"ALIVE MOMENTS" AS AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL DISCOURSE; CO-RESEARCH BETWEEN CLIENT, THERAPIST, AND CONSULTANT WITHIN ONGOING THERAPY

by

Margaret Ann Fuller

B.Ed., The University of Alberta, 1992

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Counselling Program)

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

December 2000

ABSTRACT

This study was approached from a social constructionist perspective where meaning is negotiated between individuals in relationship. Focusing on the counselling relationship, this study explored how inviting people to engage in a spiritual discourse relevant to their lives may bring forth new possibilities for self understanding. The researcher's definition of "spiritual" was purposefully open-ended and it was the participants' perspective of "spiritual" that was emphasized in the interview.

Five clients and their therapists were invited into a conversation of which the researcher was a participant-researcher. The clients and therapist videotaped a counselling session and the client took the video home to choose from the tape, a moment that they would call an "alive moment". The client, therapist, and researcher then met at a later date to engage in a conversation around the significance of the chosen "alive moment" and any spiritual relevance to the client's life experiences. The therapist was present in reflection and was invited to comment on the interview conversation. The meanings constructed from the interview conversation, were a product of the researcher's interaction with the participant. This research, then, exemplifies action research in that the researcher participated in the construction of meanings or the data of the study. At a later date, a follow up discussion with participants served to cross-verify the themes with their experience.

Two main themes were interpreted from the analysis of the data, that of "process" and that of "content". The process of the interview conversation brought forth the content of the meanings that the participants and researcher together created. The further sub themes were presented individually but were interrelated within the context of the experience of the interview conversation.

This thesis explored what can occur when people engage in a conversation that invites an alternative form of discourse, that of the spiritual. This study is about participating in a meaning-making process that creates within the practice of relating, a new way of "being together" which offers new opportunities for self understanding and for perceiving the spiritual in our lives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have happened without the encouragement and support of my family and close friends. Firstly, my parents instilled in me the value of relationships, spirituality and the desire to learn. My most avid supporter, who never once let me give up on myself when it appeared that a task was insurmountable, was my husband, David. Without David's devoted and capable ability to parent our infant baby girl while also managing his own business affairs so that I would have the time and space to write, I don't believe I would have completed this thesis. I am indebted to both David and our young daughter, Emily, for sacrificing our family time for this degree process.

As well, my extended family also readily offered to care for Emily during writing times. Marie, who so generously "adopted" Emily as one of her own children, was a tremendous blessing to me not only for offering babysitting time but also as a reminder of the strength women have as mothers and as individuals. Sharon Power, who amidst her own demanding career and personal commitments, also offered her Saturday's to entertain Emily, providing me the time to focus on this thesis. Also, I am grateful to Jamie Fowlie and Maria Walsh for their patience and time in the final production.

My advisor, Dr. Tom Strong, was a valuable coach during this process. His commitment, resourcefulness, and enthusiasm towards my topic kept me directed and motivated about the value of this research. I want to extend my gratitude to my committee members, Professor Glen Schmidt, Dr. Han Li, and the external, Dr. Michelle Worth, for their insight and direction throughout this research.

Throughout the entire process a "thesis support group", consisting of courageous, insightful women, never failed to validate, guide, and energize me with their wisdom and friendship. Laurie Baird, Marion Healey-Ogden, Barb Ingram, Susanne Muirhead, Bev Read, and Kristi Smith have individually shaped and given meaning to my participation in this research.

Lastly, I am indebted to the participants of this study, both the clients and the therapists, who courageously took up my invitation to participate in conversations that gave meaning to this research.

Chapter 1

Introduction

> Only in telling another the truth about ourselves do we discover the truth about ourselves. We can "tell" only what we know, but we come to "know" only in the telling.
>
> (Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992, p.89)

Colainn gan cheann duine gan anamchara

(Irish for "a person without a soul-friend is a body without a head")

The seat of the soul is where the outer and inner worlds meet-Novalis

(Becvar, 1997, p.176)

I have always wondered about the reasons that people seek therapists or counsellors. I am curious about the sociological changes leading to people moving out of the village that once housed all their siblings, parents, grandparents and the majority of their extended family members. Is there a vacancy left in their lives? For various reasons today, people may not or do not turn to their immediate family or community for relationships that fulfill desires for further self-understanding. So what are today's clients looking for in a counselling relationship?

I would like to explore if clients find a relationship in counselling that fulfills part of a yearning for the spiritual in their lives. The place where people have often turned for direction in their spiritual lives was the local priest, minister, shaman, or rabbi. I wanted to explore if therapists now provide the services that were once recognized as the domain of spiritual leaders in the community. Is today's therapist actively engaging in spiritual discourse in the counselling relationship without naming it "spiritual"? Is the counselling setting a context where people are seeking opportunities for spiritual dialogue in their lives? Are people finding themselves struggling with yearnings for a more fulfilling life, a life where we give meaning to our tasks and

our dreams? Is the client-therapist relationship a setting we turn to in elaborating our desires for a more fulfilling life?

My interest has always been in the mystery of how other people participate in enriching our ways of self-understanding. This led me to the Masters in Education Counselling Program at the University of Northern British Columbia. After the completion of my course work I felt there was something missing in my training. We had discussed and analyzed the client-therapist relationship but had never addressed "spirituality" in this relationship. I felt that a counselling relationship that was intimate enough to delve into the more personal aspects of peoples' lives had to acknowledge and bring forth an expression of their spirituality. Therefore, in searching for a definition of spirituality in the counselling relationship, I decided to focus on one facet of spirituality, the dialogue in the relationship. The co-creation of meaning between two people in relationship, the social-constructionist perspective, interested me. My topic evolved by focussing on what John Shotter and Arlene Katz (1998) refer to as "living moments in therapeutic dialogues". John Shotter and Arlene Katz describe these 'living moments' in a therapeutic dialogue as:

> to 'move' or to 'strike' others by the saying or the writing of certain words at certain moments, to use words to draw attention and ours to aspects of their own sayings and doings to unique details of their lives, that might otherwise passed us both by unnoticed, and particularly, to yet-to-be created relations between such details. (Shotter & Katz, 1998, p.2)

I endeavoured to find a link between these "living moments" and what could be a "spiritual aliveness" occurring in the counselling relationship. From here, my curiosity was directed towards what happens around these "living moments" to which Shotter & Katz (1998) refer. I wanted to understand the clients' experiences of these moments and whether these moments had an impact or not on the clients' future living. As well, I was interested in the counsellors' understanding of these moments and how they could inform future therapy sessions.

Further, I wondered if there could be a different form of discourse that would manifest from elaborating upon these client-identified, alive moments.

I believe I am not the only person who questions the world and the many mysteries that are too often rationalized by science. If we are seeking a richer understanding of our daily living, and a new perspective to the many difficulties encountered in life, then are we not seeking a language of spirituality? I am curious about the counselling relationship's potential to bring forth aspects of the self that may help us in our journey towards wholeness.

Research Problem

The purpose of this inquiry was to explore how client-identified alive moments within a therapeutic relationship might bring forth new meanings by inviting the client into a discussion around spiritual aspects, relevant to their identified moment.

Research Question

What unvoiced possibilities are articulated when a client is invited to look at an "alive moment" from his or her own spiritual perspective, and is given the opportunity to generate a new discourse that may challenge their ordinary discursive practices?

Impetus for Study

The impetus for this study originated from my personal belief that we are the sum of all the people we have ever met. It is from within our conversational relations that we come to socially construct meanings of who we are and the meaning about the world. As well, my experience as a graduate counselling student had left me with questions about the presence of spirituality within the therapeutic relationship. This presence was rarely given a voice in my academic counselling training. The concern was that counsellors and clients together generate new possibilities that are often not voiced because of the marginalization of certain discourses by other, more accepted discourse in western society.

Personal Stance

My perspective is that we socially construct our realities within our ongoing dialogues. Gergen (1994) and Shotter (1999) referred to the nature of psychology from within this social constructionist perspective. Martin and Sugarman (1999) compared the perspectives of "social constructionism" and "social constructivism". They conceded that the social constructionist perspective regards the social interactions of the individual as the means for organizing, developing and shaping their perceptions and understanding of the world. The constructivist focus is primarily on the individual and how he or she adapts and learns for their own purposes within their sociocultural setting. Martin and Sugarman (1999) explained constructivism as ascribing:

> ...primacy to the role of the individual in learning and psychological development...While it is not unusual for contemporary [constructivists] to acknowledge the importance of social influences on individuals' development, they persist in maintaining a strong separation between the individual and the social, construing individual psychological development as taking place against broader patterns of interpersonal, social, and cultural interaction, but not as constituted of such patterns and forms" (p.9)

The social constructionist perspective advocates that the therapist and client, together, co-construct new meanings within their conversational interactions. The constructivist perspective would focus on the intrinsic nature of the individual processes within a relationship. This study emphasized, specifically, conversational interactions as creating meaning, which was seen to be reflective of the social constructionist perspective.

The meanings that are constructed in relationship are also continually shaped by subsequent relations that evolve into new forms of discourse and perceptions of realities. Yet, much of the prevailing psychotherapeutic discourse is embedded within a positivist tradition that does not give value to other ways of perceiving reality, particularly those that are spiritual in nature. Reason and Heron's (1995) cooperative inquiry perspective, which advocates an action research stance, suggests removing the conspicuous hat of the objective researcher of the

positivist tradition. Cooperative inquiry was helpful in my conceptualization of my involvement as a participant in the co-construction of the data and ultimate meanings that were brought forth in the interview/dialogue. The participants and I became co-researchers while we explored new forms of discourse around moments that, in other dialogues, may have otherwise gone unnoticed.

For the purpose of this research, discourse referred to an activity in which people engage to create their understandings and meanings of the world. Weingarten (1991) acknowledged five phenomena that encapsulate the usage of the term "discourse" in this thesis. Weingarten (1991) stated that:

> 1. A discourse consists of ideas and practices that communicate common values.
>
> 2. Any discourse reflects and constructs a specific world view.
>
> 3.. There are dominant and subjugated discourses. Dominant discourses constrain and contain what we can feel, think, and do.
>
> 4. That which is not part of the discourse shapes our experience as critically as the discourse itself.
>
> 5. Finally, discourse evolves [due to the conversation] people have about their lives [that] transform culturally available dominant narratives about people's lives (p.286).

Personal Definition of the Concept of Spiritual

My personal orientation is that all people are spiritual beings and have a need to relate with other human beings, as well as, having to connect to "something that is greater than us". That which is "greater than us" is perceived differently across space and time and is left for the individual to define. I have found, in my experience with relationships, that there is a yearning for something that is difficult to articulate from within the constraints of privileged or dominant forms of discourse. This yearning may have been historically manifest and appropriated to religious institutions. As our world becomes increasingly scientifically and rationally orientated, there is the danger of losing sight of other dimensions of who we are, such as the spiritual. My

belief is that the counselling relationship is a place where people hope to articulate and come to understand their spiritual experience and enrich their self-understanding.

The exploration of spirituality proceeded from a non-denominational and non-religious perspective. While noting that my own traditional background was Roman Catholicism, I endeavoured to adopt an inclusive view of spirituality. First of all, I believe spirituality is basic to all human beings by the very nature that they are alive. I borrowed a definition from Ronald Rolheiser (1998), where he uses the Greek word *eros*, which refers to the energy or spirit inside each of us. He illustrated this energy as a "fire inside of us" that spurs our actions, thoughts, wills, loves, and absolutely anything in which we engage ourselves. This spirit energy, or *eros*, is not something we decide to have or not; it is basic to our humanness. The following quotation explains this characteristic which I believe is basic to all persons:

> Spirituality is not something on the fringes, an option for those with a particular bent. None of us has a choice. Everyone [has] a spirituality and everyone does have one, either a life-giving one or a destructive one. (Rolheiser, 1998, p.6)

Rolheiser (1998) goes on to say that what we do with our spirit or energy is called spirituality. He states that: "Spirituality is what we do with the fire inside of us, about how we channel our eros" (Rolheiser, 1998, p.11).

The second aspect of my definition of spirituality, acknowledges "something beyond ourselves". People around the world have different names for this "something beyond ourselves". Some people refer to this as God, a Higher Power, The Creator, or Energy Source that may, or may not, be manifested in a cultural tradition or a religious institution. However we seek spirituality, we often take into account the mystery of life and its profoundly awesome nature (Becvar, 1997; Rolheiser, 1998). Furthermore, I believe that there is no one particular definition or experience of that "which is greater than us" that is superior or more correct than any other. This study took the perspective that each person has his or her own personal orientation and way of relating to, that "which is greater than us".

A third dimension of my definition of spirituality relates to the significance of the interconnectedness of persons that is manifest in relationships. Connectedness acknowledges that "each individual member of a relationship gives meaning and existence to the other" (Becvar, 1997, p.79). Buber (1970) refers to this as the "I and Thou" relationship, in which people are walking together through life in similar directions; thus, enabling us to empathize with others, analyze our realities and, generate meaning together to comprehend our experiences. By acknowledging that we need one another to give meaning to our experiences, we are also looking to help each other to develop our spirituality. As well, by participating in a spiritual discourse, a person may be invited into a particular kind of relationship, "one that manifests an understanding of the depth of our connections, those which we may speak of as existing at a soul level" (Becvar, 1997, p.79).

Due to my acknowledgment that each person has a different expression or way of manifesting their own spirituality, I chose not to privilege my definition over the definition of the participants of the study. I also knew that I could not study every expression of spirituality within the parameters of the counselling relationship. Therefore, having clients identify an "alive moment" ensured that they could express their own unique perception of what was of significance to them in their counselling session. Then, during the subsequent interview with me, each client was invited to discuss the potential spiritual aspects (which they defined as spiritual) of the "alive moment". Attributing a spiritual quality to the chosen "alive moment" was the decision of the client's, as I merely invited them to consider a spiritual perspective. Ursula King states this eloquently:

> The search for spirituality and transcendence in our age cannot find its sole answer in intense private devotions or in escapist religious life. It has to grow and live in the market place; it has to be the source of meaning for all of life and relate to our daily problems, our family and our community, our science, our politics, the whole world as we scientifically explore and experience it today. (as cited in Becvar, 1997, p.50)

Significance of the Study

The dominant, privileged discourse of the modernist, rationalist, and individualist tradition can marginalize other forms of dialogue regarding how the world is perceived and understood. The history of psychotherapy in the past century has seen the separation of religious views from the theory of the psychology of the person. My hope was that by inviting clients to look at a moment in their life through a different lens- that of the spiritual- we may together create a new way of talking with each other that opens the door to infinite possibilities of perceiving themselves in their world. Acting as a participant and as a researcher, offered a chance for me to participate in the co-construction of different ways of relating to a person which hold new possibilities for future ways of being. This study has challenged the mainstream psychotherapeutic discourse by inviting both therapists and clients to be open to other ways of "talking" that may bring forth new ways of viewing human struggles for meaning.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The literature that I reviewed illuminated the lack of attention that spirituality has been given in the psychotherapy research. In their article, "Spirituality and Health", William Miller and Carl Thoresen (1999) described spirituality as "an attribute of individuals" (Miller & Thoresen, 1999, p.6) much like personality and character. They also described the lack of attention to spirituality in the health professions today (Miller, 1999). Health care professionals have in the past century subscribed to a more science-based perspective of counselling while not accepting the therapeutic perspective of the spiritual leaders of the community (Cornett, 1998; Elkins, 1995; Hillman, 1992; Karasu, 1999; Kurtz & Ketcham; 1992; Miller, 1999). Cornett (1998) noted that the earliest therapists were medicine men, shaman, priests, prophets, and soothsayers. These individuals would help a troubled person by using abilities, that others believed were divinely influenced. Kopp, as cited in Cornett (1998), suggested that "like those who sought out a shaman, contemporary men and women, consciously or not, seek out psychotherapists in the hope of learning something of the enlightenment that evolved from years of struggle with internal demons" (p.5). Cornett (1998) attributed a dissatisfaction with present psychotherapeutic practice as "our projected wishes for spiritual contentment and the intentional or unintentional claims of its practitioners to be able to provide such contentment" (p. 5). The focus appears to have shifted, in psychology, from helpers using divinely influenced powers to cure dissatisfied persons to helpers often using science as their diagnostic tool and remedy of choice.

