsellors in my thesis will have a unique identifier code and no names or other details will be divulged that might compromise anonymity. The final thesis will be available for reading at your request.

How will the data be used and subsequently disposed of?

Date Protection and Confidentiality of all material (consent form, outcome and session rating scales)

Data Protection and confidentiality will be adhered to by storing, in secure private separate places, your Consent Form, your clients anonymous Outcome and Session Rating Scales (as a clinical tool only and not part of the research), your audio-taped Interview and your competence self-report form within my Clinic. On awarding of the PhD all of this documentation will be shredded by me, the researcher 3 years after awarding of the doctorate to allow for the publication of peer reviewed articles.

What are the legal limitations to data confidentiality?

The above document will be subject to legal limitations (*confidentiality of information provided cannot always be guaranteed by researchers and can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions.*) and the College and IACP Code of Ethics.

What are the benefits of taking part in the research study (if any)?

The technique is a potential spiritual tool at your disposal as a counsellor when working with suitable clients. There is no cost for the training and you may use the technique as part of your practice after the research is finished.

What are the risks of taking part in the research study?

There are no risks to you - the counsellor, as if you are not happy with the technique you may withdraw or if I feel you have not had sufficient practice I will mentor you until you do.

Your clients will have come to a private counselling practise of their own volition and they will be well briefed (with the short information sheet provided) and agree to you - their counsellor using the Energy Therapy Technique knowing the type of technique it is and how it will proceed. As with all counselling sessions you - their counsellor is a fully accredited trained professional who has been taught to hold your clients as they explore and process their issue/s.

Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary.

It is important to note that there will be no penalty for withdrawing from the Research Study. So if you do not like the Energy Therapy Technique, you have the right to withdraw at any time and without the need to justify or otherwise explain that decision. For the purposes of data collection the optimum outcome is that you use the Technique with all 5 clients 3 times and the minimum with 1 client 3 times.

In the highly unlikely event that you do not wish to continue but your client does then you may, with

my assistance, refer them to another counsellor who can facilitate this but it will not be part of the research.

What happens with the project?

The final thesis will be available for reading by request.

Contact details for further information

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Chairperson, DCU Research Ethics Committee, c/o Dublin City University, Glasnevin, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7005000.

Appendix 5 DCU ethics approval

Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University



25th March 2015

Dr Liam MacGabhann

School of Nursing and Human Sciences

REC Reference: DCUREC/2015/018

Proposal Title: The meanings of spirituality among accredited counsellors practising a new shamanic energy therapy technique.

Applicant(s): Dr Liam MacGabhann; Dr Ger Moane; Ms. Karen Ward;

Dear Liam,

Further to Expedited Review, the DCU Research Ethics Committee approves this research proposal. Materials used to recruit participants should note that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee.

Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Dónal O'Mathúna

Chairperson

DCU Research Ethics Committee



Appendix 6 Energy Therapy Technique development

In an auto-ethnographic narrative here, I account for the development of the energetic/spiritual technique used in the research. I hold a strong basis in mind therapies as a scientist (B.Sc (hons) Microbiology and Biochemistry, UCD) and a Counselling Psychotherapist (transpersonal humanistic, holistic, person-centred, brief solution focused) also bodywork with advanced training in Yoga, Aromatherapy Massage and Reflexology combined with my spiritual training Reiki, Shamanic Energy Therapy. I am also a co-founder and director of the Slí an Chroí School of Shamanism. Along with years of assisting people breakthrough physical, psycho-emotional and spiritual issues to emerge into more authentic, empowered and conscious selves, the Slí an Chroí philosophy and method has evolved. In essence, we bring our full range of skills and techniques into a sacred, safe and confidential space so that another may enter and embark on a self-healing journey.

In this Celtic Shamanic approach there is considerable expansion of native Irish energy techniques for transformation by informing them with those from other cultures. Running parallel with this refinement of Energy Therapy (also known as Energy Healing or Energy

Medicine) is a model of shamanic counselling that allows the healer bring deep understanding and ‘ownership of the healing’ to the client. By achieving this, the person is brought autonomy by their greater conscious realisation of the myth of their own Soul.

This counselling aspect brings a knowing to the client on how to integrate the full impact of the energetic shifts into the literal levels of their life. There is sustaining self-practice in the client that ‘anchors in’ the healing and it provides a platform for continual holistic emergence. The Irish-Gaelic word for ‘healing’ is ‘leigheas’, which also means ‘retrieval’ and the Slí An Chroí model of shamanic healing holds dearly to the principle that we turn up fully for the healing of another, so that they may ‘retrieve themselves’.

I was always impressed by the comment of Levin (2011, pp.17-18) that “innovation in approaches to healing is a never-ending process. Healers continue to develop new theories and techniques and to refine teachings and methods that they have received from their own instructors and mentors.” In my Master’s thesis ‘Transpersonal Spiritual Healing: A study of the philosophies of Shamanic energy healing master practitioners in Dublin’ a consistent description of this modality was a:

‘very ancient tradition going back 60,000 years’, ‘a proto-religious state...the grounding of all future developments in psychology, philosophy, psychotherapy and healing’, ‘My belief is that this is the emerging psychotherapy of the future in the West.’ All 9 master practitioners agreed that the healing aspect of Shamanic work is ‘the classical encounter...an engagement between two people...one who is sharing a life issue that is of concern to them and that is being listened to and held by a healing practitioner which we will call the shaman...who is guided from Spirit and under Spirit’s guidance’. This is very intuitive healing where the shamanic energy therapist acts as an interface between the spirit world and this reality (Ward, 2013).

Following years of research and guidance, I was intuitively guided, similar to Barbara Ann Brennan of Brennan Healing Science and Rosalyn Bruyere of the Healing Light Center Church, to synthesise the theory and practice of shamanic healing traditions. These included the Celtic, North American, Peruvian as well as the Eastern Yogic tradition, the Western Esoteric and contemporary scientific research including field trips to Peru, Mexico, the Australian Outback, the Celtic Isles, North America and India to create the Energy Therapy Technique from 2009-2012. This has been used in a clinical setting with my clients and those

of the accredited counsellors I have taught successfully with professional supervision for 10 years. I have lectured and presented papers on its use in 2 major Irish academic institutions (DCU and Trinity) as well as the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy conference 2015 and 2017.

During the 50 minute Energy Therapy Technique, the client is gently led to self-connect with any heavy or intrusive energies in their energy field/aura to clear them of their own volition having understood their energetic origin through visualisation. Once removed these are then replaced with light energies from Spirit/the Universal Energy Field/the vibration of unconditional Love. A key feature is that the client not the shamanic energy therapist enters a non-ordinary or altered state of consciousness to retrieve information for their own issue. The level of pure energy is unblocked so the manifestations of the client's issue whether it is thought patterns, emotional or physical symptoms are changed for the positive. One of the main benefits is restoring the locus of control and power back to the individual themselves.

A key feature of the Energy Therapy Technique, as a modern evolution from ancient practices, is the inclusion of and intimate connection of spirituality - the psycho-energetic with not simply the mental and emotional but the chemical, physiological properties of the human body.

The counsellor is a facilitator and remains neutral, with no affinity to the outcome. This brings a spiritual aspect based on shamanic principles into a counselling session which traditionally focuses on the mental and emotional aspects of a client's issue and is therefore, highly relevant to the understanding of the evolution of counselling in a modern context.