I believe that the movement to a rationalistic and positivist society subordinated the significance of other emotional and spiritual discourses by marginalizing all but the accepted scientific discourse. In efforts to standardize psychology for academic purposes, modernists sought a unifying language that ultimately marginalized other types of discourse. The

"modernist" perspective advocates that there is one "truth" or reality that can be investigated through adhering to specific methods of discovery. The modernist acknowledges a scientific or positivist way of perceiving a world consisting of determinable causes and effects (Palys, 1997). The trend to adopt this dominant rational, scientific language meant that not only were the therapists communicating via this discourse, but so were the clients. Inevitably our society was borrowing a language from scientists to comprehend, interpret and "diagnose" human meanings for experiences; including, consequently, self-understanding. This permeated not only clinical psychology, but also education curricula, health and justice development and any other areas where an authentic, trustworthy, or commonly accepted language was required. Gergen (1994) challenged this dominant discourse in his book, Realities and Relationships. He suggested that concepts of mental illness and therapeutic relating are made deficit by the cultural context. Gergen (1994) argued that "the 'ways we talk' are intimately intertwined with patterns of cultural life [which] sustain and support certain ways of doing things and prevent others from emerging (p. 147). The question becomes, what effect does dominant/privileged discourse have on the prevailing vocabulary in our relationships and what aspects of our experiences are then not being explored or considered? Further, Becvar (1997) explained if we become "conscious of the discourses that are privileged in our society, we may also become more sensitive to those conversations which are excluded by such privileged discourses" (p.106).

The need for a less constraining or limiting discourse was found in the literature where therapists were advocating alternative approaches to study human relating and behaving other than scientific/medical model perspectives. David Elkins (1995) called for a "re-visioning" of psychology to acknowledge a "theory of the soul". Elkins (1995) reminded us of the definition of psychology as "the study of the soul" and stated that, "etymologically, a psychotherapist is a 'servant or attendant of the soul'" (p.97). Elkins iterated that many refer to psychology as the study of behaviour and few see it as the study of the soul. He stated that "now is the time for

psychology to return to its roots, to be again the discipline that studies the soul" (Elkins, 1995, p.97). James Hillman (1975) has also been a proponent for 're-visioning' the perspective of psychology from only focusing on rational thought to instead, qualifying the perspective of soul.

Despite the abundance of psychotherapeutic theories that rationalize the psyche with positivist measures, there were some who looked beyond the purely scientific to the often unexplainable spiritual facets. Victor Frankl, a strong advocate for the inclusion of spirituality in psychotherapy, contended that central to our existence is our search for meaning in life. He published, The Doctor and the Soul, in which he described what is absent in psychotherapy:

> What is still missing is a form of psychotherapy, which gets underneath affect-dynamics, which sees beneath the psychic malaise of the neurotic, his spiritual struggles. What we are concerned with is psychotherapy in spiritual terms. (Frankl, 1959, p.29).

Frankl (1959) proposed a psychotherapy, called Logotherapy, which brought to awareness spiritual realities in the practice of psychotherapy. He states that Logotherapy "is equipped to deal with philosophical questions within their own frame of reference, and can embark on objective discussion of the spiritual distress of human beings suffering from psychic disturbances" (p.35).

In addition to Frankl, Carl Jung (1933) also made spirituality a focus of his therapeutic work as a psychologist. In Jung's book, Modern Man in Search of a Soul (1933), he explained that, "of all his patients over the age of 35, not one was healed who did not develop a spiritual orientation to life" (as cited in Elkins, 1995, p.97; Rolheiser, 1998). Both Jung and Frankl emphasized and developed the significance of spirituality in psychotherapy. Their insights have encouraged others to, critically, reflect on their own practice of psychotherapy and challenge the dominant, modernist discursive practices.

The call to recognize and integrate the spiritual in therapy has begun to appear more frequently in the psychotherapy literature (Becvar, 1997; Boadella, 1998; Elkins, 1995; Karasu,

1999; Miller, 1999; West, 1997). Byram Karasu (1999) proposed that the spiritual aspects of the person, are not contained in one, single rational therapy. Furthermore, spiritual psychotherapy "cannot be contained by the human mind, just as the mind may comprehend something about itself but does not reach the ineffable depths of self (i.e. the soul)" (Karasu, 1999, p.1). Karasu referred to the principles of spiritual therapy as principles of a way of being rather than tenets of treatment. The focus is not on the specific method but on the person of the therapist (Karasu, 1999; Cornett, 1998; Elkins, 1995; Miller, 1999; Rogers, 1951). Carl Rogers' in his Client Centered Therapy (1951) focused on the therapist's person in the presence of the client. Although Rogers did not use the word "spirituality" in his theory, the focus on the person in their entirety was emphasized over any scientific, diagnostic measure. Incorporating the whole person, including the spiritual, into any theory may, in my opinion, be threatening to some who are familiar with looking at the world with predictable, objective glasses.

Many therapists and scholars continue to challenge a psychology that merely discusses the observable, mechanistic processes of an individual and neglect other perspectives of the person. Boadella (1998) questioned the limits that psychotherapy delineates against spiritual traditions and found that this is "partly because of its fear to be contaminated by association with the 'esoteric' "(p.47). Adrian van Kaam also studied the relationship between the traditional teachings of the world religions and the insights evolving out of the human sciences and psychology. Van Kaam "saw the formative human spiritual traditions, because they were open to the 'mystery' level of human experience, as able to go deeper than the purely humanistic or purely psychological ...[The traditions] stressed the unifying aspects of these formative traditions (Van Kaam, 1983-1995)" (as cited in Boadella, 1998, p.28). Even though this unifying perspective may be advocated by some (Frankl, 1946; Jung, 1933), science continues to influence much of the literature, government decisions, and practices in the helping professions while neglecting the entirety of the person (Gergen, 1994).

As science prevailed, it seemed that the person was no longer approached as a whole in counselling but instead, seen as a disembodied entity with specific diagnoses and problems. Stephen Gilligan (In press) referred to this dissection as "disembodied, isolated intellect". Gilligan (In press) presented the 'great' accomplishment of modernist thinking to "separate the intellect from the present moment of the body, nature, and life itself" (p.5). Gilligan stated that the, "hope was that if we could just think clearly and rationally enough, we could overcome the major problems of life" and then if "we could just control and predict things, happiness would follow" (Gilligan, 1999, p.5). The shift to a more urban lifestyle, which takes its directives from the media, propagated the idea that people live in isolation and communicate, primarily, through machines. Gilligan used the term "disembodied intellect" to characterize the dominant discourse that Gergen (1994) also challenged in his assumption that there is a need to challenge accepted discourse. The result of this "disembodied intellect" in our relationships is that there is "[Less] soulfulness, less mystery, less healing, less deep listening, less sitting still, less wisdom, less hope for true peace and understanding"(Gilligan, 1998, p.5). Marion Woodman referred to "embodied consciousness" as what is needed in order to approach our struggles creatively and without becoming fixed on certain understandings or positions that might make others the enemy while leaving us only one option for viewing the world (as cited in Gilligan, 1999).

What consequently happened in the acceptance of the positivist model in counselling was not only the adoption of the concept of religion as spurious but also the loss of the validity of the spiritual reality of being human. It was apparent in the literature that, too often, the practice of psychotherapy does not allow for the total human experience of acknowledging the spiritual realm. Many researchers and practitioners are looking for the integration of psychology and spirituality (Cornett, 1999; Elkins, 1995; Frankl, 1946; Jung, 1933; Miller, 1999; Weingarten, 1999; West, 1997;). The literature continues to point to this yearning or need to speak of the mysterious part of life. The following illustrates this point:

> Seeking the Divine…has been a major aspiration and force in all cultures and periods of history, yet it has been virtually ignored by traditional psychology… Regular people with ordinary problems who are also on a spiritual path …are looking for therapists who will honor their seeking for something sacred and who can respect their whole being –in its psychological and spiritual fullness-rather than belittling or minimizing their spiritual seeking, as much of traditional psychotherapy has historically done. (Miller, p.3, 1999)

Working Definition of "Spiritual"

My thesis proposed to speak to the need to explore how clients seek to integrate spirituality in psychotherapy. There was an abundance of literature in many areas that described spirituality from various different perspectives, cultures, and traditions. The breadth of this review could not come close to describing the bulk of literature available on spirituality. To reiterate, the definition I use in this study for the term "spiritual" was an inclusive one. It was not my intent to advocate a particular definition of spiritual in this research. Rather, by clarifying my own perspectives, my hope was to leave the dialogue open for participants to present their definitions in an all-inclusive environment. As stated earlier, my personal definition of "spiritual" has three components. Firstly, I believe that every human being is spiritual by virtue of being alive. Secondly, I acknowledge that there is something "greater than us" which I refer to as God but may be referred to by others using other language. Lastly, coming from a social constructionist perspective, it is my view that through our relationships we give meaning to our spirituality and that we mutually support each other in our spiritual development.

The overall intent of this study was to explore how "alive" moments might bring forth the spiritual possibilities, in each of us, to the forefront of our daily struggles by inviting a dialogue to construct such meaning in the clients' lives. Thus, my study attempts to bring the spiritual into therapeutic discourse. I believe that if therapists were more inclined to acknowledge the spiritual in counselling discourse they would have another possibility from which to understand their client. Inviting the participants to discuss the spiritual attributes of

their "alive moment" opened the possibilities for spiritual discourse to evolve from the discussion. As well, participants would have a greater opportunity to appreciate different aspects of themselves which, normally are unvoiced possibilities. By elaborating on current, dominant discourse, this study gave therapists a new perspective from which to approach the counselling relationship. Therefore, the marginalization of spiritual by the dominant, modernist discourse was challenged in this study.

Chapter three specifically speaks to the literature related to the "how" or the methodological perspectives adopted in this study.

Chapter 3

Methodology and Method

Perspective of Methodology

This qualitative study was embedded within a postmodern, social constructionist perspective. The postmodern perspective argues that there is not only one "truth" that resonates in an experience of a given phenomenon but, instead, an infinite plurality of "realities" that vie for currency in our relationships. What the modernists accept as "truth", because it is called "science" by virtue of it being subjected to the rigors of positivism, is where postmodernists challenge us to consider other ways of learning and knowing. Laurel Richardson illustrated:

> the core of postmodernism is the *doubt* that any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal or general claim as the "right" or privileged form of authoritative knowledge. Postmodernism *suspects* all truth claims of masking and serving particular interests in local cultural, and political struggles… the postmodernist context of doubt distrusts all methods equally. No method has a privileged status. (as cited in Palys, 1997, p.207)

My goal in this study was for the researcher to participate in the construction of the meanings of individuals' lived experience while acknowledging that each person was the only "expert" in understanding their reality.

The social constructionist perspective advocates that a person's "realities" are brought forth through interactions within cultures, traditions, genders, and any other context that contributes to the meaning of their actions, thoughts, and feelings. Weingarten (1991) explained that: "…people's thinking and understanding shift in relation to the vicissitudes of social processes, processes whereby historically situated people construct views of 'reality' "(p.286). In this study the participants and I co-constructed meanings of specific words through shared discussion of our perspectives of our realities. What then occurred was "knowledge as created in interaction among investigator and respondents" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.111). Hence, the

data was not discovered in this research study, but rather the participants and I created the data together.

Kenneth Gergen (1999a) and John Shotter (1999) advocated this perspective of social constructionism to perceive the nature of psychology. Gergen's (1999a) studies in the 1970's of self-esteem revealed that psychological science was not value neutral and actually encouraged certain values over others. In addition, he argued that the individual's meanings and understandings are dependent on the social feedback from the environment or the context of the individual. Gergen's interest in the influences of social forces on the individual led him to Gadamer's (1960) work which focused on how understanding occurs in a given text. Gergen found that Gadamer (1960) and Fish (1980) both asserted that the meanings we come to accept are dependent upon the framework or community from where we are operating. Gergen concluded that: "research findings don't have any meaning until they are interpreted, and these interpretations are not demanded by the findings themselves. They result from a process of negotiating meaning within the community" (Gergen, 1999, p.5). This perspective challenges the traditional perspectives, which test hypotheses to achieve a universal knowledge of psychological processes.

Gergen (1999) did not abandon the idea of empirical ways of knowing but, instead, advocated viewing research and conclusions as related to social understandings, which occur via dialogue, collective agreements, and, ultimately, language itself. Gergen (1999a) and Shotter (1994; 1999) both presented a paradigm that placed ways of knowing or doing research in the realm of relational interactions and reflexive deliberations within a conversation. Gergen (1999) referred to" reflexive deliberations" as a process that is attentive to the taken for granted assumptions of the society's cultural and historical traditions which are often accepted as the only possible meanings for viewing the world. He stated that these processes "reflect on the [traditional assumptions'] potential for suppression, and which open a space for other voices in

the dialogues of the culture" (Gergen, 1999, p.8). Shotter and Katz (1996) also referred to the practice of "social poetics" as a way of creating, within a dialogic interaction, new ways of talking that draw our attention to otherwise unnoticed possibilities of experiencing our lives.

It is from these social constructions of an individual's reality, that a sense of self and meanings for our experience are continually being negotiated. The values inherit in this perspective of self are in opposition to the positivist, individualist tradition and, therefore, value relationship over isolation. It is my own understanding that we are the sum of all the people we have ever met. This is supported by the concept that each time we enter a new activity, thought, conversation or experience, what we bring to these engagements is the product of all prior relationships in our lives to that point. This is the basic assumption of social constructionism:

> ...instead of the inner dynamics of the individual psyche (romanticism and subjectivism), or the already determined characteristics of the external world (modernism and objectivism) it is the contingent, really vague (that is, lacking any completely determinate character) flow of continuous communicative activity between human beings that one must study. (Shotter, 1993b, p.179)

In studying the communicative activity of people, one must be "open to further specification as a result of human, communicative activity" (Shotter, 1993b, p. 179).

This ongoing interaction is how I, personally, come to understand and articulate aspects of my developing self and my verbalized reality. In this understanding, we then develop who we "are" as a result of the interaction in our relating to one another. For, "it is not experience that organizes expression but the other way around-expression organizes experience" (Shotter, 1997, p.5). Therefore, this perspective of co-constructing research was the best perspective for me to approach the topic of spirituality within the counselling relationship.