Shamanic energy therapy and counselling are two distinct modalities however the Energy Technique Therapy is a succinct form which fits neatly, safely into a counselling session to bring an energetic and spiritual aspect to a session by accessing the client's natural energy field or aura. It is both safe and non-invasive for clients who are grounded, stable mentally and emotionally and ask of their own volition to engage with it having been fully versed in its format. It is holistic in that it forms the final pillar in the integration of mental, emotional, physical and energetic/spiritual.

Appendix 7 Energy Therapy Technique entrance/exit interview forms

ENERGY THERAPY TECHNIQUE CONSULTATION FORM

ENTRANCE INTERVIEW

Presenting Issue:_____

Name:_____

Address:_____

_____Email Address:_____

Telephone No:_____Mobile No:_____

Gender:_____Age:_____Relationship Status:_____

Children:_____

Occupation:_____

Mother and Father Details:_____

Family of Origin Details (inc. place in the Family):_____

Next of Kin:_____Contact Number:_____

Any Previous Help Sought? Medical_____

Complementary:_____

Holistic Health Score on a scale of 1 – 10:_____

Medical History:_____

Any Heart (cardiovascular) Problems:_____

Any Asthmatic/Breathing Problems:_____

Medication (prescribed by Doctor, Therapist or Self)_____

Name and Details of GP Doctor:_____

Permission to contact if required: Yes_____No_____

Any Psychiatric/Psychotic Illness or Episodes/Mental Health problems/Addictions
(in the family?):_____

In you?_____

Name of Psychiatrist and details if relevant:_____

Permission to contact: Yes_____No_____

Any Pregnancies:_____

Feelings re Presenting Issue:_____

Fairytale Character:_____

Is there a Benefit of Issue?:_____

Patterns (in client or family):_____

Do you see a Way forward:_____

What is your Soul's Yearning:_____

My Intention is to breakthrough:_____

Stone Key Aspect to help in the session:_____

Signed:_____Date:_____

EXIT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Feelings after session:_____

Insights during session:_____

Insight re Moving Forward:_____

New Fairytale Character (or changed):_____

Stone Properties relating to Moving Forward:_____

Soul Work Suggestions by Client:_____

Soul Work Suggestions by Therapist - Time in Nature, Earth Painting

Return Visit:_____

Notes on the

Session:_____

Appendix 8 Energy Therapy Technique training handbook

THE ENERGY THERAPY TECHNIQUE TRAINING HANDBOOK

This Handbook is your quick reference guide for using this technique with your clients as part of my PhD research requirements. This is a supplement and ‘aide memoire’ to the training workshop you have attended in which all the terms have been described in detail and explained. It is devised so that when your client is sitting comfortably in front of you with eyes closed, you may take your time to read the next step making sure to proceed correctly. There is no need to memorise the steps. However, you will find that as you use the Energy Therapy Technique you will easily become familiar with the format once you understand why each section flows into the next.

PREPARATION OF THERAPY SPACE Prepare your therapy space as usual for a regular counselling session (tissues, glass of water) including a basket of stones (as an anchor during the session and a resource for your client to take home).

CONNECT WITH YOUR SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE by sitting quietly with whoever/whatever you refer to as your sense of the spiritual i.e. God, Holy/Great Spirit including Saints, Angels, Spirit Guides or Power Animals.

SECTION ONE: PREPARATION

1. INTRODUCTION and BRIEF EXPLANATION. Once you have greeted your client as usual, explain that you are going to introduce a new technique today (as agreed at a previous session when you talked through and gave them the Short Information Sheet).

2. EXPLAIN ENERGY BLOCKAGES in terms of their natural Energy field (also called their Aura) using the analogy of the baby with fresh raw energy and the Granny who has passed away lying in her coffin without her energy. Mention the concept of the holistic model of Mind, Body and Spirit/ Energy, Chakras or ask if they have ever had Reiki or Bio-Energy as a reference.

Talk about the Checklist of the 4 types of energetic blockages:

1. Solid Energetic Blockage in their Aura which can be ‘felt’ physically i.e. “she stabbed me in the back”, “weight of the world on my shoulders” (psychosomatic symptoms).

2. Unhealthy Energetic Ties cutting the ties that bind with people we know who may also be loved ones.

3. Disassociated/Lost Parts of Self - remember the jigsaw analogy – if you can imagine your energy field like a big jigsaw, in times of trauma or chaos or challenge a piece or pieces can go missing/disassociate or misaligned for ‘safe- keeping’ and if so we can bring them back today.

4. Unfulfilled Bereavement If there is anyone that you know associated with your issue who has died but you sense is not fully at rest, we can do some gentle work to assist them if you are comfortable and feel that is appropriate.

3. WHAT THE CLIENT WILL BE DOING Explain that as they sit opposite you with their eyes closed, you will be asking them to visualise certain places in their ‘minds eye’ similar to ‘seeing’ during dreaming. Reassure them that this is easy to do. You will be coaching them in simple Yoga like breathwork called Circular Breathing out through their

mouth and in through their nose with no pauses in between. You will be asking them to sense where in their body the feelings/sensations of any blockage associated with their issue may be and to direct their breath into that area.

4. EMPOWERMENT Let the client know that they are in charge of the session and can stop whenever they want by crossing their hands over their chest if unable to verbalise or saying stop. If this happens, request that they keep their eyes closed so you can talk them back from the visualisation gently.

Finally reassure them that the usual safety and confidentiality of a counselling session applies when working with this technique also.

5. ENTRANCE INTERVIEW (see attached Entrance Interview sheet) including

6. CLEAR INTENTION (something that can actually be broken through)

7. ANCHOR STONE WORK – 1. Client chooses a stone and explains why they chose it (colour, shape, sense, meaning). In the highly unlikely event that they can't think of anything, then you explain what it feels like/means to you to start them off. 2. They pick a Key Aspect of the stone's meaning based on their/your meaning to help them breakthrough their issue and keep them grounded during the session.

SECTION TWO: VISUALISATION and BREATHWORK

1. SETTLE CLIENT sitting opposite you in a comfortable chair. Visualise yourself opening your energy field/Aura/Goll (gaelic for Aura) over them for extra connection, safety and protection together for this work.

2. ASK FOR PERMISSION to start by closing their eyes/saying yes/nodding their head.

3. NATURE PLACE: Invite your client to visualise a beautiful place in Nature with a tree/trees/large rock as an anchor and a source of water nearby where they can be alone in safety. Ask them to nod their head when they can visualise themselves (their Adult Self) there. Then keeping their eyes closed, invite them to briefly describe where they are and what the weather is doing (bringing the scene alive/deepening the experience.)

4. CALL IN HELPERS: invite them to silently ask for assistance with their issue by calling in Helpers who may be loved ones, those who have died, Spiritual Guides like Angels, Saints and Deities and pets or animals. 'Allow yourself to be surprised by who spontaneously "pops into your head or appears in your Nature place"'. Explain that you too will ask for Helpers for

the session. Share your Helpers with them and then invite them also to share, if comfortable. This gives you vital information on their current spiritual belief and support system.

5. REMIND THEM OF THEIR INTENTION and ASK THEM TO STATE IT 3 TIMES SILENTLY OR OUT LOUD and BLOW INTO THE STONE to ‘charge’ it with their essence and help them focus on their issue.

6. BEGIN BREATHWORK: After observing their natural breath for a minute, coach your client into Circular Breathing – deep in-breath through the nose and out-breath through the mouth. You set the rhythm so they can copy you.

7. BREATHE INTO THE FEELINGS/SENSATION OF THEIR ISSUE. Invite them to surrender to their breath. Let their breath take them to where in their body they ‘hold’ the issue.

8. HAND/S ON THEIR BODY WHERE THEY HOLD THE BLOCKAGE: Invite them to place their hand/s wherever in their body they feel they are holding their issue. Give them time to do this (usually 1 minute).

9. RUNNING COMMENTARY: Ask them to keep breathing but when you ask a question, to stop, answer and then go back to the breathing afterwards.

10. IS THERE A COLOUR, SHAPE, TEMPERATURE and/or TEXTURE to the area where they are holding their issue (the energy blockage) i.e. ‘ice blue metal armour over my torso’. Continue to ‘breathe’ into that area. Privately note the chakra nearest this body part as your client will working with this later on.

SECTION THREE: SCENE OF THE BLOCKAGE/S ORIGIN

1. INVITATION TO VISUALISE (sense/know or guess) THE AGE and SCENE when the energetic blockage came into their energy field. Ask them to let a scene emerge in their minds eye of the age they were when the ____ (give an example i.e. the ‘cold black barbed circle’ came into their heart) and to allow themselves to be surprised by what scene emerges. They will not be reliving any traumatic event merely observing it. This may be a trauma, an accident or a seemingly innocuous event in their childhood which has energetically held them back in their lives.

2. BE PATIENT and TRUST while holding a deep inner knowing that they can do this easily. This is where you need to believe in the process entirely.

3. ASK THEM TO DESCRIBE THE SCENE so you both can understand the dynamics as to why the (give an example such as) the ‘red hot blob’ came into their ‘stomach’.

4. INVITATION TO IMAGINE THEIR ADULT SELF as they are today standing beside their Younger Self in the scene. Ask them to nod when there.

5. INVITATION TO TALK TO THEIR YOUNGER SELF DIRECTLY saying what is needed to bring healing to the situation. Usually this is a hug or holding hands with their Younger Self and saying things like “It’s ok”, “You will be fine”, “It’s not your fault”. So, they imagine themselves as they are today (Adult Self) standing in the scene and interacting with their Younger Self.

6. INVITATION TO ADULT SELF TO RANT and RAVE to whoever in the scene upset/caused harm etc. Explain that this is energetic work.

“We know you are a lady/gentleman and not prone to using bad words or showing anger or rage BUT this is an opportunity to release blocked emotion **ENERGETICALLY** that your Younger Self may not have been able to.” They can visualise themselves as their (Adult Self) in the scene privately and silently ranting and raving to the bullies/horrible Mum/uncaring Doctor whoever is the protagonist/s (using their description).

7. HOLD A ‘SAFE SPACE’ as they do this. Ask them to nod when finished. Often the client may release physically in the form of tears, sighs, yawns or a palpable shift in the energy of the room. Reassure them that this is normal.

8. ASK CLIENT WHAT IS GOING ON/JUST HAPPENED (running commentary style with eyes still closed).

9. OFFER OPPORTUNITY FOR FORGIVENESS and GRATITUDE if appropriate once they have reached a place of understanding with what has happened in the scene. Explain that even if they can offer forgiveness through gritted teeth or in a partial way then this will free them to move on in life.

10. INNER CHILD ASPECT: Explain that their Adult Self is now going to return to their Nature Place to start to remove the energetic blockages. In a neutral voice ask ‘Does your Younger Self want to return to the Nature Place with your Adult Self or are they fine where they are, either is fine’. Tone of voice is important here so that they understand that you do not favour either. If they do bring their Younger Self this is an indication for Inner Child work later on

SECTION FOUR: ENERGETIC CHECKLIST

1. RETURN TO NATURE PLACE (the safe place in the original visualisation). Nod when there.

2. CHECK LIST OF POSSIBLE ENERGETIC OCCURENCES and the opportunity to release them visually/imaginatively in the presence of their supportive helpers. This is where the client chooses of their own volition to release or restore their own energy field.

a) EXTRACTION OF SOLID BLOCKAGE (hardened area of clients energy field i.e dagger in their heart/weight on their shoulders). Ask the client how the for example ‘warm cement block’ on their ‘abdomen’ is now.

Is there a sense that it needs to be removed/taken away from their energy field? **IF NO**, move on.

IF YES, ask them in their wildest imagination and with the assistance of their Helpers what they can do to remove it and where can they put it so that the Earth or Sky can transmute it. Remind them to allow themselves to be surprised at what comes to their mind’s eye. (Some clients may mime doing this.)

HOLD SPACE while they do this, no need for any other work from you. Use the time to check in with your intuition/Spiritual Guidance for a sense of how your client is doing. Invite them to share with you what happened when they fully released the blockage (still with eyes closed). You can suggest that they may like to offer some **SOOTHING TO THE AREA** where the blockage was held.

b) EXTRACTION OF UNHEALTHY ENERGY TIES to or from living people. Explain to your client that you are going to mention some people from the previous scene and to trust intuitively that they will know if there are any unhealthy ties/cords to or from anyone

attached to them. They will know this in their hearts. You will list each person one by one and wait for the answer after each one i.e your Mum, your Dad, little sister, bully from next door etc.

IF NO, move on.

IF YES, invite them to visual each person one by one on a giant TV screen in the sky of their Nature Place (for safety, no triggering/ reliving the scenario.) Ask them to visualise what the unhealthy tie looks like. You may prompt with ‘is it a rope/string or chain?’ When they describe it, ask where is it attached to them and to the protagonist. Then invite them to silently say whatever it takes to be able to cut/untie/release these ties/cords with the assistance of their Helpers. Essentially, they are taking back their energy and/or releasing the other persons energy so both are whole.

HOLD SPACE as they do this, nothing else. Ask them to nod or place their hand on their heart when they are finished. Invite them to share their experience if comfortable.

c) RETURN OF A DISASSOCIATED/LOST SOUL PART (Soul Retrieval). Ask your client to imagine their natural energy field/Aura as a giant jigsaw. Do they sense that at the time of the ‘scene’ that a piece of their jigsaw went missing for safekeeping so that they could survive? In other words, that a vital piece of their essence/soul misaligned/fragmented or disassociated away.

IF NO, then move on (reassure your client that they will know instinctively in their hearts if this is the case.)

IF YES, then is it time to bring this piece back? Ask them to sense what the soul part/jigsaw piece is called. Explain that some people might say they lost their ‘safety’ after a car accident or their ‘strength’ after an illness or their ‘joy’ or their ‘innocence’ after a parent died. Ask what they imagine what a symbol of it might look like (such as a heart/dove/light) and what part of their body it might come into first before spreading throughout their whole energy field and into every cell in their body. (Note the nearest chakra to this body part). Usually people say something simple like ‘a ray of sunshine/light feeling/flower’.

INNER CHILD WORK if relevant. If their ‘Inner Child’ came back to the Nature place with them, ask them where they are and what they are doing now. Explain that this is the time to invite them to ‘merge/join/become one with’ themselves so that their Younger Self becomes part of their Adult Self by hugging them close to their body as you continue to the:

MOMENT OF RETURN OF LOST/MISSING PART Invite them to sit by the tree/large rock or lie down in their Nature Place and silently call back their soul part/jigsaw piece into the body part (and their Younger Self if relevant.)

HOLD SPACE as they do this and check in with your Spiritual Guides. Once again invite them to share as much or as little as is comfortable still keeping their eyes closed. (This happens very smoothly and often the client will explain that it has actually happened spontaneously.)

e) DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT WORK (Psychopomp: gentle and loving release of a soul). Ask your client is there a sense of anyone from the scene who is now dead but they intuitively feel isn’t where they need to be. Let them describe what they name this place i.e. Heaven/Spiritworld.