Overview of the Research Method

This study was conducted from an action research stance. Action research (Stringer, 1996) implies that the very process of participating in the study had some inescapable influence on myself, as co-researcher and co-participant, as well as on the participants involved. The

impact of the dialogical exchange on each individual was that new meanings were collaboratively constructed and ultimately came to be defined as the content of my data. To gather this data, I employed the "Inter-Personal Recall" (IPR) method which utilizes video replay (Rennie, 1995) to assist the client to reflect on a therapeutic session. The conceptualizing and categorizing procedures applied in Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Rennie, 1995) helped not to construct a theory, but to develop categories and themes in data analysis. To cross-validate the emergent categories and themes with the understanding of the participants, I incorporated Reason and Heron's (1995; 1997) cooperative inquiry method of "action-cycling".

Methodology

Acknowledging that understanding arises from communicative interaction, I recall instances in my own life when underlying issues were brought forth in a conversation and given a voice. It was when others called attention to something that I had said, to my body language, or to my disposition, that they invited me to articulate and give meaning to my understanding of self. I believe that the counselling relationship is one setting where such meaning making can occur between people. Often it is this relationship where one can co-create a revised sense of self and engage in a new type of discourse that invites new perceptions of reality. It is in the context of a dialogical exchange that we come to re-visit our self and bring forth new ways of seeing the self. It is "from within our conversationally sustained activities themselves, that we can (through our talk in practice) draw each other's attention to certain [understandings] of their crucially important features that might otherwise escape our notice" (Shotter, 1997, p. 2). Gergen (1999b) encouraged:

> we might open the door to many other discourses common with the society, but often eschewed by therapists by virtue of their "unscientific" basis. Here I am thinking of a range of otherwise marginalized discourses- of spiritual life, of the deities, and of the mystical and mysterious. (p.8)

I explored what can emerge when people are engaged in interaction, where a new discourse that transcends ordinary, everyday dialogue maybe brought forth. Inviting respondents into a new discourse, a spiritual one, co-constructed between respondents and myself, is what I endeavored to accomplish through this research.

My research was conducted from the relational or dialogical perspective that Shotter (1997) and Gergen (1999a) present. My role as collaborator necessitated that, at times, I shared with the participants my own perceptions, assumptions, and values from within my reality. This sharing of self is in opposition to the traditional, realist perspective that advocates the objectivity of the neutral researcher to obtain valid, empirically tested data (Palys, 1997). Since I was participating in bringing forth new meanings out of an interaction, then I could not remain a neutral, objective observer. Instead, by the very implication that I was questioning or inviting a dialogue around spirituality, I was simultaneously co-creating and influencing the consequent direction of the interaction. I could not withdraw my person from the interactions with a participant, as the data resulted from the mere possibilities of meanings that were generated between us. Reason and Heron (1995) advocated a research paradigm that invites people to, together, create knowledge about themselves. It is researching through the process of action (interaction) and reflection, that a cycle occurs between researcher and participant (in the meaning making of the study participants become the co-researchers). Within this participatory cycle co-researchers acknowledge and communicate their subjective perspectives while accepting "that our experiential encounter with ourselves in our world is the grounding of all knowing" (Reason & Heron, 1995, p.124).

'Critical inter-subjectivity' is defined by Reason and Heron (1995) as a state of consciousness that challenges the position of positivists who take the stance of objective researcher studying a phenomenon from which they are not participating in, or are somehow removed from. They argued:

> ...we have to learn to think dialectically, to view reality as a process, always emerging through a self-contradictory development, always becoming; knowing this reality is neither subjective nor objective, it is both wholly independent of me and wholly dependent on me. (Reason & Heron, 1995, p.125)

I acknowledged the participants as contributing to the action and reflection of the research. Together we became co-researchers and co-subjects taking on mutually inclusive roles in the work to generate meaning. Together we explored, through cycles of conversational dialogue and reflection, the meanings of the particular moment identified from their therapeutic session. During the interview I used the techniques of clarifying and cross-verifying my understandings to ensure that I was responding and listening appropriately (Egan, 1998). After the interview, I ensured that the meanings that evolved fit with the client and therapist by a process of checking in with them as the transcripts and emergent meanings were compiled and written. Another task involved organizing the information from these dialogical exchanges and the emergent themes to understand their importance to the study. These emergent themes were then clustered into "meaning units" (see the data analysis section for further elaboration).

The organization of the data from the interview was ultimately a study of a conversation that was collaboratively constructed. The underlying values that each person brought to the interaction influenced the meanings each of us attributed to the words and thus the direction of the discourse itself. Wittgenstein (1981) referred to this, as a "call" that we receive from another that invites us into certain ways of being or acting that we might not otherwise enter into. Where we "go" in our discourse or "how we in fact 'socially construct' or 'develop' different possible ways of 'going on' with each other, that is up to us to work out, to invent, according to the forms of life we feel we want (and are able) to live" (Shotter, 1999, p.3).

The direction of the interview was shaped not merely by my values or meanings, but by what occurred when *we*, the client and myself, *together* coordinated and co-constructed the life of the interview. By the mutual interaction of myself and the participants in a conversational

relationship, I addressed Weingarten's (1991) concerns about non-intimate interactions which I endeavored to avoid in my interviews. The following citation illustrates the type of intimate environment of the interviews:

> Intimate interaction occurs when people share meaning or co-create meaning and are able to coordinate their actions to reflect their mutual meaning-making. Refraining from meaning-making and providing, imposing, reflecting, and misunderstanding are associated with non-intimate interactions. (Weingarten, 1991, p.287)

In summary, it is my belief that people are attending counselling because of a deep yearning in their lives. To explore this concept I utilized a client identified "alive moment" as a vehicle to discuss a person's deeper yearnings that may or may not be projected within the therapy session. The subsequent dialogue with the client, the therapist, and myself, by the very nature of asking about spirituality, generated a collaborative meaning making process. This process, as Gergen (1999) described, brought about a reflexive deliberation whereby spiritual yearnings in our everyday tasks and struggles that may not have been previously acknowledged by our culture or generated in other dialogues, was explored. The intent was that by presenting an invitation to explore our unique spiritual expressions and to view specific moments through a different lens (a spiritual one), therapists and clients were afforded a new perspective from which to view the helping relationship.

Research Method

My research method involved obtaining informed consent to videotape five different client-therapist counselling sessions. The client and therapist had been actively working together for more than four counselling sessions, which ensured a relationship had been established. After videotaping one counselling session, the client took the taped session home to identify a moment that was somehow alive or significant for him or her. The participants defined the meanings that they attached to their "alive" moment. The technique of reflecting on a taped session is referred to as Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR). This technique of videotape re-play

is what Kagan (1975) used to help train intern counsellors and what Rennie (1995) used in his study of clients' recollections of a moment-to-moment experience of their therapy session. The re-play of the videotape stimulates the client to recall and reflect on the experience on his or her own, after the session.

I selected participants by approaching private clinicians who were interested in participating in the study. Interested therapists were then asked to approach clients they had been seeing for more than four sessions to solicit their participation in the research (see Appendix A). The therapists provided an information sheet (Appendix A and B) that described the study and a number where clients could contact me if they were interested in participating. This practice was in keeping with how Rennie (1995) approached therapists for referrals to research.

The participants were given a form that orientated them to the study and explained how they could participate if interested (See Appendix B). The ethical concerns of privileged information and confidentiality were outlined on this form (Palys, 1997). They then had an opportunity to provide written consent and voice any questions or concerns around the study. As well, it was clearly stated that they, at anytime during the course of the research, could refuse to participate if they so decided. During the cycle of action and reflection of the emerging themes, the informants were ensured of pseudonyms and given the opportunity to exclude or elaborate on the data pertaining to their input of this written/published thesis. Because I had already stated that my relationship with the informants was one of mutual respect in a collaborative, co-researcher perspective, there was opportunity to express concerns and specific needs. In addition, I offered to provide referrals if any issues arose where further counselling was required and the clients expressed a need. Since the therapist was included in the process, it was my hope that they would be able to incorporate the outcome of the meanings created in their subsequent therapy sessions.

Because I wanted clients to identify the moments and to attach their own significance, I did not provide much more than a brief definition of my understanding of "aliveness". I briefly described "aliveness" as a moment that was somehow more striking or significant than all the other moments in the session. I wanted them to implement their own understanding of an "alive" moment when they chose a moment from the tape. The meaning(s) attributed to this moment were then elaborated upon during the conversation in the subsequent interview.

After the client had an opportunity to examine the tape, we then engaged in an interview pertaining to the client-identified moment, focusing on experiences that such reflection brought forth, and the possible spiritual relevance. This interview occurred with the therapist present and in reflection (Andersen, 1991), but not actively participating in the initial dialogue. After engaging in an interview with the client we, then, invited the therapist (who was present during our interview) to be part of a de-briefing discussion around the emergent effects of the consultation with the client and myself. I consulted with the client after these sessions in person to confirm or further co-construct the emergent categories or themes in the qualitative analysis of the interview discussion. This is in keeping with Reason and Heron's (1995) "cycling" approach to research. "Cycling" implies that I return to the participants after I have interpreted themes from the data to cross-reference my themes. Asking the participants for their perspective of the themes, within the context of their experience, acknowledges the validity of this study.

Some of the data I collected was in the form of field notes from our interview and from the subsequent "check in" or "cycling" meetings I had with the clients. Further, I kept an ongoing journal of my reflections, reactions, and how the conversations with the informants helped my study to evolve and the subsequent changes within the data analysis. The dialogues with the therapist, the client, and myself were audio recorded and transcribed. I did not view any of the video taped sessions as my data focus was the conversation around the alive moment from

the session not, necessarily, discussing the session content. (See Appendix C for interview and debriefing questions.)

To keep track of the research process I maintained a journal of my day to day activities and how my decision making had evolved. It was here, in this journal, that my personal comments and experiences of the process of data collection were kept. During the process of interacting with the informants, I also made notes on how this process had shaped my research questions, the interview questions, and the generated themes which influenced the direction of my study. As well, throughout the interviews and informal meetings, I was looking for patterns and made memos around themes that I saw appearing in the course of the research. I continually checked in with the participants during the interview to relate my understanding of what meaning was evolving in the interaction to see if this was what they were actually saying.

In addition to my conversations with my participants, I also engaged in conversations with my thesis support group and my thesis advisor. These conversations offered me an opportunity to reflect on other theoretical methodologies and to critically compare the research method I chose. These conversations were then helpful in clarifying each step that I took in my research and in reiterating the need to be constantly conscious of my method. As well, while analyzing the transcripts, my thesis study group lent suggestions which provided further interpretation and direction in the final analysis.

Data Analysis

The developing categories or themes that I interpreted from the transcribed segments of a videotaped session organized my analysis. I adapted the Grounded Theory approach that was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to compare within and between each transcript common patterns or themes. Glaser and Strauss proposed that we "discover theory from data" through the "general method of constant comparison" (1967, p.1). They advocate an approach that seeks to create first themes and then categories from the themes. From there, grounded theory attempts

to compare the relationship between the different categories. Using Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to inform the development/organization of themes and sub themes, I did not hope to arrive at a theory but instead endeavoured to keep my analysis grounded in the data and research relationships. Rennie and Brewer (1987) outlined four main criteria for a theory to be grounded of which I applied in my analysis:

> [The analysis] should be believable in that it should seem to be plausible to the reader. It should be comprehensible in that it accounts for most of the data. It should be grounded and therefore tied to the data. Finally, it should be applicable and should lead to hypotheses and additional investigations. (p.12)

Rennie (1995) also adapted procedures from Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory to analyze his IPR sessions. Rennie saw the task as to "conceptualize a theory of a phenomenon by interpreting the meaning embodied in the text in a way that remains faithful to the text itself, in short, 'grounded'" (Rennie, 1995, p.207). Hence, the categories derived from the data are *in vivo* codes, which are taken directly from the respondents' discourse or voices. I made memos when reading through the transcripts of *in vivo* codes called meaning units (MU) which later served as larger categories. I took the meaning units from the themes and compared them with other themes to then create larger, more inclusive categories. Throughout the process of memo writing, I was looking for patterns to investigate whether there were comparative themes between transcripts (Charmaz, 1995). Then I took the potential categories back to the informants and asked them to reflect on the themes.

Reason and Heron (1995) referred to this cross verification with participants as reflection and action, which they call "cycling". This process of cycling is central to their methodology of cooperative inquiry. They outlined four phases within their co-operative inquiry paradigm that reflect this idea of cycling. In the first phase, the participants gather with the researcher(s) to explore and agree on an area of human activity to study. The participants and researcher(s) take on mutual roles of collaborative devising of propositions to explore and decide on what activity

they will engage in to understand the inquiry. Under normal circumstances, cooperative inquiry engages "respondents" as co-researchers who are involved in the initial planning discussions or the research. Instead, the second and third phase of Reason and Heron's methodology is where I adopted their style of inquiry.

In the second phase, I made mental notes of potential themes emerging and checked these themes in with the co-researchers to ensure they fit with their understanding. After the interview was transcribed, and I had categorized the data (acquired from the meaning that was collaboratively created from our conversation) into meaning units or themes, I then took this back to each client to reflect upon and decide if it fit with their understanding of what emerged from our interaction. The final phase of cycling back and forth to ensure mutual understanding, is what gave the themes I interpreted validity in this study. Reason and Heron's (1997) concept of experiential knowing, where "the very process of perceiving is also a meeting, a transaction with what there is" (1997, p.278) and where knowing is "subjective-objective and so relative to the knower" (1997, p.278), is illustrative of the epistemology that informed the data of this study. This participatory paradigm that Reason and Heron (1997) advocate is what informed the backdrop for my understanding of the collaborative relationship of the participants and myself; the interactive method of arriving at the data or meanings; the nature of reality that was co-constructed; and the intrinsic value of the results of the study to the co-researchers.

Ethical Considerations

I ensured the well being and respect of the participants by securing the following was understood and complied with in this study:

1. Confidentiality: Protection of the anonymity of informants by creating pseudonyms in the transcribed and written documents.

2. Withdrawal from the study: Participants had the opportunity to withdraw their participation and information at any time from the study. Participants were free to limit the areas of sharing in discussion.

3. Referral: If participants approach me after the study, wishing to seek counselling services, I will offer appropriate referrals (bearing in mind that they are already in a counselling relationship).

4. Availability of information: The transcriptions and notes were available to my advisor, my committee members, and myself. The raw data will be stored in a locked cabinet for 5 years following the retrieval of information and will be shredded later.

5. Results of the study: The collaborative information (created by the participants and myself) resulting from the study will be used for research purposes, for application in future counselling services, and may be reported in academic journals. Before publication and presentation, the participants were given the opportunity to review and then to accept or decline the inclusion of information pertaining to their reported responses.

This study's ethical considerations were reviewed and accepted by a committee from The University of Northern British Columbia's Ethics Review Board in March of 2000.

Chapter 4

Results

As a co-participant in the creation of the content of the data, I knew that the data was not discovered but instead co-constructed between the participants and myself, the researcher. In addition to the conversation of the interview, there were field notes, memos, external conversations (with my advisor and committee) and journal reflections that helped me to shape and organize the data. A group of my peers also who worked partly as a team, lent suggestions, reflections, and advice during the course of the development of themes. The themes of the analysis of the data were, then, interpreted by myself and were validated/verified through checking with the participants how they fit for them. Kvale (1996) asserted that the context in which we find ourselves is where we come to socially validate the results of our analysis.

The first section of this discussion will explore the decision-making process I undertook in establishing themes. Utilizing the criteria of grounded analysis, I read through each transcript and highlighted how the participants responded in the interview. This consisted of charting each participant's response to my questions and where the dialogue subsequently went. From there, I compared across five participants' responses to each question that I had posed in the interview. Then, I interpreted and created themes from the participants' voices. What I was charting started to appear to me as deficient or superficial in some way. The themes described the experience of the participants but it seemed to me that they could not exist on their own, as gems are not found in isolation. I realized then that my voice, as a co-participant, needed to be included, as the meanings were a collaboration from our conversation and not just a set of responses that were expressed in isolation. This was an important factor, which shaped the analysis of my data.