Explain that sometimes a loved one or someone they knew (especially if they have had a difficult life) can be confused or fearful of dying and may remain in the physical realm/Earthbound needing assistance to move to the spiritual realm. **IF NO**, move on.

IF YES, then ask if they are willing to assist them move on to the Spiritual realms/Heaven/The Light (whatever language is most appropriate).

Ask your client to silently talk to the person gently explaining that it is time to move on, that they release them and their ancestors are waiting to guide them on in a loving way. The client may ask their Helpers to assist also. Again, you are holding space, not doing any other work. Usually the blocked soul of the clients loved one shifts to the other ‘realm’ easily and you will both feel an energetic shift in the room. Reassure your client that the feeling of this shift is normal.

If your client gets a sense that the person has passed over to Heaven/Spiritworld but needs some assistance then go through the SECTION FOUR Checklist and do the same work with their loved one visualizing the person in Heaven/Spiritworld in a Holding Place (Purgatory/The Bardo Plains). Ask if they can imagine them crossing over into Heaven/Spiritworld fully. Ask

your client if there is someone in Heaven/Spiritworld who can assist them move there i.e. loved one who has died before, Saint, Angel etc.

e) REBALANCING THEIR ENERGY FIELD (in Gaelic ‘Imbas’ meaning ‘illumination’). Since your client has removed energetic blockages now is the time to fill those space with Divine Spiritual Light (though you might never use those terms with your client if you feel that inappropriate. Instead you may talk them through “rebalancing your own energy field including the chakra system and the one nearest the blockage.” Ask them to sit or lie down by the tree in their Nature Place and visualise the Light of the setting Sun and/or the rising Moon and/or Heavenly energies shining down on them filling their energy field/Aura to energise them completely. This permeates every cell in their body while boosting their immune system. Ask them how this feels and whatever they answer i.e. ‘calm’, ‘goodness’, invite them to breathe into that ‘calmess’ or ‘goodness’ deeply anchoring it into their Aura. This also enhances their energy system especially the chakra they chose during Returning Disassociated Part and the ones nearest the blocked body part.

3. SOULWORK Ask your client to sit up by the tree in their Nature Place with their Helpers in a circle to have a Gathering/meeting/’Pow Wow’. Ask them and their Helpers what could they do in the next 24 and 48 hours to anchor in the work they have done today.

4. GRATITUDE Invite your client to give thanks to themselves, their Helpers, Nature Place, whatever left (blockages/ties/departed Souls) and any disassociated Soul part that came back and themselves for turning up so fully.

5. GROUNDING Ask them to silently count from 10 back to 1 before opening their eyes slowly. Then do some gentle grounding stretches with them. Offer a glass of water also. Remind them that it is normal to feel a little lightheaded afterwards as you have been doing energetic work and that this will pass quickly before they leave.

SECTION FIVE: EXIT INTERVIEW AND SOULWORK

EXIT INTERVIEW including offering the Stone for them to bring home to anchor the work

The whole process takes approximately an hour and fifteen minutes with the Consultation or approximately 50 minutes on any follow-up sessions. If you book the session as an hour and a half that allows plenty of extra time if required especially when learning the technique.

Appendix 9 Professional academic development

2014

DCU Biennial Conference ‘Self, Selves and Sexuality’ Co-facilitator of the Sexuality and Shamanism Workshop www.dcusexualityconference.voog.com May 2014.

Invitation to become an inaugural member of the Trinity School of Nursing and Midwifery Spiritual Interest Group SIG now renamed as the Spiritual Research and Innovation Group SPRIG Autumn 2014.

Key Facilitator at the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) Supervisors Forum on Spirituality November 2014.

2015

Attendee at the TCD School of Nursing and Midwifery Winter Research School February 2015.

Attendee at the DCU School of Nursing and Human Sciences Summer Research School May 2015.

Co-Presenter at the DCU International Conference on Sexualities IASSCS
<http://www.iasscs.org/2015conference> June 2015

Presenter at the Trinity School of Nursing and Midwifery Spiritual Interest Group Annual Conference 'SOWING THE SEEDS' June 2015.

Presenter at the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) Annual Conference 'Strengthening Therapeutic Relationships' October 2015.

2016

Attendee at the TCD School of Nursing and Midwifery Winter Research School February 2016.

Named co-author of peer reviewed article in 'Religions' publication as a member of the Trinity School of Nursing and Midwifery Spiritual Research and Innovation Group February 2016.

Completed DCU School of Nursing and Human Sciences GTE module Qualitative Summer School NS5055 obtaining 5 credits May 2016.

Plenary Session Chairperson at the 2nd TCD School of Nursing and Midwifery Spiritual Interest Group Annual Conference 'Spirituality in Healthcare' June 2016.

Presenter at the PubhD initiative, monthly 10 min presentations on PhD research in a public setting September 2016.

Co-facilitator of the DCU School of Nursing and Human Science module Community Based Learning: Personal Growth and Community Engagement NS4029 Level 8 on NFQ with John Cantwell, Slí an Chroí. Organised by Dr Liam MacGabhann, my Supervisor on the topics of: 'The essence of Community/Tribe - Myth, Spirituality, Symbolism 10th October 16 and Archetypes in Community Systems – the Feminine and the Masculine November 16.

The Energy Therapy Technique Training with the Dublin Counselling and Therapy Centre as a potential post-graduate training module November and December 2016.

Order of Bards Ovates and Druids (OBAD) Winter Gathering Keynote Co-Presentation with John Cantwell, Slí an Chroí School of Shamanism, December 2016.

Completed DCU School of Nursing and Human Sciences GTE module ‘Suffering, Survival and Hope’ NS5007 Level 9 with Dr Angela Cocoman obtaining 10 credits.

2017

Co-Facilitator of the DCU School of Nursing and Human Science new innovative module ‘Community Based Learning: Mental Health Peer Support Course’ with John Cantwell, Slí an Chroí organised by Dr Liam MacGabhann, my Supervisor, entitled ‘The Essence of Community and Archetypes in Community Systems’ March 2017

Keynote Presenter of the prestigious TCD School of Nursing and Midwifery Spiritual Research and Innovation Group annual Public Lecture ‘Do the ancient roots of Celtic traditions have a bearing on healthcare today?’ March 2017.

Presenter at the Limerick Postgraduate Conference 24th May on thesis research to date.

Summer Solstice Reflection at the Opening Address and Plenary Session Chairperson at the 3rd TCD School of Nursing and Midwifery Spiritual Research and Innovation Group Annual Conference ‘Creating Space for Spirituality in Healthcare’ June 2017.

Co-keynote Presenter at the 6th annual Eco-Psychology Gathering ‘Fraktured Psyche’, Worcester, England June 2017.

Main stage research Presentation and Poster of my Research at the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy Annual Conference November 2017.

2018

Panel presenter at the 1st annual SpIRE (Spirituality Institute for Research and Education Conference) ‘Pilgrimage and the Evolution of Spiritual Tourism’ Conference, Waterford Institute of Technology March 2018.

Panel presenter at the British School of Spiritual Studies BASS annual Conference Coventry May 2018.

Summer Solstice Reflection at the Opening Address and Research Poster winner at the 4th TCD School of Nursing and Midwifery Spiritual Research and Innovation Group Annual Conference 'Spirituality at a Crossroads' June 2018.

FORTHCOMING

Writing for RELIGIONS magazine

IASSCS World Conference in Sexuality Studies interdisciplinary volume dedicated to the Literacies of Sexuality. K article ETT and Sexual Abuse Survivors (2/3 potential cases). Scopus recognised Publishing Company 2017 academic year.

Working with my Supervisors on publishing my Literature Review in a peer reviewed Journal.

Appendix 10 Research questionnaire

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Q.1 How would you define your sense of spirituality in general?

Q. 2 Do you discuss spirituality with clients and if so is that initiated by you or by them or both?

Q.3 What experience of shamanic energy work have you had previously, if any?

Q.4 What are your views on marrying the spiritual/energetic with the mental and emotional within counselling work?

Q. 5 What do you see as particularly energetic or spiritual if at all in the Energy Therapy Technique?

Q. 6 Describe, if any, developments in the meanings of your spirituality from using the Energy Therapy Technique with your clients.

Q. 7 Has there been any ripple effect using an energetic spiritual tool in your work on any other aspects of your life?

Q. 8 What, if at all, is the relationship between using the Energy Therapy Technique and any developments in the meanings of your spirituality?

Q. 9 Was there any part of the Energy Therapy Technique you found particularly spiritual?

Q. 10 This is an Open Forum for you to mention anything specific from using an energetic spiritual tool with your clients.

Q. 11 Anything else you would like to add or comment on?

Q. 12 Will you continue to use the Energy Therapy Technique in your counselling work?

Appendix 11 Terminology cross references

Terminology utilised in the Energy Therapy Technique and its Counselling and plain language counterpart/s.

In counselling terms: a blockage in the energy field/essence/Life force/Aura.

In plain language terms for clients: a heaviness in the natural energy field. Many clients are familiar with the concept of the holistic model of mind, body and spirit/soul/energy and chakras. If they have ever had Reiki, Integrated Energy Therapy or Bio-Energy this is an excellent reference and introduction to the ETT work.

In shamanic terms: an energetic blockage in the light electromagnetic energy field or Aura.

A ‘checklist’ of the 4 types of possible energetic blockages

1. Solid Energetic Blockage in the Aura (Cruaigh in Gaelic meaning ‘solid’) which can be ‘felt’ physically i.e. “she stabbed me in the back, weight of the world on my shoulders”.

Terminology:

In counselling terms: Psychosomatic.

In plain language terms for clients: heavy energy around physical parts of the body.

In shamanic terms: Solid/Crystalised Extraction work (Villoldo, 2001).

2. Unhealthy Energetic Ties (Sreabhach in Gaelic meaning ‘fluid’ tie) with people you know (cutting the ties/cords that bind).

Terminology:

In counselling terms: Co-dependency.

In plain language for clients: Inability to ‘let go’/move forward from an old relationship.

In shamanic terms: Fluid Extraction work (Villoldo, 2001).

3. Disassociated/Lost Parts of Self. using a jigsaw analogy – ‘if you can imagine your energy field like a jigsaw, in times of trauma or chaos or challenge a piece or pieces can go missing or be disassociated or misaligned for ‘safe-keeping’ and if so we can bring them back today.’

Terminology:

In counselling terms: Disassociation.

In plain language for clients: Feelings of loss of self/something missing.

In shamanic terms: Soul Retrieval (Ingerman and Wesselmann, 2010; Villoldo, 2005).

4. Unfulfilled Bereavement. Simply explained as ‘If there is anyone that you know associated with your issue who has died but you sense is not fully at rest, we can do some gentle work to assist them.’

Terminology:

In counselling terms: Grief/Bereavement work (Frick, 2011)

In plain language for clients: Inability to move on from death of a loved one/sense that they are not ‘at rest/peace’.

In shamanic terms: Psychopomp work (Mathews, 2001; Villoldo, 2001).

Appendix 12 Transcript sample

Counselling and Spirituality Interview 4

Key: I = Interviewer, Jude = Counsellor Pseudonym, purple = salient quote. (Hardcopy Transcript contains Right Hand Side Margin with green ink 'Free Association' and red ink 'Reason for Highlighting'. Left Hand Side Margin contains Emergent Theme terms.)

Checked for permission, assured confidentiality, anonymity, showed previously signed form from training weekend.

I: Q.1. HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE YOUR SENSE OF SPIRITUALITY IN GENERAL?

Jude: Yeah, I suppose my own sense of spirituality is, I suppose I am a Catholic and I do practice- you know, I don't practice every Sunday but I practice like. I have a faith in whatever, I'm not sure, I question it a lot, right? But I suppose my sense of spirituality is that there's something greater at work out there, every minute in my day, in my life, right? Sometimes I'm wondering what it is, I'm not sure. I do feel it's an energy probably. I have a strong belief that it's an energy from people who have passed on and you know, especially __, my passed __ [deceased relative]. I suppose my real confirmation of that is, that I don't think I ever could've gone through what I've gone through without having that sense. There was something else out there driving me on, right? So, I suppose that is, kind of, one part.

Another part of this sense was that it's something that I have somebody or something to, kind of worship and, worship might be, is such a strong word, but yeah to worship or to just trust that life will be okay, that even though I get scared shitless [laughs] Take that word out, [laughs] I'm sorry you know that it'll be okay that the fear is part of the growth in my own belief system, you know and that even though I am fearful and terrified sometimes, I still can try things and I sometimes think, "Jesus! Did I do that? Right, right, you know, Oh my God." So something has to be at work, a force at work greater than me, eh, for me to get on every day, right, you know.

And I suppose also just even looking around, seeing, you know. Even if it's all the floods we see, you know, that must be something at work, you know. It's some message as well that maybe we, I should be paying more attention to the message there.

So suppose that its messages I get, it's the, kind of, physical sense I get, that is sometimes hard to fit into words, and it's just a belief there's just something there that has got me through some awful things and, you know, still gets me through, mm, you know, some rough days, you know and I suppose around fear as well, that even though I have these fears and things that maybe sometimes I feel block me and hold me back yet I do things and I think, "Oh my God, you know, did I do that? You know" Yeah. I really believe then, yeah, there is something great at work here, you know and it's some divine presence, you know. I suppose the rainbow is something that symbolizes it for me you know. Yeah, so when that appears, Yeah, I can really, kind of, relate to that, you know.

I: Q. 2 DO YOU DISCUSS SPIRITUALITY WITH CLIENTS AND IF SO, IS THAT INITIATED BY YOU OR BY THEM OR BOTH?

Jude: I do discuss it, yeah and it's a bit of both. Eh, I suppose sometimes I find with clients who are in a very, very bad place, definitely those who are suffering a lot of loss and I suppose first of all, maybe their faith that they were born into, they kind of, they're very angry with that. So, I often find that a good starting point I suppose to, kind of, look at you know, to tease it out a bit and what else does that mean to them, and is there anything frail of that left that they can hold on to or have they any sense that there's something supporting them, you know. Has any sense of the earth, or the ground or the tree outside or, you know, em. So, I would definitely weave it in that way right and then I, a lot of them would be surprised if that's, kind of, a sense of spirituality, you know.

I: It sounds like you're offering them a sense of spirituality that's wider than a formal religion.

Jude: Yeah, yeah, but might include it, yeah. I have brought it in that way because people might present very angry with God, you know and I might tease that out you know. What is that God for them you know, or what else do they think helps them so. And maybe tease it out to Nature.

That's a good way sometimes to get people to look that there is something else there that can help them in the darkest days. You know, the fact that the trees shed their leaves and they do come back again, you know.

I find clients bring it up themselves yeah. I think most of them who are very angry. Yes, yes.