Therefore, not only was my voice a part of the generation of themes but so, too, was the process of our conversation. The question then became: How do I analyze data as not only content but also as process? After some deliberation, it appeared that the data had two

dimensions; one being that of content themes and the other process themes. It seemed that one could not exist with out the other. Thus, it became clear that my study not only described an experience but also, exemplified a process.

The key for me, was that in participating in the interview dialogue, I helped to create the meanings embedded in the content by engaging in a particular focus of discursive practice. When a response from a participant did not provide a full image in my mind, I asked for clarification or responded in a tentative manner to check my own comprehension of their comment. This process was much like a dance in that the response, reflection, re-expression, clarification, re-iteration, and so on, described how we, together, constructed the meanings of the content of this analysis. It was from within these conversations that we were open to negotiating and re-articulating our thoughts, which led to new possibilities that might have otherwise not been created or noticed without our interaction. Katz and Shotter (1996) refer to this as social poetics:

> ...a living interactive process in which people as embodied agents are continuously , responsively, reacting to each other in such a way that , even as one person is speaking, the facial and bodily responses of those around them are acting back upon them, to influence their 'shaping' of their talking. In such circumstances as these, we are doing much more than merely talking 'about ' things; we are creating forms of relationship...seeing [the conversation] as providing, not information, but different possible relational opportunities. (Katz & Shotter, 1996, p.925)

Acknowledging this dialogic dance was paramount in the evolution of my analysis. It became apparent that I was not only curious about *what* the participants said in the interview but also, *how* the participants made their responses in our interactions. To encapsulate both of these curiosities I developed two themes through which I organized the transcriptions. Initially, I came to acknowledge the *what* of the transcriptions which I organized into content themes from the participants' responses. After further contemplation, the significance of *how* the participants informed me of these content themes became another theme on it's own, that of process.

An example of perceiving the relationship between the product (the *what*) and the process (the *how*) is written about in the perspective of "performative psychology". Lois Holzman (2000) writes about performative psychology, which incorporates the work of Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky stressed that the activity, the doing, the "how" is inseparable from the product, the "what". In this sense, the way we come to understand, learn, and/or develop is by "Neither process nor product, this new entity is simultaneously both...a dialectical unity" (Holzman, 2000, p.4) where both the doing (process) and the product (content) are acknowledged in relationship. These inter relationships between the process themes and the content themes, are what encouraged me to organize the data as I did in my analysis.

I spent much time deliberating on this relationship between the "what" and the "how" of my conversations with participants. I also realized that each time I re-visited my data I contributed to re-interpreting and thus, re-constructing the themes of the analysis and in this sense, I continued a dialogue with my data. This process was further influenced by my conversations with my advisor and thesis study group which helped to situate my data and also provided further places that I "could have" gone with the analysis. The "conversations", then, that I had with the transcripts have continued to shape my analysis and offer new interpretations. For the purpose of this thesis, I had to "stop the conversations" with the data and thus, the evolution of the analysis, to produce a written, coherent product. My angst was in being mindful of the process of writing a thesis while at the same time, acknowledging my orientation to my research which advocates a collaborative, constructive process within the responsive-order of a dialogue (Shotter, 1995). Hence, my research perspective implies that there is never an end to the possibilities of meaning that may evolve from the process of conversation; for each response yields yet another response and so on and so on. The decision to "stop" my "conversation" with the transcripts was one of the struggles that I had during my interpretation of the analysis. What follows then is a presentation of some possibilities of meanings that I organized into themes and

then sub themes to describe the content, while also illustrating the context of the interview conversations.

The five participants whom I interviewed were all over the age of twenty. There were three females and two male participants who participated in the research. All of these participants had been seeing their therapist for more than four sessions, and their therapist was present in reflection during our interview conversation. The participants' pseudonyms will be abbreviated in the exemplified transcripts as follows: Ann=A; Fred=F; Joyce=Joy; John=J; Marilyn=Ma. My voice will be abbreviated with an "R". The page number, of the original transcription, will be referenced with the abbreviated pseudonym following exemplified excerpts from the interviews.

The Theme of Process

It is my perspective that the theme of process coexists with the theme of content. In order to simplify and categorize the data I chose to separate it into two themes for the purpose of analysis. For each question that I asked the participants (See Appendix C) there was an ensuing conversation between us that comprised a sub theme under the larger "process theme". Likewise, as there was a corresponding "process sub theme" there was also a "content sub theme". The themes I have developed are inseparable, but will be presented and examined individually while at the same time I attempted to note their inter-relatedness. I struggled to make this coherent in my presentation while taking the reader step by step through the experience of our conversation. It was difficult to separate the how's and the what's but this was important to understanding how I distinguished the two themes while still being aware of their interrelationships. The five sub themes under the "process theme" are Creating Dialogic Space, Telling Their Story, Dancing Around the Word "Spiritual", Struggle, and Re-Incorporating which are discussed below.

Creating the Dialogic Space

Although this sub theme began and continued throughout the entire interview session, the first five minutes were indicative of the creation of an environment or dialogic space, where as Weingarten (1991) described, a respectful, intimate conversation can unfold. Thus, the theme began upon meeting the participants and discussing the study. My first question had the participants describe the moment they had chosen to call their "alive moment" from within their therapy session. It was during this initial part of the interview where we spent time hearing one another and got a sense of the intended respectful atmosphere of the interview conversation.. Using grounded theory's constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I was able to identify and compare how dialogic space was created across all five interviews. My decision to include this sub theme followed from how it was clearly evident in my memos and field notes. The rhythm or the dance of each interview was unique given the fact that each interview involved a different participant with unique dispositions and experiences. Being aware of these differences in personalities between interviews made for a variety of manners in which the questions were posed and how I responded to each person. This made for an exciting twist to each datum collected but, each time, required a self-reflective comment as to why certain decisions varied with each participant. Using the metaphor of a dance illustrates this well; with each individual a new step or rhythm was constructed that required different stances, movements, pauses, and turns to attempt to stay attuned to the participants responses. As a novice interviewer, this caused some anguish at times as the worrisome baggage of the positivist era crept in…such as: Should the questions all be asked in the same manner? Is there a standard protocol being followed that will warrant the data as valid and reliable? After discussing this with my advisor and my peer study group I further realized that the basis of my study centered around the openness of the interview which would lead to a co-constructed dialogue that would become my data. To use the rigors of quantitative methods would be to squash the opportunity

to dialogue with participants in a natural medium where we could, together, develop meanings that have infinite possibilities.

Hence, the way in which each person described their "alive moment" provided an opportunity to discuss a part of themselves as it focused on an important aspect of their therapy session. Some participants were able to provide very vivid and verbal accounts of their chosen moment. Below Marilyn quickly dove into a discussion around the internal dialogue that she was experiencing during her moment:

> R: Okay – so could - maybe just tell me, sort of what was happening for you at that moment? Like what were you feeling or thinking or what was – what was going on…
>
> Ma: …was a complete terror.
>
> R: Okay.
>
> Ma: -and the orange and yellow I started to think about. [My therapist] said well what does it mean and so then that was pause for thought. The connection – like the blood is the connection of life, but the orange and yellow was colour was that spiritual connection. I had to think – I had stop and think well why – like why do I always go there when I think of that glow or that aura it's always that colour and what's that all about for me - (Ma, p.2).

In comparison, the "dance" with John was very different in that as John searched for a means to express his thoughts, I would re-ask the question and provide empathetic responses to help him understand that *I understood*:

> R: Um – was there a moment on the tape in talking about these things, that-
>
> J: No
>
> R: -sort of hit you as different from all the other parts – or somehow significant from all the other parts of the session?
>
> J: No. I found the tape to be – uh – myself to be very boring on the tape.
>
> R: Okay.
>
> J: I would sit there for several moments and not say a thing and – um – I can't say that at one particular point it – it's just the – the discussion about the suicidal thoughts just seemed to be – I know [my therapist] had to say this – that there just seemed to be – made me sit back and think that would be a good moment…that's about all I can say.

R: So when you say that (um) when you're talking about the suicidal thoughts and feelings sometimes happen and that's part of your life.

J: It's the thought process that I get into-

R: Right

J: Um – 'cause I'm a very deep thinker and I think about things a lot. And when things aren't going the way I think they should be or the way I wish them to be going, then (um) then negative thinking comes along and 'kicks me' so to speak (J, p.3).

Above, John at first states that there was not much he needed to say but as the dialogue continued, John elaborated upon his previous comment by explaining that he was a negative thinker and how this related to his alive moment.

The examples of providing a dialogic space where other possibilities can be explored continued throughout the interview conversations. This theme was significant as it helped "set the stage" to further explore the possibilities of the interview conversation. It seemed that as the participants and myself became more comfortable with the dialogic dance between us, the constructed meanings continued to evolve. The content themes (discussed later) were then situated within the context of setting the dialogic space.

Telling their Story

As participants and I became comfortable in our dialogic dance, the participants began to share their narratives, or parts of their life stories. For most participants this theme continued throughout the interview as they shared stories and experiences to exemplify their comments. I had asked them to explain how their alive moment was illustrative of the depth of what was happening in their lives. Fred shares a part of his history to help me understand what was happening for him during the alive moment and the significance of these memories for him:

R: Um – I'm just wondering too that you've reflected on this moment and you said that there was another door opened and then it shut – um – and could you say a little bit more about that? Um – you said that about the light at the end of the tunnel…

F: Yah – um – almost a point of realization I guess, I was sitting there and then – I've always argued with [therpist]that – uh – the big thing about my mom dying and the way the accident happened wasn't the issue, because I've had a lot of problems and a lot

> of things went wrong before my mom died. And – uh - I still believe that's true - but that was almost one of the straws or one of the culminations that made me reach a point where I just couldn't deal with it anymore. So it's the most recent thing, and I don't remember anything else in the past. So when that opened up, I thought about – it was like this door opened and I saw the accident, my mom, the way I got along with her – (um) the things I did wrong – I thought when I was back celebrating…I don't know I think I was in grade six - a birthday at Shakey's Pizza. (F, p.5).

During each interview, at some point in the conversation, both the participants and I shared a part of our own narrative, which helped to bring forth an understanding of the context of our responses. It was significant to the atmosphere of the interviews to be sensitive to when participants wanted to divulge information about their stories. During the time of the interview, I was not aware of the sharing of information so it was interesting to note afterwards the amount of conversation that centered around the discussion of our stories. It put into perspective the importance of allowing the rhythm of the conversation to flow so as to include oneself, as a researcher within the process.

Dancing Around the Word "Spiritual"

After the participants and I had discussed the "alive moment" and the way in which the alive moment reflected their life, I then asked them if there was any spiritual significance that they would attribute to this alive moment. It was at this point that each participant then asked me to share what I meant by the word "spiritual". I was relieved when they asked me my personal views on spirituality. To bring this word out into the open felt like I was entering a more intimate area where common, ordinary discourse does not generally go. I liken this feeling of uneasiness I had, to asking a stranger about his/her sex life. Even after I had felt comfortable sharing parts of my life story and had heard the participants share theirs, throwing this term out into the conversation seemed to have some risks. Since there are so many innuendoes associated with the word "spiritual" from our cultural and personal baggage, we spent the first part "unpacking" this baggage so that we could feel safe to discuss our own views and not feel judged or condemned. Several participants sighed when I explained that I was not looking for

any particular definition of the word and was definitely not associating spirituality with religion, unless they deemed it so. Some of the comments of this dancing around what we each meant by "spiritual" follow:

> F: -what's your interpretation of spiritual? *'Cause I'm not sure...*
>
> R: *What's my own personal?* And you know what – and that's part of this too – is (um) I guess we're all going to have different understandings. My idea of spiritual is probably (uh) regarding something other than is, and (uh) something that's within us and connects us – (um) but something other than-
>
> F: So not necessarily religious.
>
> R: No, no. And (um) but I'm really interested in your perspective of spirituality.
>
> F: No I just wanted to know where you were coming from.
>
> R: Sure...
>
> F: You can ask your question now, please. (F, p.9).

After relating my views it seemed easier to ask the questions as the participants were aware that I was not looking for a specific definition or perspective on spirituality but, instead was open to what "spiritual" was in their experience.

The participants also attempted to share their views of spirituality, which helped us, see how these views interact in their day to day living. One participant shared his own personal perspective:

> R: Would you say in that moment, that there was something spiritual about that moment, that you would regard as spiritual? Looking at it now?
>
> J: Um – spiritual is a very strong word. It's a very – it's a complicated word.
>
> R: Okay
>
> J: Um – I can only think of spiritual, the spiritual as being – (um) – God given or higher being has some control over you...(pause) No. Possibly it's the idea of spiritual-
>
> R: Hmm
>
> J: -that means something spiritual wasn't there. So – (um) – man...
>
> R: The idea of spiritual wasn't there?

J: I can only interpret spiritual as being God given at this time. I don't believe in God but I believe in a higher being – so – I can only relate spirituality-

R: Hmm

J: Jesus Christ or God or whoever. God…

R: Hmm

J: I can't – I can't – I can't say it was spiritual…

R: So it wasn't Jesus Christ or God-

J: Yah

R: -but what I hear you saying is spiritual for you might have been -a higher power? Is that what you're saying?

J: Yah, uh-

R: So could this moment somehow relate to-

J: So in…possibly… (J, p.7.)

Above John speaks of the difficulty of relating to the "spiritual" because of its *"complicated"* nature, as he described it. It seemed that this was often the case as the participants attempted to present their thoughts and I would attempt to hear them and reflect these thoughts back to them in such a way that often left a new place for us to start from. Each time this happened, the meaning of the word "spiritual" was re-negotiated and further re-constructed. Marilyn questioned the spiritual within her alive moment by reflecting on the color of her painting and how this seemed to bring about a spiritual dimension for her. Marilyn admits that a color being representative of "spiritual", was something she had not thought of before. Yet, during our conversation Marilyn reflected on the potential the color yellow has of being "spiritual" for her:

Ma: but it's nothing that – you know I've never sat down this whole process-

R: Yah (throughout)

Ma: -of spirituality being connected to a color.

R: Okay. So it was kind of in that process of thinking about my study that you thought that that clicked.

Ma: Hmm (affirmative). Do you see spirituality as having a color?

R: Yah, I mean I don't see it as *not* having a color.

Ma: Hmm

R: It just depends on how *you* see it. (M, p.6).

As we danced around the word spiritual and new meanings were created the participants were left with a struggle to re-integrate these meanings into their understanding of their realities, and to create new narratives.

Struggle

Do I really want to go there? How do I articulate these new definitions of "spiritual" into what I know as my reality? These were some of the questions that jumped to my mind as I read the transcripts. It was evident in each participant's response that to "go there", to actually describe what he or she considered "spiritual", was a struggle. The struggle occurred, partly, because there were no words that they could use to describe their thoughts. When the words were "dug up" by our conversation, what was yielded was often difficult to accept or to acknowledge. One participant described it as being "unschooled in my ability to go there" (Ma, p.11). Another shared that it was like "looking around internally and not really knowing—not identifying anything anymore" (Joy, p.10). A third participant described how he *might* have felt his deceased mothers' presence during his alive moment, but had difficulty accepting the logic or rationale of this belief:

F: So, it could be border line spiritual in that point, except I deny it. As soon as I feel it, I deny it. And then logic kicks in, and I like to think that it's logic that kicks in So…

R: Logic. Makes sense to you? And you're comfortable with that part?