So, like everything has let them down, including God, or including any belief system they ever had or including maybe the angels they thought were protecting them.

Or say St Martin, St Brigid, their grannies that's dead, you know, "she said she'd look after me" and look at the mess I am in now.

So that can be that there's nobody there for them even though they thought that all those people were going to be helping them and supporting them. Yeah, so the trouble with all that out then and a whole wealth of stuff that, you know Often at the end of therapy they can see like that's what did help me through this, you know, you know like, yeah, yeah.

I: Q.3 WHAT EXPERIENCE OF SHAMANIC ENERGY WORK HAVE YOU HAD PREVIOUSLY IF ANY?

Jude: I did the Course, the shamanic course yeah, the Slí an Chroí course, yeah, yeah and that was when I went to ____ for sessions of shamanic, myself after...for grief [when her husband died] and that's how I got into the whole shamanic thing and I suppose I just felt it was the thing that lifted a whole kind of something out of my system, blockages and darkness, you know and that was my introduction into it and then I did the courses, a lot for myself really and kind of used it, bits of it, never strictly, you know, in it's true sense, but sure, used, bits of it, em, with clients and for myself more than yeah, yeah. But definitely with clients, yeah, yeah. **6.15 mins**

I: Q.4 WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON MARRYING THE SPIRITUAL/ENERGETIC WITH THE MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WITHIN COUNSELLING WORK?

Jude: Eh, yeah, it was something that I really, I think when I started the shamanic Course, it was something in my own head, I was thinking, I wonder how could I use this? [laughs]

What I, without putting people on a plinth, in a different type of therapy, right? Because I suppose, I just see so many people that are coming to therapy for a long time and yet, they are not, there's something in their face that's still, there's not enough light there, no, yeah. Even though it seems as if they've worked through every bit of emotional stuff in talk therapy they can possibly work through in every approach has been used. So I often think that there's something there that's stuck on their throat, that's stuck on their head, you know.

So, I suppose when I was doing the shamanic course, I was thinking to myself, I wonder how could I use this and you know then when__ said she was using this I thought, yes, bingo, there's definitely something here.

So, I suppose I really believe that, I mean I think myself, that in all therapy I'd love to be able to offer one session of this at the end to people, you know. Just to clear away, yeah, if they felt that there were things felt, that I feel that people can really connect into it, almost and unknown to themselves, that they can almost do such work without- in their head. It doesn't have to be in their head, you know. So, they can clear away a whole load of stuff. That's lodged there deep in the psychic and subconscious without really being aware of it, you know. They come back a few weeks later and say, "Jeez, I don't know what it is but I just feel half a stone lighter!" Yeah!

I: As a Counsellor when you did your shamanic Courses, you're figuring how to bring this together with Counselling?

Jude: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I did a bit of Reiki, but I felt the people weren't that interested and coming for another type of therapy. That was too kind of confusing for people or you know when you leave one thing and go to another, you know and sometimes I felt that people kind of, didn't get that, you know. The whole Reiki thing maybe as much.

I: Q. 5 WHAT IN THE ETT DO YOU SEE AS PARTICULARLY ENERGETIC OR SPIRITUAL IF AT ALL?

Jude: I think its connection for me is that it's, kind of like, leaving a space in the psychic, in our soul almost, right?

That it is kind of, letting almost as if it's driven a hole in the soul to let in this light that has been blocked out. Em, and I think when there's been that shift in energy for people whether it is in tears or in yawning or jumping and shouting that's kind of like the piercing of the soul that like, there's almost like concrete around it and that this kind of bores a whole in some way and this energetic light our divine light or coming from a greater power than me, or you know, coming from the force of the earth, right?

Or God or whoever their spiritual belief system is but that's kind of filling them up with that kind of light. Yes, I think that's the best way I can explain it.

I think the one bit is when people really get into their own **nature place** that they kind of go to where they're safe and they're secure and you can almost see people's bodies, you know, kind of, really as if they are really cuddling themselves into bed, you know.

So that all of that nature is there, kind of, you know, minding them and, you know, engrossing them into its body almost, about that piece, right. and I also think for me, I think the strongest part was, the cutting of unhealthy ties with people. That was a big part where I saw, you know, this is somebody great at hard work that's allowing this person, to first of all even see it, having an unhealthy [energetic tie] and next of all, get some kind of a way of cutting it. And, they all, all of them I think in my cases, all of them wanted to return them to the earth. They wanted to have some kind of burial ceremony or service or something that, kind of, buried it in or brought it back to earth level.

I: Is it the energy within them or is it the actual tie itself they want to bury?

Jude: Yes, the tie itself they want to bury, yeah, yeah, yeah. I think I had about four or definitely three of them had the service or the ceremony themselves. Where they wanted to bury that back to the earth, yeah, yeah. So that, like I felt is a very strong, and a very spiritual connection, do you know, even the whole idea of spirituality is, I suppose, where we go to and go back to and what the earth can do for us and you know, yeah, yeah.

I: Q. 6 DESCRIBE, IF ANY, DEVELOPMENTS IN YOUR MEANINGS OF SPIRITUALITY HAVING USED THE ETT WITH YOUR CLIENTS?

Jude: I think the thing, it was for me was a greater trust for me in that Spirit, I think...it is very hard to put into words, yeah. We don't have words to describe it, you know, even though...and I think maybe we complicate it with words, but maybe it's the feeling or it's the sense. Or it is the change. And so, I think there was something in that trusting that that process is a lot stronger in me than I believed before I started this. And that people could, kind of, link into that more and also that it is a lot stronger in the clients. I was shocked by how strong it was in some of the clients and so were they shocked themselves.

I: In what way?

Jude: You know that they had this great, very spiritual belief system, you know they had the spiritual feel. They really got it but they didn't believe they had it, you know. So, they had this great wealth of stuff they were carrying about with them but they didn't know what it was.

I: How was that for you?

Jude: Well it was kind of like, yeah, it is, kind of, like the tunnel I went through as well, like wondering, questioning, you know and just not trusting, yeah, yeah.

So, I think with that way, it has made me trust more. Em, yeah, I think a lot of it is around just trusting and believing, you know. And I might never have the right word to put on it, but just when I have the sense, then that's what it is. Yeah, yeah.

I: So, when you with your spiritual beliefs and your shamanic work from before use this technique in your work and see the wealth of spirituality your clients have that brings in your trust even more?

Jude: Hm, hm, oh definitely, yeah. And also, it gives me, I suppose, the courage or that, to try it more and to bring it more into the therapy room, you know. And to have it as another great tool probably greater than, you know some of the theories and philosophies that I may have been working from. Yeah, yeah.

I: What is that like when you see that in your clinic work?

Jude: Oh, it is very moving. It is very, em, there's, kind of, a reassurance in that there is something greater out there helping, you know. So, I can keep doing this because I know that even how I am stuck with somebody that there is something there I can call on. And there is something there to guide me, you know. Yeah, yeah. So, I mightn't have the theory right or the practise but there is something there I can call on. That I know now. Yeah it is probably that belief that I know now after trying this that there is something there that I can really feel. I can trust more. So, I know there is something there greater than me, you know, there's an energy there that can help me. You know, so I can ask people, you know and I can trust what they tell me even if they are not in the room.

I: 'People' as in the helpers?

Jude: Yeah, yeah, yeah yeah. Or I can look at the tree out the back and ask it, you know "what should I, can I do?" or you know. So, I can rely more on that kind of strength and resources.

I: Within your work?

Jude: Yeah, within my work. Yeah, and I have found it has brought a lot more bits of twigs into the room and stones and that. So...