F: Yah. It makes more sense than thinking, yah, wow, my mom can hear me or my mom's around me – or it's you know-

R: And that makes you uncomfortable somehow?

F: *Yah,* yah it does. Because it doesn't make sense.

R: Okay.

F: There's no – it's not tangible.

R: Hmm. It's more comfortable to be in a logical place.

F: Yah.

R: Even though it's a struggle?

F: Yah. (F, p.9).

As the participants struggled to re-conceptualize the spiritual possibilities of their alive moments and their lives, we continued to dance to the rhythm of reflection and re-expression.

Upon Reflection and Dialogic Elaboration

From the struggle, then, came new insights and further elaboration as the previous meanings were revised and re-constructed. This often took shape toward the end of the conversation when I asked the participants if, having discussed the alive moment and the potential spiritual aspects, there was anything about our discussion that would influence how they went forward. This question generated more dialogue around how the alive moment had created more possibilities about the relevance it played in their everyday lives. One participant commented that the discussion reinforced to her that, " there's something more to life than just those mundane things no matter who puts what importance on those things" (Ma, p.18). Another shared that the conversation had given him something that he hoped he could reflect on more:

> "Your questions give me some different things to think about, because I'm one of those people who think a lot and try and remember conversations…and I think about that spiritual a lot more you know cause it's important" (J, pp.22-23).

A third participant expressed, upon reflection at the end of the interview, that the process of looking at her alive moment gave her a new insight, which might not have been there without the experience of our conversation:

A: Yah – so I think this would be more – this whole – my reflecting on it, it happening was important. My reflecting on it on my own was important. My reflecting upon it now, with you, was most important…because it has made it very clear what I got out of it.

R: Yah

A: And you did I guess what a counselor does, is make me think about, you didn't tell me the answers. So now I have more answers-

R: Hmm

A: And then I – I will use them. I'm not sure how, but they will be used. 'Cause I know that's how I operate. (A, p.34).

Ann continued to point out that the discussion had made her reflect in a "deeper" manner than she would have been able to do on her own:

A: …this kind of has happened because of the requests you have for your research.

R: Hmm

A: It's made me reflect more upon this whole thing and deeper than I ever would have on my own. Maybe I would have taken three more years to figure this out, I'm not sure, but it definitely has triggered stuff and I do work well when something triggers something.

R: Hmm

A: I do like to see it, kind of, to its end. So that I have a feel – because I'm the type of person, I like to have an answer in my hand. And I feel like I have something. (A, p.35).

From these reflections, participants helped to identify the process, which evolved from our conversations. Identifying this process also assisted them in acknowledging how they would re-incorporate this information into their future.

Re-Incorporating

At the end of the conversation I asked participants where they would like to go from there, either in their future counselling sessions or in their everyday lives. Some of the responses seemed to reflect how our conversations unfolded and the significance of newly acknowledged meanings. One participant, who is employed in the helping profession, expressed that: "the

spiritual connection with my clients, that this is a yearning-that is a real thing. I'm not just imagining-" (Ma, p.25) was something that was affirmed for her.

As I asked the participants, I also asked their therapists this same question about what they might want to explore in future sessions with the participant. This was interesting, as the responses lent themselves to validating the participants on their journeys and their future goals. One therapist shared that hearing the participant engaged in a conversation on spirituality intrigued him. This opened up further discussion about the possibilities for future elaboration on this topic of spirituality. The following example illustrates the hope that the therapist has for further discussions on spirituality:

> Therapist: Well, I like the fact that he kind of thinks I'd like to talk to you about this topic. It's important. So these terms- it has- given us a chance to talk about this stuff. Acknowledge that he'd be there –[to talk about] spirituality - I guess I learned some things about Fred today. (F, p.26).

This was a common response from therapists, that what they witnessed from our conversation (between the participant and myself) was a new perspective from which to understand their client. While it provided a new insight into the experience it also affirmed the process of therapy. One therapist, who is an art therapist, commented on her feelings of being validated by witnessing our interview conversation:

> That was exciting and there was parts where I was thinking, 'Oh no – in forty-five minutes we didn't hardly do anything', but then like, I was doing some self examination – but then I thought, 'That is often the way it is in therapy where there is one hour' – talking about stuff and bringing up stuff. And same with the art therapy…And what I was really -I was excited about what you did – also excited about art therapy because I think that it just speaks- kind of - volumes to how it works. So it's made me feel a bit better, (um) more - just more solid.
>
> Even though I've been doing this for almost ten years I always love to have these new experiences that come out of an art therapy experience. It just makes it feel it's something special, something different- (Joy, p.19).

The reflections on the process were further highlighted by the input of the therapist who was in reflection during the course of the interview. The follow up conversations, between

myself and the participants, when I asked to "check" the data analysis themes for fit, further affirmed that our interview had brought forth different reflections regarding the meanings in their lives.

After examining the process I still had some curiosity about the data. For instance: What kinds of "stuff" came up for these participants? There was a process that evolved from the interaction between the participants and myself, but there was also the birth of the substance that gave meat to the process itself. The essence of our interactions brought forth an experience that lent itself to construct content. This content was further interpreted to be content themes. In continuation of the discussion I will now focus on the "what" that performative psychologist, Lois Holzman (2000), describes as inseparable from the "how" or the process of which I have attempted to describe above. Recall that each time I revisited the transcripts new possibilities were interpreted in the analysis. My struggle was to create a coherent thesis that was clear and demonstrative of one place of the infinite places that the analysis "could have gone". Kvale (1996) asserted that each researcher will offer an interpretation that is their own and it will make sense within the context of illuminating their decision making and how these decisions shaped their analysis. The following discussion made sense for me in the context of the process themes, as, without the process, there would have not been the construction of the "what" of the content.

The Theme of Content

Distinguishing the process from the content of the interviews was difficult, as it seemed that one gave meaning to the other so they were almost inseparable. Yet, as I read over the transcripts and utilized the method of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I began to notice, firstly, some common themes, which described the participant's responses. Secondly, I noticed how we discussed and "danced" through the interview, providing the context where these responses could be brought forth. There are three sub themes that I interpreted under the larger heading of "content theme". These three sub themes and their further sub categories are:

Internal Dialogue (confusion, "enlightenment"; and movement); Illustrative of Life ("putting up walls", unfamiliar); and Spiritual Discourse (connection with others, connection with the universe/other beings, and spiritual space). Once again, these choices were made by the researcher to fulfill the requirements of the analysis for this thesis but are, by no means, the only themes/sub categories that could have been constructed from the data. I made the decision to create content themes as I was looking for how the interview discussion brought forth new possibilities from which participants could view their lives and how these possibilities fit with each participants' present life journey.

I. Internal Dialogue

Interestingly, each participant described an alive moment from their therapy session as moment where there was no dialogue happening, and they were having an internal dialogue with themselves (Andersen, 1991). One participant commented that he " just sat – I noticed on the tape I just sat there and I was really quiet for a couple of minutes while I was thinking. I didn't tell [my therapist] what I was thinking" (F, p.2). Another participant expressed that during the alive moment she chose was a time where she had "stopped" and had changed her process of thinking. She describes this as:

> What was happening in that moment was that – it was a moment where I had stopped writing, I had stopped talking – I had stopped the flow of rhyme and the flow of the conversation and I was looking at the drawing, and I guess I switched from subconscious to - uh - maybe an objective, frontal lobe thing. (Joy, p.3)

A third participant shared that she had paused to reflect on the colors in her painting and was questioning, internally, the significance of the colors she chose in her painting (Ma, p.2). John identified a moment where he and his therapist had stopped talking, and he was thinking. Ann also spoke of her alive moment as a time where she sat silently, observing her partner speak while she, internally processed the observation. Noting this striking similarity in the chosen alive moments by participants provided me with information to elaborate upon these previously

nonverbal moments. During our conversation, I was interested in the participants' descriptions of the internal conversations of which they spoke. So, as we elaborated, the participants began the process of deconstructing the moment. This deconstruction yielded more content that I chose to include as sub themes under the larger theme of "Internal Dialogue". The sub themes included not knowing, "enlightenment", and movement.

Not Knowing

During our conversation the participants described what was happening during the silence of their alive moment. A few participants commented that if I was to have viewed the tape of their session, their alive moment would have appeared to be very "undramatic" and "boring" as John stated (John, p.1). It seemed to me that when the participants reflected back on their "alive moments", part of the reason why they did not verbalize their thoughts at the time is because they did not have the words to understand what was happening during this moment. Gergen (1999) referred to how we come to understand our reality within the reflexive deliberations that occur in our conversational interactions. Since this chosen alive moment was not reflected upon or discussed at the time of the therapeutic session, it was instead seen as a time of confusion and uncertainty. It was not until I asked the participants to elaborate upon their "alive moment" in the interview that they had to put words to their earlier inner dialogue and, thus, we constructed understandings or meanings for this particular moment. At the beginning, as the participants began to speak of their "alive moment", many spoke of a time of feeling confused and overwhelmed by this moment. One person used the word, "puzzled" (Joy, p.4), while another shared that there was frustration in a positive way that spurred her to explore the uncertainty (Ma, p.9). During this confusion, a third participant acknowledged overwhelming feelings from images of the past which did not have a logical place as he initially perceived it (F, p.2). As well, "not understanding what was happening" (Joy, p.3) was also described as "complete terror" (Ma, p.2) by one participant. Interestingly, this uncertainty was

something that struck these participants as significant and more "alive" than all the other moments in their session. As we continued to explore these feelings of confusion generated from within the context of the process theme- "creating a dialogic space", new curiosities arose that took our conversations to new places and subsequently we constructed new content.

It should be noted that this subcategory, "not knowing" was originally titled "confusion". During the follow up check in conversation, participants expressed that the word "confusion" implied for them a "painful" or "negative" experience. The participants described this theme as "not knowing" rather than as "confusion" and thus, the title of this subcategory evolved.

"Enlightenment"

Often these new curiosities shed light on the uncertainty of the "alive moment", which is presented under the sub category of "enlightenment". Joyce described the time after the alive moment as a "sea burst" (Joy, p.6) where a new perspective began to take shape. As we continued to talk about the moment, Joyce's demeanor became more excited and enthusiastic. Joyce spoke of having been "transported to a higher level where you can understand" and gain a "new perspective" (Joy, p.6).

Marilyn commented that she "glimpsed an opening" where she got a "peek" of a "beginning" but where she was not sure that she would have the "ability to go to that place" (M, p.10). Fred spoke of a "light at the end of the tunnel" and that "someone had opened the door and then closed it again"(F, p.3). The frustration before and after this enlightenment is what was making it difficult for Fred to put words to the alive moment. John spoke of a time when things "sunk in" and when the "light bulb came on" while he described his moment. While Ann spoke of feeling "uplifted; smug; empowered", an "enriching" (A, p.8) experience. For some participants, the moment was initially confusing plagued with uncertainty. Yet, they spoke of new insight and enlightenment as they described what came of this confusion in their moment.

Movement to Another Level

The new insight was further constructed as I asked for more clarification and elaboration of the aspects of their moment and they expressed a sense of "being transported to another level" (Ma, p.6). Together, Marilyn and I elaborated upon her alive moment by discussing what "deeper" meant for her:

R: And so, looking at that moment now and you said that it's somehow deeper-

Ma: Hmm (affirmative)

R: -than you're normal everyday life – what do you mean by that? Can you say anything about that or?

Ma: So that's moving beyond – (um) - those boundaries like walls and ceilings. It's even moving beyond the emotional – (um) - I don't know – the feeling of loss or pain or joy

R: Hmm (in agreement)

Ma: And it's – it's another level. So that there's that unwritten, 'intangible' 'connectedness' with spiritual harmony that we find in many places in life. Or I find it with other people…you don't have to sit there and say, 'oh – we're so connected spiritually' – it's just this sensation.

R: Okay. And that same sensation you have when with your clients.

Ma: Hmm (in agreement)

R: And you said it was beyond – (um) – lines? Is that what you said, beyond…?

Ma: Well, it moves beyond the boundaries…

R: Boundaries

Ma: -*that we* know as in our world. Like, the simple boundaries.(Ma, p.3).

Joyce also spoke of her moment as a time when she "noticed a shift, there was a shifting in my energy " as the "timbre of my voice was lower" (Joy, p.5). Joyce described the movement "like a transportation takes something in you-elevates it to a higher level where you can understand it" (Joy, p.6). As we continued to discuss her alive moment, Joyce referred to feelings of anxiety or "panic" (Joy, p.8) because she stated that she couldn't "access levels of information that you would normally use" due to the "puzzlement" of being "stopped in her

flow" of creative therapy (Joy, p.8). Joyce went on to say that her moment "seemed to have a lot more poignant than-than the usual stuff I do creatively" (Joy, p.9).

John admitted that he tended "to fade out and [that he] doesn't take everything in that the [therapist] has to say, so on that particular moment it just, it just sunk in more than it normally did (J, p.3). John further described that when he viewed himself on tape in the session with his therapist that "it made him wake up" and that:

> ...it just didn't- um - fly bye the top of my head, it actually hit - hit here and sunk in, you know, so...um – just seeing myself on tape it makes you think – it makes you – makes all the words your counselor is saying to you or the words that you're saying to him or her - um – once you – um - go back and see what you're saying and what you're saying helps it sink in better. And sometimes, you can say words like this but if you don't have nothing to refer back to – um – it's just words going in – going in one side and out the other, you know (J, p.4).

Fred also shared that his moment was different from the other moments in his session as before and after the moment Fred was "fighting with his conscience" (F, p.4) to accept the moment and what he perceived to be illogical places that he was not ready to yet go. Ann also found that the moment illustrated a universal theme for her, one of validation (A, p.9). As we continued to discuss this theme, Ann identified that it permeated all aspects of her life and held great significance for her: " I came to realize how important it was for me and probably everybody, including my [spouse], that they feel validated" (A, p.13).

The unfamiliarity of the alive moment that brought forth the realizations and the "deeper levels of awareness" was also representative of a theme that was happening in many facets of their life. This led me to create the next sub theme of "Illustrative of Life". As the participants began to share more of themselves through the course of our interview together we tentatively, considered the connections the experience of this moment had with other areas of their lives. This subtheme can also be cross-referenced with the process themes, discussed earlier, of "Telling their Story" and "Re-Incorporating".

II. Illustrative of Life

I asked the participants to consider how the alive moment was somehow illustrative of what was happening in their lives. After discussing the alive moment and reconstructing the meanings, I was curious to know the relevance the moment played in their lives and how our discussion of the moment had or had not invited them to look at their lives differently. The further sub categories of "Putting Up Walls" and "Unfamiliar" were then created to illustrate the "what" of the participants' responses to my inquiry of how our discussion was illustrative of their lives.

"Putting Up Walls"

Marilyn expressed an acknowledgement of a "seeing another perspective" but having difficulty going "there":

> R: Yah…So looking at this moment, does this – and you said that it somehow invited you to look at your situation that you think about all the time – in a different manner…
>
> Ma: Hmm
>
> R: Um – so how are you examining your situation now?
>
> Ma: Okay.
>
> R: What are you doing to examine it differently?
>
> Ma: So now I'm really putting up walls to avoid it. But it's quite interesting how I'm thinking about it. I am thinking about it differently but I'm – I'm – (um) it's like I'm unschooled in my ability to go there.
>
> R: Okay. Yah.
>
> Ma: Or maybe, I'm just using that as a – you know, a block too.
>
> R: Yah. You mean like the wall's for avoiding going there?
>
> Ma: Yah. Uh huh.
>
> R: (Inaudible)
>
> Ma: *Because* I know there's something else going on right now-
>
> R: Right - so there's something- stopping you-

Ma: But I'm not able to –

R: stopping you.

Ma: Yah – to go there.

R: Hmm.

Ma: So it's - interesting. 'Cause I know there's something 'over there'.

R: Right. But you're not sure how to get there.

Ma: Yes. Or if I want to or if I can-

R: Hmm

Ma: -but now I see it very differently. In a lot of ways-

Marilyn described being "unschooled in her ability to go there" and somehow blocked in seeing her life in a new way because of her feelings of uncertainty and being "overwhelmed" (M, p.11).

Fred also spoke, similarly, of "fighting with [his] conscience" (F, p.4) as he expressed he had a "problem getting 'there', because I don't know *how* to get there" (F, p.6). Fred further explained that getting to an inner feeling of acceptance and peace where "everything's great, everything is okay" (F, p.7) was something he consciously attempted to avoid. Fred shared that: "I can shut if off and stop myself from getting there which I do all the time" (F, p.7). Fred and I continued to discuss the impact that "pushing away" (F, p.11) these inner feelings had on his life. Fred described that he "could see it but [he] can't get there" but "that's where [he] wants to go" (F, p.16). Fred acknowledged that his therapist was like a door to "there" but that at times he did not want it open:

> F: No, I don't want to go there because…and now I'm just guessing, but if I went there and stayed there who knows where it's gonna go. How far am I going to…it's like when a door opens and a wall comes down, what's gonna come next?
>
> R: So there's nothing to protect you?
>
> F: Yah (F, p.16).

Unfamiliar

The unfamiliarity of the 'unknown', of what was behind the "door" in Fred's analogy of his struggle, was indicative of other participants as we continued to co-construct their moment. Elaborating upon the moment in our conversation brought forth new "places" that participants were not sure they were ready or wanting to go. Joyce also described that she was feeling blocked in her life:

> "I'm at a point where I feel kind of frozen and spiritually I've got to- in order to make my life a success, I have to come to the end of my life knowing that –that I've done what I wanted to do and I haven't done it yet. So I have to somehow find it and that means spiritually I'm rocking or allowing the next part of my development to happen" (Joy, p.14).

Joyce had a "view from a pedestal…[where] somehow [she could see] things differently" (Joy, p.14) yet at the same time the new revelations were alarming as she stated: "What's next in my life? I'm afraid to make a decision in lifestyle change" (Joy, p.11).

The unfamiliar territory of looking at their lives anew was both frightening and hopeful for participants. John found that it was a struggle to see that he was "worth it…that I am a good person" (J, p.21). Ann also reflected that, as we de-constructed her alive moment, new, unfamiliar aspects were brought forth:

> …what I'm talking about now-I didn't think about before we got here. So this is like, you know as you're digging deeper it makes me think of other things and so I didn't think of this you know before, but it's coming to me as we discuss it (A, p.24).

It seems that each conversation with the participants involved a social poetics where:

> Instead of seeking a universal, cognitive understanding of such events, supposedly revealing of their true nature, a social poetics must 'move' us toward a new way of 'looking over', or participating in, the particular 'play' of unique events unfolding in the conversations between us. Not only must it draw our attention to events that might otherwise escape our notice, but it must also provide us with an understanding of their possible relations and connections to the particular circumstances of their occurrence" (Katz & Shotter, 1996, 919-920).

The next sub theme acknowledges this particular play/dance of which the participants and I participated, in the responsive order (Shotter, 1999) that further led to a dialogue on spirituality.

III Spiritual Discourse

The dialogue on spirituality was at first put forth very tentatively. There was nervousness implied in throwing the word "spiritual" into the interview conversation. Earlier, I made the analogy of asking a stranger about his/her sex life, to asking someone about his or her spirituality. As I began to present this theme in writing, I felt these same apprehensions as when I first asked the participants about spirituality in the interview. The word "spiritual" denotes something very different for each person. It has been my experience that the word "spiritual" often can evoke stereotypical defense responses to evangelizing, converting, and other religious presentations. As I write and hope to capture snippets of our dialogic experience, there is fear that the reader may infer that our dialogue was about conversion to a particular spiritual bent or institution. This was not at all the intent of this thesis. My hope instead was that as we dialogued around the word spiritual that it might offer a place for participants to view their lives from within their own perspective of "how" they perceive spirituality. My curiosity was with what happens when one engages people in what I termed "spiritual discourse". What follows, then, is a presentation of some content themes that I have interpreted from our conversation regarding the significance of spiritual within their alive moment and how this was perceived as salient in their daily lives. I further organized the themes according to the subcategories of Connection with Others, Connection with the Universe, and Spiritual Space. These subcategories represent how I came to see the data across the five transcripts. Often there were similarities, but at the same time there was much uniqueness in how the participants and I danced with the word "spiritual" and what was further constructed.

Connection with Others

Part of the dance of our conversation alluded to the significance of relationships the participants had with other people. When we spoke of the significance the alive moment had in their lives, the participants often described their responses from within the context of their personal relationships. Ann spoke of how her moment was illustrative of the importance for her to validate others and for others to validate her. Ann further described her spirituality as "being responsible as a human being...so anything that I do that makes me a better person; better, you know, not with rules but you know, from being kind to others, kindness..." (A, p.28). John also describes his spirituality as "helping some guy who lives on the streets-like helping them-" (J, p.16). Marilyn shared that her connection with her clients was spiritual for her. Marilyn explained:

> I was also making that connection on another level with my clients...and it became very apparent very early on, when I started [counselling]...and at first I didn't really understand it although I've been very spiritual my whole life- I don't believe in God and I don't follow any religion, but that connection with the universe and the world, that's not tangible...So then I thought, I'm making that funny connection here with these clients. (Ma, p.7)

There was also an interesting, serendipitous example used within this sub-category. Both Joyce and Fred independently referred to the same Hollywood movie to explain their perception of connecting with others. The movie, "What Dreams May Come", starred Robin Williams as a man who dies and goes to a place where he can still connect somewhat with his living wife through recognizing her presence in a painting. This coincidental illustration expressed by both Joyce and Fred was very powerful for me. This coincidence confirmed the importance of this sub-category for these participants and also emphasized the role that media plays in providing images as possible resources for something as intangible as spirituality.

Discussing the significance of connecting with others helped to further construct the participants' own personal definitions of "spiritual". As we continued to elaborate and discuss

the spirituality of being connected to others, participants also began to share their connections to something larger, the universe or some "other".

Connection with the Universe

When the participants asked me about my definition of spirituality, they often sighed with relief when I expressed that spirituality, for me, was not necessarily found within a religious institution or contained within the concept of a particular "god". What I did share was that for me, personally, spirituality included a relationship or connection with something beyond our human reality, which may or may not be called God. This unknown "something" seemed to be applicable in a few of the interview conversations. Marilyn shared the idea of moving 'beyond the world as we know it... cause everything else with you is always tied to some part of us... I mean emotionally, physically, psychologically...the spiritual connection or that spiritual part of us isn't...I think it's limitless" (Ma, p.16). John also spoke of seeing spiritual as coming from the external universe. John expressed that: "we are an experiment that was put on the earth millions of years ago and we're a product of evolution and experiment" (J, p.9). As we dialogued, John described that, for him, each person has a "destiny or a fate" (J, p.9) and a reason/purpose for living on this planet. Exploring his purpose in life appeared to be significant to John as he struggled with finding his own reasons for being alive.

Fred shared that he felt his deceased mother's presence during his alive moment, which did not logically appeal to him, and so at the time, he fought the feeling. In our interview conversation, Fred expressed that he still had difficulty accepting an experience that held no logic for him: "[it's] like I said a feeling of acceptance and comfort knowing that my mom was around me and then I pushed it aside thinking that-doesn't make sense" (F, p.10).

It was interesting to note, then, that none of the participants referred to a specific "god" or "other" that was a part of their spirituality. During the conversation, I left room for the possibility that the participants may have wanted to discuss their relationship with a god. My

preconception, before engaging in the interviews, was that part of the participants' response to my invitation to dialogue on spirituality may havet encapsulated their belief in a particular god. The conversations did not go this way and I was surprised. When I created the interview questions at the time of my proposal, my peer study group had warned that some individuals might refer to their religious beliefs as a place to argue or defend their responses to my questions. This was not my experience. Instead, participants seemed to want to be open to where we went with the dialogue and the new meanings that were then created.

Spiritual Space

I created this subcategory as a way to illustrate the feelings that some participants expressed about actually having a "place" or a "space" in their descriptions of spiritual. Joyce referred to an "inner quiet" (Joy, p.17) when she visualized her "place" from within her artwork. As well, Joyce and Fred chose to exemplify their understanding of a spiritual space by illustrating a movies' main characters' expression of peace found by "being within a painting". Joyce referred to this space as she used meditation to visualize herself walking in her painting. Joyce also shared that she "wasn't aware of it at the time" (Joy, p.12) but that this space in her painting, described as part of her "alive moment", could be defined as a spiritual space for her. Fred also used the images from the same movie as Joyce to exemplify his "safe place" (F, p.7). Fred shared that: "[it's] a safe place-like it's an inner feeling that suddenly is there that everything's great, everything is ok-" (F, p.7).

Marilyn similarly spoke about going to a new "spot" or a different place (Ma, p.13). Marilyn further expressed that: "I wasn't sure of where I was but I could be comfortable there. But it was just something beyond the usual or the normal" (Ma, p.13) when we spoke of the spiritual aspects of her alive moment. Marilyn continued to explain that the spiritual in the alive moment "would lead to another spot... a step further" (Ma, p.14).

It was as if our dialogue opened an avenue for the participants to view a space that held more possibilities for them to see their lives. The space that they described above was generated from within the context of the elaboration and reflection of our dialogic play or dance. From within the responsive order (Shotter, 1997) of our talk, the "spiritual" for these participants took on a new understanding that held potential new "places" that the participants could further explore.

"Check In"

Following compilation of my themes and categories, the next step was to "check in" with the participants as to whether the themes that I interpreted were "fitting" for them or not. Heron (1996) refers to this as action cycling where the participants have a negotiated say in the interpretation of themes from the data. This "cycling" was a continuation of the earlier interview and could serve to elaborate upon my previous data. For the purpose of this thesis, it was my decision to not continue the "dialogue with my data" and to instead, keep the focus of the data on the first interview conversation. Rather, through this "check in", I hoped to validate my interpretations of the original interview. Kvale (1996) also refers to this process as the "social construction of validity". Kvale (1996) proposes that knowledge as not merely observation but also knowledge as conversation. He states:

> In a postmodern era, the foundations of true and valid knowledge...of a modern objective reality have dissolved. The conception of knowledge as a mirror of reality is replaced by knowledge as a social construction of reality. Truth is constituted through a dialogue; valid knowledge claims emerge as conflicting interpretations and action possibilities are discussed and negotiated among the members of a community. (Kvale, 1996, p.239)

The negotiation that Kvale referred to is exactly what I attempted by meeting a second time with participants to discuss how appropriate or not the themes which I interpreted were with their [given] experience. This occurred in an informal conversation where I presented an outline of my themes and subthemes and then asked the participants two questions. The questions were:

1. After reading and discussing the themes that I outlined from my interpretation of the data, what fit and what did not fit for you from these themes?
2. Has anything changed since our last conversation as result of thinking about what we discussed during the original interview?

We discussed the themes by questioning each other's understandings, by asking further questions and, engaging, once again, in a dialogic dance. As well, the participants served, as Kvale (1996) purported, as my critical analysts who played the devil's advocate towards my interpretations of the data. This all was "worked out" within our dialogue in what Kvale (1996) called communicative validity. Kvale (1996) referred to communicative validity as "testing the validity of knowledge claims in a dialogue" (p.244). Knowledge becomes valid through being debated within the discourse of a community. Polkinghorne (1983) as quoted in Kvale (1996) suggested that: "Validation becomes the issue of choosing among competing and falsifiable interpretations, of examining and providing arguments for the relative credibility of alternative knowledge claims" (Kvale, 1996, p. 240).

As I alluded to earlier, adopting a post modern perspective of research "allows for a legitimate plurality of interpretations" (Kvale, 1996, p.210). As the researcher, I made decisions and choices while keeping records of my decisions to defend my interpretations to the community and the participants to ensure validity. To be valid within the context of a qualitative study, according to Kvale (1996, p.217), my interpretations must be: a) valid to the interviewee and their contextual understanding; b) valid to the general public by convincing argumentation and documentation; and c) valid to the theoretical community from within the context of the particular area of study. What follows is a summary of the outcome of my conversations with participants when I brought my interpretation back to them to "check in".

I was able to speak individually to all five of the client-participants whom I originally interviewed. I outlined the process themes and the content themes individually to the

participants and also explained how I came to my decision to distinguish them. Each participant expressed that upon hearing my outline of the process themes that it assisted in their recollection of what we had discussed. Further, each person reported that this interpretation of the process was "fitting" with his or her experience. The participants were also in agreement that a process occurred which they had not necessarily noticed before our "check in" conversation. One participant shared that there seemed to be "harmony and synchronicity" between what she and others had experienced which was interesting for her in acknowledging the flow of events "in the universe", as she perceived it.

The content themes were outlined in a similar manner and met with few objections. Since the content themes encompassed three sub themes each containing sub-categories, I explained to the participants that each subcategory was not intended to account for every participants' experience. The three subthemes of Internal Dialogue, Illustrative of Life, and Spiritual Discourse fit for all five participants. The sub categories, which attempted to describe further, the more unique experience of each participant, were not necessarily fitting for each person. What follows are the objections the participant's expressed to the sub categories of the content themes.

For Ann, she described that under "Internal Dialogue" she did not experience "confusion" but rather was aware of "not knowing" for a while before she experienced further "movement to a different level of understanding". As well, Ann spoke of "putting up walls" as "not to protect myself' but she saw the walls as "wonderment" and stated she did not think of these walls as "painful". In addition, Marilyn also expressed that it wasn't "confusion" that "allowed me to move to a new level of understanding but a curiosity to look at things differently". Marilyn was able to identify with each of the other sub categories with the exception of recalling a time of "confusion". Fred also shared that he did not recall being "confused" but instead explained that he did not want to volunteer his internal dialogue to his

therapist at the time of the alive moment. Fred stated that it was "too personal and that it did not pertain to their conversation in the session. Fred further expressed that he did not experience his alive moment as "unfamiliar" or "somehow fearful" but instead stated that he "did not know how to get 'there'" (back to the 'alive moment').

Moreover, Joyce commented that she did not recall making a reference to having a "connection with others" as part of her experience of our spiritual discourse. Joyce did express that she had experienced a "connection with the universe" and acknowledged a "spiritual space" as significant during her alive moment. Similarly, Fred reported that he did not acknowledge a "connection with the universe or a God" but did experience another presence during the alive moment. For Fred, he called his "spiritual space" of peace and contentment a "special place" and for him it was not necessarily "spiritual".