I: You are bringing nature in?

Jude: So, I am bringing Nature in, yeah, yeah, yeah.

I: You have answered the next question organically.

Q. 7 HAS THERE BEEN A RIPPLE EFFECT FROM USING AN ENERGETIC SPIRITUAL TOO IN YOUR WORK ON ANY ASPECTS OF YOUR LIFE? 16.24 mins

Jude: Though I had one client who didn't, kind of, in the beginning but came back yet again for more, you know, yeah, yeah and that was quite interesting because he had just had a complete anger with God and with everything he was ever brought up with, you know. And this had all fallen down around him, you know.

And he didn't see any separation, you know, between, he felt "I am angry with God, that's it. The door shut, good luck, goodbye." Yeah, but then he came back, yeah, yeah. **17.19 mins**

I: Q. 8 WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN USING THE ETT AND ANY DEVELOPMENTS OF THE MEANING OF YOUR SPIRITUALITY?

Jude: Hm, hm, I think the link, I think it's back to trust, really. I think it's back to trust and I think it is back to just holding my own belief and my own sense of spirituality, right? And owning that more so I can, kind of, be more present then with that for the client rather than, kind of, trying to hide it. That is saying, you know, that this is not part of how I see it. It's more marrying it into the therapy, you know. It's much a part of the therapy as empathy is, you know, it's probably what makes empathy, it's what makes, you know, unconditional, you know, regard and that.

I: Carl Rogers?

Jude: Yeah, yeah, so it is that, yeah, yeah. You can't have them without the spiritual part but I think up to now maybe I probably was more hiding the spiritual part because people, might think that's a bit whacky whacky. Whereas now, maybe, it is all of it, yeah, yeah, rather than it's something apart from it.

I: Q. 9 WAS THERE ANY ASPECT OF THE ETT YOU FOUND PARTICULARLY SPIRITUAL?

Jude: I found a lot of them had guardian angels, they were very prominent. Yeah, yeah and St Martin and St Brigid, yeah, yeah and a lot of people have deep connections to their grannies. Interesting, [inaudible] one of them did say, "my puppy." But a dog, for him, that was after a lot of 'planting' [helping/asking the question in different ways], yeah. **18.52 mins**

I: Q. 10 THIS IS AN OPEN FORUM FOR YOU TO MENTION ANYTHING SPECIFIC FROM USING AN ENERGETIC SPIRITUAL TOOL WITH YOUR CLIENTS.

Jude: I suppose I saw one part with the, eh, first client that I've had for sessions, right, and eh, this was somebody that, who was completely dead, you know, in every sense of the word even though she was alive, right but because of life's pain she was dead. Ok? Right, em, and I just saw in one session, in the second session, right, where, an innocence came back to her - a child-like innocence. And it was almost like in the room, it was just with her eyes closed, it was almost like a flash of light came over her face like a little child's face, right? and she just started to kind of laugh, you know? Like a little child.

I: Has she ever laughed in the sessions before?

Jude: No, no. She cried so much for so long, you know and she was like completely thrown, she just like didn't know where it came out of, you know. So, it was, kind of, like a real I mean like, I didn't make that up.

That's something at work and she had a very, she had a very strong connection to her dad, who had passed on, died by suicide many years ago and she actually said in the end that she could actually see him laughing with her when she was about three. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

I: What is it like to hear this client say that?

Jude: Well to see, well that was the most moving, that was really moving, that was one of the ones where I really felt like this is working because this person has been in therapy for a long, long time with many therapists and she's being really, you know, going through tough stuff, you know. But it was almost like, this, this, she just wanted to laugh and she couldn't. She's been a child, no, an adult since about four, yeah, yeah, yeah. So, I suppose it was like one of those God-like moments you know, you know, that like why is the sky blue?

Or why does the rainbow come? You know, yeah, yeah, that was probably the most yeah. And the other one then was actually to the gentleman that I had who actually, eh, became very angry. The first session, yeah, and said "this is a whole load of codswallop" and yeah whatever you want to add onto that.

And yet when he was having this complete, kind of, outrage about the whole thing, there was something that I just felt there was a calmness he was really, really angry, right and all the anger was, kind of, directed towards, em, the questions I was asking him and about the nature place and that was so ridiculous and beautiful language and all that yet, there was some kind of a calmness that I couldn't describe, couldn't put a word on it but it was almost like, as if, almost like featherlike, it was like were you ever in a room and the air and there was no window open but you kind of felt the breeze, yeah.

Yes, when he was ranting [sic] and he was telling he wanted to stop the session, he was still venting and was all about the whole craziness of this and ta dum, ta dum, ta dum.

I: Did you think he was going to come back?

Jude: No. He rang me then, about, oh, maybe two months later I think? That was 2nd September and he rang me some time in November and he said to me could he come back for another session. So, I said to him what do you want to come back for? And he says, "Oh, I might try some of that weird stuff again" Right! And I said so we will have a chat when you come and sure, we will see. So, we had quite a good chat before we started anything, right and actually, at that session, we just had a chat a talking session and then he... and I said "what made you?" and he said, "I'm so stubborn, I'm not going to tell you." [laughs]

But actually, he did tell me in a few talking sessions after that that day, he told me he slept for two full days, all day, all night, all day, all night. Yes, he got on well now.

Subsequently he had 2 sessions he certainly wanted to come back for another one but he had worked so we had to stay while he was not back in the country at a time that is good. Yes, the next session was interesting with him. Em, he had a great link with his inner child and I thought that was like yes. Because he says himself "I'm as hard as you know as the Rock of Gibraltar, right?"

So even just to see that like you know to see him even being able to feel or even to see him hugging himself like you know? Was like, you know, and.

I: How old is this man?

Jude: He is fifty, fifty I think fifty-four.

I: He's fifty-four hugging himself, actually hugging his younger self?

Jude: Yeah, his little self of seven yeah and that's really the root of where he is at like, for the traumas that happened to him when he was seven. But he has been in therapy, I mean, I don't think he ever would have got there in talking therapy because and as he said himself he was so stubborn and everything has to be justified and followed up with the theory and who developed the theory and you know, where yeah, yeah.

I: So, this brought him to?

Jude: A different place, yeah, yeah and I also think, probably that he's going to come back for another session later on. I think he needs a good space between them. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

But something he did tell me the last day he was there is that he has made a kind of a shrine to his little inner child, to the seven-year-old, yeah. But he says, "I never show it to anyone." He told there were little feathers and a robin and a little toy, things like that- he said he'd never show it to anyone. That's, you know, your business and you know, all but, em, I do feel that going back to the spiritual bit, I think that what happened to him that day. Eh, I mean, he was so, so angry, like but there was a calmness there within him, yeah, yeah, yeah, which was a strange kind of a feeling, you know.

I: Would you say that calmness was from within him?

Jude: I think it was a guidance, I think it was a guidance, yeah. Now he couldn't get that part about the guides, I think he says, none and then it's my dog and no he said for a long time it's my dog. He wouldn't get into the characters, who the character of the [Fairy tale] and, yeah, they were just making him wearier.

I think it was definitely some kind of a guide, or subsequently I discovered I him that he has a very strong connection to his granny who, kind of, it was after her death, that things went belly up for him and his home life, you know.

Yeah, yeah. He's been very angry that she died. So yeah, probably possibly her, yeah, but she probably was there with him because I never heard about his granny before that.

I think she was in the sixties because he said "I was only three years." And she died quite suddenly like. He is a challenging client.