When I asked the participants if anything had changed since our interview, John shared that he had spent many hours thinking about his meaning of the word "spiritual". John reported that he had searched the dictionary for different definitions of "spiritual" and was eager to discuss these new perspectives. He also shared that he was not sure if he could relate to "spiritual" as he was not a Christian and for years only perceived "spiritual" as being related to Jesus Christ. John expressed that our conversation "opened up another door" and that at this point he was able to share that when he "put his heart into something that this was now 'spiritual'" for him.

Ann also shared that she had been mulling our conversation around in her head for sometime now. She stated that "there is no practical, measurable way of noticing the change" in herself but stated that it is "there and it is a part of me". Ann shared that she was still "fooling around" with the meanings that we constructed together and is often raising further questions about her ways of relating "spiritually" to her husband and to others.

Marilyn further stated that she was "looking at [herself]in a different way and in relation to others". Marilyn also discussed with me that she was now more aware of her need to [be] "there", to explore the intangible, and to believe in her own "senses or gut reactions" in her life.

In addition, Joyce reported that after the interview she was especially struck by her struggle to "re-incorporate" our conversation into the future. As well, Joyce shared that she felt there was a "reason/purpose to the synchronicity of the five participants' experiences" which she believed had something to "teach" me as the researcher.

Fred expressed that he found our interview conversation to be "revealing". Fred stated" [Our conversation] revealed to "me" things about myself ...as I said things that I had not said to anyone before which came to me as I was speaking". Fred shared that he was surprised somewhat by what he had expressed at the interview and it encouraged him to ponder these things further.

It was valuable to re-connect with the participants and to learn how our interview conversation had affected them. It helped to not only validate my interpretations, but also emphasized, for me, the significance of inviting people to dialogue about a topic that is often not a part of their ordinary discourse. In addition, if the participants and I met for yet another "cycling" or "check in" of the themes, there would be further revisions and refining of their meanings as our dialogue continued. Consistent with social constructionist research, our conversations really never ended; each participant and I will carry on from here continually negotiating our meanings in our next relationships. I had to end the conversations to complete this thesis. As a social constructionist researcher, I expect future interactions to continually offer new directions for considering spirituality that may not have been noticed before and will therefore bring forth further negotiations of meanings.

Figure 1

Themes at a Glance

Subthemes:

1) Creating the Dialogic Space
2) Telling Their Story
3) Dancing Around the Word 'Spiritual'
4) Struggle
5) Upon Reflection and Dialogic Elaboration
6) Re-Incorporating

Subthemes:

I) Internal Dialogue
   a) Confusion
   b) "Enlightenment"
   c) Movement

II) Illustrative of Life
   a) "Putting Up Walls"
   b) Unfamiliar

III) Spiritual Discourse
   a) Connection With Others
   b) Connection With the Universe
   c) "Spiritual Space"

Chapter Five

Conclusions of the Study

This study explored what occurs when a client is invited to discuss the spiritual relevance of an "alive moment" from within a therapeutic session. The interview discussion that ensued between the client-participant and myself, the researcher, was collaboratively constructed as we both participated in this dialogic exploration. The social constructionist perspective advocates that the meanings in our world are negotiated through our conversational practices. In this regard, further relating constantly shapes the meanings we construct. This research process will offer the opportunity to participate in the co-construction of spiritual discourse and to create meaning with participants.

As a participant in the interview conversation, the theory of social construction was for me, validated and made apparent. The transcriptions of the interviews exemplify the process that occurs when two people engage in a conversation while being open to the direction of the dialogue. One participant commented, he was "revealing things to himself that came to [him] as he was speaking". This was also my experience as a researcher, as I did not have a script to read from or certain rehearsed responses. With the exception of the six questions I asked each participant, the interview was much like a conversation that followed its own unique direction depending on the individual participant. In addition, I was also wearing my "counsellor hat" in that I was "talking *with* the participants" and not "lecturing to them". This created a dialogic space that was conducive to listening and being open to the other person's perspective. The same qualities of acceptance and unconditional positive regard found in a therapeutic relationship (Rogers, 1970) were naturally a part of our interview conversation.

As I was advocating a therapeutic atmosphere where I was not the objective, neutral, or cold researcher, I felt nervous about inquiring about the participants' perspective of spirituality relative to their "alive moment". It seemed that to throw this term "spiritual" out into the

conversation held some risks. Benner (1988) finds that ordinary discourse regards the topic of spirituality as taboo, much like sex was at one time viewed in certain cultural circles. This was my feeling in each of the interviews when I first invited a discussion about spirituality. I was concerned that participants were going to perceive me as "evangelizing" and that they would react in a defensive manner. It was when the participants asked me about my own spirituality that they were then able to respond comfortably, assured that I was not seeking a certain type of spiritual/religious following. This was an exercise for me in being comfortable enough to share my own views with a virtual stranger while at the same time offering that stranger a safe place to present their own perceptions.

Acknowledging my own apprehension in using the word "spiritual" reinforced for me the cultural baggage that often is attached to words like "spiritual". It seems likely that words like these are often excluded to avoid an uncomfortable conversational topic. In the interview conversation, we had to "unpack" our cultural understandings from past experiences in order to become comfortable discussing our meanings of "spiritual". This "unpacking" of meanings of spirituality occurred during the process of our conversation. The process sub themes of "Creating the Dialogic Space", "Telling Our Stories", and ""Dancing Around the Word Spiritual" that I interpreted were indicative of how we came to unpack our understandings and began to negotiate new possibilities for the meanings of "spiritual".

As we responded, reflected, and re-expressed ourselves in our dialogic "dance", I felt as if we were embarking on new ways of talking. This cycle of dialogue is what Gergen (1999a) refers to as "reflexive deliberation" which provides a setting to try out new possibilities of meanings that surprised both the participants and I. The significance of this process for the construction of new meaning was evident during the "check in" conversation. The five participants reported that they had spent time contemplating and further dialoguing around the new perspectives that they took away from our interview conversation. One participant shared

that they were not "practically measurable" in an overt manner, the ideas that we constructed together, but stated that, "they were incorporated as a part of me". Another participant spoke of feeling "stuck", regarding his own definition of spiritual and that he was taking efforts to find new meanings. For this study, the process of our conversation was significant to our embarking on new ways of being or dialoguing together.

Embarking on new ways of dialoguing together, there was some difficulty finding the "right" words to "go on together" (Wittgenstein, 1981) discussing spirituality. There was not one "correct word" that seemed to appease our struggle to share our meanings of spiritual. Rather, the solution was found in our combined efforts to coordinate and re-construct how we were talking together to continue our conversation. This struggle to express and to construct meanings is exemplified by one participant who commented that she felt "unschooled in her ability to go 'there'" regarding the direction of our conversation. There was also a degree of discomfort for both the participants and myself in not being familiar with articulating what Shotter and Katz (1996) refer to as the "unvoiced possibilities". This was made apparent when the participants identified an "alive moment" as a moment in their session when they had not verbalized their thoughts but, instead, were engaged in an internal dialogue (Andersen, 1991; 1995) with themselves. Andersen advocates a "reflecting team" approach to therapy where he focuses on bringing forth this internal dialogue of clients. Similarly, as I invited the participants in this study to discuss their "alive moment", they were voicing an experience that they had not shared before, not even with their therapist. One participant expressed, in the "check in" conversation, that his "alive moment" experience did not seem at the time to pertain to the content of the therapeutic session so he did not share his thoughts with his therapist. This was significant to the study as it identified that often the direction in which our conversations are going may not be what the other person at that time prefers due to their competing internal dialogues.

It would seem then, that not being present and responsive to the unfolding of the other persons' voice intonations and whole body cues might cause the preferred type of dialogues to pass by unnoticed. Shotter and Katz (1996) refer to "social poetics" as a practice of being aware of fleeting moments that may reveal unvoiced possibilities about the speaker. These researchers explored the nature of doctor's relational attitudes by studying doctor and patient communications. They found that:

> It is in our capacity to respond to these fleeting moments in extraordinary, rather than ordinary, routine ways that enables us to create a novel form of living contact with [patients]. For it is in those living moments of talk that we can find that patient, their 'world', and what it is like for them, trying in the face of their illness, to live in it. (Katz & Shotter, 1996, p.921)

Ultimately, it was my invitation to participants to look at the spiritual possibilities of their "alive moment" that brought forth a discussion of spirituality. Thus, their "fleeting/ alive moments" were not discovered or referred to necessarily as "spiritual" before my invitation to discuss them as such. The process of our conversation offered a context in which participants could consider the spiritual possibilities of their "alive moments". As Bakhtin asserts:

> An utterance is never just a reflection or an expression of something already existing and outside it that is given and final. It always creates something that never existed before, something absolutely new and unrepeatable…(as cited in Billig & Shotter, 1998, p.13).

Further, the new possibilities that we articulated in our conversations created some frustration as we attempted to find the words to express ourselves. Struggling to find these words in turn offered a new perspective from which the participants could view their world. In reflecting on our interview conversation, one participant stated that: "I've learned something. I know something more. As it struck me, it makes me then look out and see how I matter to other people…and would I ever had this moment if I hadn't been doing this [interview]?" (A, p.32). This study then invited participants to delve further into their internal dialogue and to articulate unvoiced possibilities that at times, were not as familiar and comfortable to explore as the

routine, ordinary ways of talking have been for them in the past. Bakhtin (1986) refers to this as a polyphony of multi-voicedness where there is not one possibility for dialogue but several different "voices" or possible dialogues that one could access. "Spiritual" was just one of the possibilities that the participants may have considered when looking for another way in which to view their "alive moment". Further, the participants were able to connect the new meanings of our conversation to their everyday lives and, from there, could further continue the interview dialogue into other relationships.

In my introduction, I stated that I was curious about why people seek counsellors and whether there was a vacancy in clients' lives that counselling fulfilled? I also made reference to the sociological changes in North American society where people seldom reside in close proximity to family members and may find it difficult to find relational experiences that help them to grow spiritually. In this study participants were invited to engage in a conversation that they previously might have experienced only in a familial setting or a religious institution. To enter into "spiritual discourse" was not something that was done easily or without apprehension. After offering what Cornett (1998) calls an attitude of therapists to be "spiritually attuned", I was surprised to find the work or effort it took for us to look at the spiritual qualities of the identified "alive moment". One participant commented that it was "hard to say" what he had to say as it was new for him, like a new language. Offering a setting in which to explore spiritual possibilities was, for some participants, the first time that they had shared these possibilities with someone. One participant shared that normally the content of the interview "was too personal to share with anyone", but when he did participate, he stated: "I revealed things about himself to himself that I had not been aware of before". The counselling relationship is a place where people can feel comfortable to "try on" new ways of seeing their lives and to delve into aspects of themselves that are often too intangible for ordinary dialogue.

In present society, perhaps the counselling relationship is a place where we can speak of the vacancies in our lives and explore the possibilities for viewing our experiences apart from the contexts that dominant discourses offer us. By adopting new "ways of going on together" (Wittgenstein 1981) we may also enter into new ways of seeing our experiences and ourselves. Counselling, through relational interactions, may provide support in the journey towards self-understanding. Becvar (1997) states that by acknowledging our connectedness as human beings we are able to "realize that each [of us] is affected by the other, and that the growth or healing of one benefits all" (p.80). To acknowledge that we are connected, by virtue of engaging in new ways of "conversing together", we are actually offering new places from which each person can view solutions or take action in their lives.

This study also emphasized the need to *invite* people into a spiritual discourse rather than *securing* whether they had a spiritual experience or not. As we encourage a conversation around spirituality, we are at the same time seeing a person from a different perspective. Becvar (1997) outlined principles for a spiritual orientation in the counselling relationship and advocated that our conversations enrich our self-understanding. Becvar (1997) stated that:

> I do not hesitate to make inquiries about clients' religious or spiritual orientation when this seems appropriate. I do so because I believe it is important to learn of the significance of this dimension in the life of my clients and also to let clients know that this is certainly a permissible topic of discussion should they desire to pursue it. (p.96)

The "dialogic dance" that we participated in, the interview, was indicative of a process that enabled us to engage in spiritual discourse.

In this study, our participation in a spiritual discourse also brought forth narratives or stories of our lives. These narratives helped to contextualize responses but also offered a place to "fit" the new meanings that the participants and myself constructed into our lives. One participant shared that she spent time after the interview reflecting on how her concept of spirituality was related to her marriage. She said she was attempting to incorporate the new

meanings from our conversation into her existing relationship. It seemed that the possibilities of meanings that we constructed could not be discussed in isolation. Rather, alluding to stories from our lives gave meaning to our discussion and offered new perspectives of thinking and behaving creating possibilities for both the participants' and myself to perceive our lives. Kurtz and Ketcham (1994) make reference to storytelling as part of a spiritual journey. They referred to "re-mapping" rather than "re-framing", the concepts of our selves, as part of the journey to "discover a new 'map' through storytelling" (p. 114). As well they stated that:

> We are defined by our relationships, our connections with *all* reality; what happens in the re-mapping of 'storylistening' and storytelling is that in telling our *own* story, we come to *own* the story that we tell. (p. 115)

This new "map" of how we perceive the world and ourselves is what occurred in our interview conversation.

The process of participating in the construction of new meanings and also "re-mapping" our stories to fit these meanings was for me, a spiritual process. I began this study attempting to find a definition of the word "spiritual" and how this definition was evident in the counselling relationship. Yet, it became obvious during this study that there was no "complete" definition that would include each person's experience and encompass the mystery of being a spiritual being. To describe their spirituality some participants spoke of the importance of relating to others while others spoke of the significance of "something that is greater than us". Each person acknowledged having some sort of spirituality but none of the definitions used to describe this were identical. Kurtz and Ketcham (1994) referred to this when they stated: "Spirituality is one of those realities that you have only so long as you seek it; as soon as you think you have it, you've lost it" (p.131). Engaging in a conversation with participants about their meanings of spirituality and negotiating new meanings appears to be an ongoing process. In essence, what was brought forth from our interview conversation will not end with the conclusion of this thesis. Rather, each interaction, in the future, will generate new meanings for each of the participants

and myself. Spirituality may defy definition but the conversations that invite us to look at spiritual possibilities can create new places to continue a spiritual journey.

This study concluded that spiritual discourse is often marginalized in ordinary discussions by other forms of discourse that may be more scientific or tangible, and more comfortable to speak about. In the counselling relationship, we may have been unconsciously encouraging people to become stuck in a certain way of relating and perceiving reality because we are apprehensive about engaging in other discourses such as the spiritual. I believe that counselling can miss opportunities to be open to different, inspiring possibilities for clients by sticking to ordinary, familiar discourses. This study demonstrated the importance of inviting people to look through a different "lens", in this case, the spiritual, that may afford new possibilities for living and perceiving their reality.

As a co-participant in this study, I experienced the uneasiness of engaging in an unfamiliar way of dialoguing. It became apparent, by acknowledging my own apprehensions, that there was much cultural "baggage" associated with the word "spiritual". Since we did take the "risk" of engaging in spiritual discourse in our interview, we together, then constructed new ways of viewing experiences that have led participants to new perspectives. This discourse opportunity was made possible by creating a dialogic space where open, inclusive, and intimate relating could occur. It was then that we could share our stories and safely incorporate them into the new possibilities that we together had constructed.

The study was significant for me as it drew attention to spirituality as a process rather than as a definition to be captured. Conversations do not end after two conversationalists leave each other's company, the dialogue continues into further conversations. Similarly, our journey to understand the spiritual acknowledges our need to support each other in dialogues that create new possibilities for being.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study was that it did not continue the conversation with participants to the degree that a larger project could by providing follow up information and thus, further re-fining the data as it evolved between conversations. Instead, I limited the data to one interview and one follow up "check in", and made a decision to "stop" my conversations with the data to produce the themes of this thesis.