I think, good other times that I had, that I used the technique on are people who've, kind of, lost their way in life. That's their words, that they have lost their way. They're off their path some way and they don't seem to be able to, trying to the back on it.

I: Why do you think they lost their path?

Jude: Just through life's events I think, and lack of trust in life like they can't go on, you know. I think there's some of them maybe their path then is their spiritual path that they are coming back onto. The fact that they are even able to identify that they've lost their path and I know for myself that would be, you know. Walk your path or whatever your path is, things are not as, you know, they can get a bit wobbly, you know. Hm, hm, I think three or four of

them have mentioned that. That's their hunch that they've lost their path, "I'd like to get back on my path" 30.52 mins

Jude: I find that even after bringing in nature or the stones and the tree you know, I'm getting people to bring in stuff.

I: So, they bring in their nature?

Jude: Yes, their nature bits, yes. I just say it, maybe tomorrow or over the next week, if you see something that reminds you or stopped you or talks to you about your anger and whatever's going on for them. Maybe pick it up and if you want to bring it in the next day we'll have a look at it. A lot of people have brought in. A lot of them said they have started to build up stuff, I think the earth paintings, I also learned that from John [previous shamanic teacher] yes, a lot of people can see a lot to them, can connect to them.

Yes, their soul work yes and that's the part I think that works very well for me, the soul work. That's tangible and they can do it and they can connect to it and they can feel something.

I: Q. 11 ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD OR COMMENT ON?

Jude: No, I mean I think they all enjoyed it and I really wish the very best to Karen, I hope it really takes off, and I think it will.

I: Q. 12 WILL YOU CONTINUE TO USE THE ETT?

Jude: I have used it, yes, [inaudible] I used it with two others or actually with three others. I'll say I will continue to use it, yeah, yeah. [delete not relevant, small talk.]

Jude: Thank you very much for the experience.

End

Appendix 13 Vignette Energy Therapy Technique session samples

These are verbatim quotes of sections of the transcripts which chart the counsellors' depictions of particular sessions to offer a sense of the counsellors' experience with certain clients.

Fran P. 10 L 7-40. *"I had one guy...and his issue was anger in his relationship. Fairytale Character Mrs Bouquet's husband [tv comedy character who is dominated by an opinionated wife]...his intention to 'breakthrough rage to a place of expression.' He puts Mother Mary [Catholic saint, mother of Jesus] at the core of his healing...[He] went back to childhood to the original scene where he was shown his Dad also gagged so he learnt this. Eh, he felt*

sorry for him but couldn't say this as he was fearful of his Mum... When he went up onto the screen [part of the ETT protocol] there was a zip across his mouth and she [his mother] was holding the zip. So it was [Mother] Mary that went [he gestures pulling open a zip across his mouth] and now with his wife he is going 'this is how it is now'. 'So empowered, I am not gagged anymore.' ...that was session 2 with him.'

Jude P.10 L.33-35 P.11 L. 1-12, 15-19, 22-30 *'...this was somebody that, who was completely dead, you know, in every sense of the word even though she was alive, right, but because of life's pain – she was 'dead'in the 2nd session, right, where an innocence came back to her – a childlike innocence. And it was almost like in the room, it was just with her eyes closed, it was almost like a flash of light came over her face like a little child's face, right? And she just started to laugh, you know, like a little child...she cried for so much for so long, you know and she was completely thrown, she just like didn't know where it came out of...she had a very strong connection with her Dad who had passed on, died by suicide many years ago and she actually said in the end that she could see him laughing with her when she was about three...that was really moving, that was one of the ones [sessions] where I really felt like this is working because this person has been in therapy for a long, long time with many therapists...so I suppose it was one of those God-like moments.'*

Ger P.13 L.21-30 *'With another client...she's experiencing this huge sense of urgency and then when we journeyed and she went into this dark space and she's just a green blob and I knew straight away where she was. She was in her mother's womb but she didn't pick up on it for a while and...she heard a sound, she heard gurgles...she was an emergency birth.'*

Leslie P.9 L.25-33 P.10 L.1, 12-15,23-26, 28-29, P.11, L.1-3 *'There was one girl I worked with and...her issue [papers rustling] was anxiety ... at the end of it, she realised that anxiety would always be with her. That she would always have a certain amount of anxiety, she could be an awful lot kinder to herself. [silence]...She was seven. It was a practical joke...She'd be in her bedroom alone and the anxiety is about being alone...She's thirty-two, she's single and she lives with her mother...this anxiety has been crippling...it's as if she got a handle on things as if...She got clarity and she got a bit more calm [sic]. And, eh, she just sees life and challenges herself.'*

Finn P.11 L.26-36 P.12 L.4-8 *'One of the other ladies...wanted to heal the pain of really serious, em, postnatal depression after the birth of her twins. Em, and she has really suffered quite serious mental illness and, and only as we did the work, eh, to realise that actually... it*

was her own twin birth that, that has actually really traumatised her...and she said to me. "You know how long would I [sic] have had to have waited for this piece to have them?" ...She [is] realising now that she also when the...her mother was pregnant, she was told that one of the babies had died. So, she feels that a lot of the work, do... maybe she was the baby that the mother didn't think was there anymore. They did live but the same thing happened in her pregnancy with her babies. So, she prepared herself to meet one baby and then two. It is exactly the same with her mother. But she struggles with them, because she struggles with that battle, but now she realises what the struggle is, and she is working really well on that...It is a real struggle and the battle of trying to keep them alive, these little babies are now the obsessiveness [sic] around trying to feed them enough in all of this, but actually it is herself that she is trying to nurture...She said "I don't know how long I would have had to stay in therapy before I'd have realised what I was actually looking at, working on."

Cory P.12 L.25-27 P.13 L.1-19 *'A guy that I've been working with for two and a half years...is a trainee therapist, psychotherapist...one of the issues was he had a fear around being physically hurt and...one of the parts he was calling back, was in terms of a symbol and it was black crystal. When you look at the meaning of black crystal it's tourmaline and it's actually...keeps us safe from a fear of physical spaces and that is the issue he was dealing with!...I didn't know it, but he just said black crystal and I registered black crystal. I didn't know what it mean so then, but the week after then we spoke about that...he checked it out.'*

Kerry P.5 L.33-34 P.6 L.1-12 *'I'm just thinking now of a client who was assaulted, yeah. And really going back to an abandonment issue as a child in their journey... getting to the core issue a lot quicker...presenting with anxiety and, em he, em, his journey went back into being a three-year-old sitting on his mother's knee, and he cried like a three-year-old...that was something that touched me but I think there was something that, of a release for him and kind of something that made sense for him that he was what, able to acknowledge having carried it as a 53 year old man.'*

Finn P.12 L.28-35 P.13 L.1-31 *'...the other client is actually in his 70s and suffered horrific sexual and physical abuse by his dad and has been a long-term therapy and has been in residential therapy...and going to that safe place, you know finding the technique to actually meet with his dad and do that piece...he sat and he shook and I could see he wanted to vomit and he held himself together with it...stayed with it and he was able to break the tie...the next*

day [he] went to visit the grave and said what he needed to say. He hasn't been for about 30-40 years. He found a stick "bet the shit out of" his dad at the grave and, and let him go...but he said he cannot believe that he always felt that though he stepped into therapy with me, he said, "I keep saying, how is talking about this going to make it any better? It is just going to make it worse." And so, the technique has actually given him such, it has soothed him that is actually a word he used, he said "I felt soothed on the inside, really soothed" ...and I was amazed after and you just feel so privileged to sit with people in that place.'