Secondly, the findings of the study are not generalizable because of the small size of my sample and because of the unique nature of our informal interview conversations. Another study would likely create different meanings as the researcher and participants would bring their own values and unique ways of relating to the interview conversation. Because the dialogue is ongoing and is really never completed, the same participants would have different contributions under different circumstances. As the "social construction of validity" (Kvale, 1996) illustrates, every new relational context will offer a new place from which people can re-construct their meanings.

Further, my participation in the construction of the data, and in the organization of themes, influenced the outcomes of this research. Another person doing this research with the same participants would have come up with different themes from the data. The approach I took with this research, to adapt "Inter-Personal Recall" and Grounded Theory, was a unique combination that other researchers may or may not have chosen to follow.

My research invitation focused primarily on the spiritual attributes of the participants' "alive moment" and thus, may have prevented other forms of discourse that may have been beneficial to the participants. Keeping this in mind, I was open to where the participants were willing to go with our interview conversations and whether they did not want to take up my invitation to engage in spiritual discourse.

Lastly, the type of questions that I asked and the way in which the participants and I together created the "results" of this study could not have been compared to a typical quantitative study due the nature of the approach taken in this study.

Implications for Further Research

This study focused on the discussion of a client-identified "alive moment" within a therapeutic session. Rennie (1995) also used the technique of having clients elaborate upon significant moments in their therapy session. It would be interesting to create a study where both the client and the therapist identify their own "alive moments" from within the same therapy session. From there the researcher could invite the therapist and the client to each discuss what was happening for each of them at those times. This is similar to a process used by Andersen (1991) in a reflecting team where he invites each person to elaborate on their internal dialogue. Further research might have both the therapist and client share the spiritual relevance of those moments while they are both present in reflection during this discussion.

With the exception of one participant, the other participants all identified an "alive moment" from within an individual counselling session. The fifth participant chose a moment from a couple's session. Due to those circumstances, the participant's partner did not participate in our interview conversation. Further research might primarily study couple therapy sessions. Each couple would individually view their session tape and choose their respective "alive moments"; then both partners would be invited to engage in a interview conversation around these moments. As well, asking each partner to share his or her views on the relevance of spirituality might create some new meanings as to the role that spirituality plays in relationships.

The approach taken in this study focused on studying the creation of meaning from *within* a relational experience. The future study of counselling relationships might be better fulfilled within this context- of the researcher as a participant in the creation of the meanings of the data of the study. A researcher who is open to engaging in an open, subjective experience

where they become participants in their own study could offer new places from which to view the counselling relationship. By participating in a "meaning making" experience researchers may come to better understand how meaning construction can occur within relationships.

Implications for Practice

This study revealed the challenges involved in inviting participation in a seldom turned to discourse in therapy. Many counselling agencies may not have the time, mandate, or inclination to delve into a "dance" or conversation which would unpack the meanings of words, especially those word that have intangible qualities like "spiritual". As well, some therapists are often unprepared to speak to the "spiritual" aspects of the person, feeling this should be left to pastoral counselling and other religious ministries. Although, Benner (1988) found that therapists may not necessarily have the background to provide "spiritual guidance", that directs our relationships with God or an "other", they do have the opportunity to discuss spiritual experiences and meanings in the lives of their clients. He stated that: "Therapists can open the door to spiritual considerations in therapy in an even more direct way by simply inviting clients to share their views if they feel they need to do so" (Benner, 1988, p.156). This study demonstrated that inviting a person into spiritual discourse within a counselling session could create new possibilities for self-understanding and for articulating as-yet-unimagined experiences.

This study also spoke to the potential of what could happen when practitioners offer opportunities to engage in new ways of dialoguing with each other. Encouraging a dialogic space, where people can be comfortable trying out new ways of seeing the world, creates places where people can construct new meanings. It is from within our participation in conversations that we can support each other in seeking new self-understandings and perceptions of the world we live in. The relationships that we participate in are also places where we, the practitioners, are shaping our meanings as we learn of the new possibilities which are relevant to us. In

practice, this study implied that we might strive to be cognizant of how we participate in the negotiation of others' perceptions and meanings while at the same time, acknowledging that we are also negotiating our own understandings.

The transcripts of this study showed evidence of the consideration and construction of new meanings that involve a certain type of participation from counsellors that may be different from how many conceptualize clinical counselling conversations. In conducting this study, it was my experience that it is the interaction between people that guides how we perceive a problem in our lives. This suggests that the same description or diagnosis of an illness can have a different meaning for each person. Each person has their own individual struggles and descriptions of how they are affected by a particular illness/experience and this can result from the "lens" or "way of going on together" that they and their therapist together negotiate.

It became apparent to me that the way we understand and use words is very individualistic. As well, by seeing each person caught in an individual struggle helps us to avoid stereotyping the experience of our clients. Instead, we are encouraged to be open to negotiating and constructing meaning within the context of the unique interaction with each client.

Further, as practitioners we need to be cognizant of the language that we use to relate to our clients. Clients may begin adopting the therapist's discourse in sessions, which may create a specific way of talking and perceiving of their situation. A therapist, who engages in a spiritual discourse, that may be less familiar to the client, may also provide new opportunities for the therapist to understand their client. As well, the client who is invited to less familiar ways of talking may have opportunities to view themselves and their experiences from different possibilities that normally would not be constructed in dominant mental health dialogues.

In addition, my presence as a consultant in this research interrupted the normal pattern of relating for the therapists and the clients that I interviewed. The therapists' responses and the "check in" conversation with participants illustrated the significance of having a consultant

briefly engage the client in a new form of discourse that brought forth new opportunities for the therapist and client to explore in future counselling sessions. The use of a consultant in practice could benefit the therapeutic relationship by helping the client and therapist to avoid becoming stuck in routine ways of relating together.

"Spiritual" is one example of a discourse that practitioners may invite their clients to engage in. The challenge is not to become "stuck" in rigid ways of "talking" together which marginalizes ways of seeing the world. Instead, this study suggests to practitioners, the need to be cognizant of how the dialogues engaged in offer places for the construction of meaningful self-understandings and perceptions of reality. Spiritual discourse is one possibility that clients may be searching for in their journey of self-understanding.

REFERENCES

Andersen, T. (1991). The reflecting team: Dialogues and dialogues about the dialogues. New York: Norton.

Andersen, T. (1995). Reflecting Processes; acts of informing and forming. In S. Friedman (Ed.)The reflecting team in action: collaborative practice in family therapy (pp. 11-37). New York: Guilford.

Andersen, T. (1997). Researching client–therapist relationships: A collaborative study for informing therapy. Journal of Systemic Therapies, 16(2), 125-133.

Aponte, H.J. (1996). Political bias, moral values, and spirituality in the training of psycho therapists. [On-line]. Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic, Fall 96, 60(4), 488, 15 paragraphs.

Becvar, D. (1997). Soul healing. New York: Basic Books.

Benner, D. (1988). Psychotherapy and the spiritual quest. UK: Baker Book House.

Billig, M., & Shotter, J. (1998). A Bakhtinin psychology: From out of the heads of individuals and into the dialogues between them. In M. Mayerfield Bell & M. Gardiner (Ed.), Bakhtin and Human sciences (pp.13-29). London: Sage.

Boadella, D. (1998). Essence and ground: towards the understanding of spirituality in psychotherapy.[On-line]. International Journal of Psychotherapy, Mar 98, 3(1), 29, 23 paragraphs.

Bromberg, W. (1975). From shaman to psychotherapist: A history of the treatment of mental illness. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co.

Brun, B., Pederson, E.W., & Runberg, M. (1993). Symbols of the soul. London: Bookcraft.

Buber, M. (1970). I and thou. New York: Scribner.

Charmaz, K. (1995). Grounded theory. In J.A. Smith, R. Harre, & L. Van Langenhove (Eds.), Rethinking methods in psychology (pp. 122-142).Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (Eds.). (1996). Making sense of qualitative data. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Cornett, C. (1998). The soul of psychotherapy: Recapturing the spiritual dimension in the therapeutic encounter. New York: The Free Press.

Cox, R.H. (1997). Transcendence and imminence in psychotherapy. [On-line]. American Journal of Psychotherapy, Fall97, 51(4), 511, 11 paragraphs.

Egan, G. (1998). The skilled helper (6th ed.). Toronto: Brooks/Cole.

Elkins, D.N. (1995). Psychotherapy and spirituality: Toward a theory of the soul. [On-line]. Journal of Humanistic Psychology, Spring 95, 35(2), 78, 21 parargraphs.

Elkins, D.N. (1999). Spirituality. [On-line]. Psychology Today, Sep/Oct, 32(5), 44.

Ellenberger, H. (1970) The discovery of the unconscious: The history and evolution of dynamic psychiatry. New York: Basic Books.

Elliott-Griffith, M. (1995). Opening therapy to conversations with a personal God. Journal of Feminist Family Therapy, 7, 123-139.

Fine, M. (1994). Working the hyphens: reinventing self and other in qualitative research. In Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 70-82). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Fish, S. (1980). Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Frankl, V.E. (1959) Man's search for meaning: An introduction to logotherapy. New York: Washington.

Fromm, E. (1950) Psychoanalysis and religion. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Gadamer, H.G. (1960). Truth and method. New York: Seabury.

Gergen, K. (1994). Realities and Relationships: Soundings in social construction. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gergen, K. (1999a). Social psychology as social construction: The emerging vision. [On-line]. The Message of Social Psychology: Perspectives on Mind in Society. http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/kgergen

Gergen, K. (1999b). When relationships generate realities: Therapeutic communication reconsidered. [On-line] http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/kgergen

Gergen, K., & McNamee S. (1992) .Therapy as social construction. London: Sage.

Gilligan, S. G. (In press). The experience of "negative otherness": How shall we treat our enemies? In J. K. Zeig (Ed.), Brief therapy: Lasting impressions. Phoenix, AZ: Zeig Tucker Publications.

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

Guba, E.S., & Lincoln Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In Handbook of qualitative research (pp.105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Heron, J. (1996). Co-operative inquiry: research into the human condition. London: Sage.

Hillman, J. (1992). The myth of analysis. New York: Harper Perennial.

Holzman, L. (2000). Educational and Child Psychology, 17, 1-39.

Jung, C.G.(1933). Modern man in search of a soul. New York: Harcourt Press.

Kagan, N. (1975). Interpersonal process recall: A method of influencing human action. East Lansing: Michigan State University.

Karasu, T. B. (1999). Spiritual psychotherapy. [On-line]. American Journal of Psychotherapy, Spring, 53(2), 143, 20 paragraphs.

Katz, A., & Shotter, J. (1996). Hearing the patients 'voice': towards a social poetics in diagnostic interviews. Social Science & Medicine, 43(6), 919-931.

Katz, A., Conant L., Inui, T. Baron, D., & Bor, D. (2000). A council of elders: creating a multi-voiced dialogue in a community of care. Social Science & Medicine, 50, 851-860.

Kurtz, E., & Ketcham, K. (1992). The spirituality of imperfection: Storytelling and the journey to wholeness. New York: Bantam Books.

Kvale, S. (1996). Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing. London: Sage.

Mahoney, M.J., & Graci, G.M. (1999). The meanings and correlates of spirituality: suggestions from an exploratory survey of experts.[On-line]. Death Studies, Sept, 23(6), 251, 8 paragraphs.

Martin, J., & Sugarman, J. (1999). The psychology of human possibility and constraint. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

McNamee, S., & Gergen, K. (1999). Relational responsibility: Resources for sustainable dialogue. London: Sage.

Miles, M.B., & Heberman, A.M. (1994). Qualitative data analysis (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Miller, W.R. (Ed.). (1999). Integrating spirituality into treatment: Resources for practioners. Washington, DC.: American Psychological Association.

Miller, W.R., & Thoresen, C.E. (1999). Spirituality and Health. In W.R.Miller (Ed.), Integrating spirituality into treatment: Resources for practitioners (pp.3-18). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Palys, T. (1997). Research decisions: Quantitative and qualitative perspectives (2nd ed.). Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada.

Randour, M. (Ed.). (1993). Exploring sacred landscapes. New York: Columbia University Press.

Reason, P., & Heron, J. (1995). Cooperative Inquiry. In J..A. Smith, R. Harre, & L. Van Langenhove (Eds.), Rethinking methods in psychology (pp. 122-142).Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Reason, P., & Heron, J. (1997). A participatory inquiry paradigm. Qualitative Inquiry, 3(3), 274-294.

Rennie, D.L. (1994). Human science and counselling psychology: Closing the gap between researach and practice. Counselling Psychology Quarterly 7(3), 235-250.

Rennie, D. L. (1995). Strategic choices in a qualitative approach to psychotherapy process research. In L. Hoshmand and J. Martin (Eds.), Research as praxis: Lessons from programmatic research in therapeutic psychology. (pp.198-220). New York: Teachers College Press.

Rennie, D. L. (2000). Aspects of the client's conscious control of the psychotherapeutic process. Journal of Psychotherapy Integration.

Rennie, D.L., & Brewer, L. (1987). Grounded theory of thesis blocking. Teaching Of Psychology, 4(1), 10-15.

Richard, P.S., & Bergin, A.E. (1997). A spiritual strategy for counselling and psychotherapy. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Rogers, C. (1951). Client-centered therapy. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Rolheiser, R. (1998) Seeking spirituality. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Shotter, J. (1993a). The cultural politics of everyday life: Social constructionism, rhetoric, and Knowing of the third kind. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Shotter, J. (1993b) Conversational realities: the constructing of life through language. London: Sage.

Shotter, J. (1997) The social construction of our 'inner'lives. [On-line]. http://www.massey.ac.nz./~Alock/virtual/inner.htm

Shotter, J., & Katz, A. (1996). Articulating a practice from within the practice itself: Establishing formative dialogues by the use of a 'social poetics'.[On-line]. Concepts and Transformation 1, pp.213-237. Also available from: http://pubpages.unh.edu/~jds/TA-HS.htm

Shotter, J., & Katz, A. (1998). 'Living moments in dialogical exchanges. Human Systems 9, pp.81-93 . Also available from: http://pubpages.unh.edu/~jds/TA-HS.htm

Shotter, J. (1999). Inside dialogic realities: From an abstract-systemic to a participatory-wholistic understanding of communication. [On-line]. Southern Communication Journal. http://pubpages.unh.edu/~jds/TA-HS.htm

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

Stringer, E.T. (1996). Action research: A handbook for practitioners. London:Sage.

Weingarten, K. (1992). A consideration of intimate and non-intimate interaction in therapy. Family Process, 31, 45-59.

Weingarten, K. (1991). The discourses of intimacy: Adding a social constructionist and feminist view. Family Process, 30, 285-305.

West, W. (1997). Integrating counselling, psychotherapy and healing: An inquiry into counsellors and psychotherapists whose work includes healing. [On-line]. British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, Aug97, 25(3), 291, 21 paragraphs, 4 charts, 13 diagrams.

Wittgenstein, L. (1981). Zettel, (2nd. ed.), G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H.V. Wright (Eds. and Translators.). Oxford: Blackwell.

Appendix A

Letter of Introduction

Letter of Introduction

Dear

I am a graduate student in the Masters of Education (Counselling) program at UNBC. I am presently working on my thesis to complete my degree. My research will be *exploring the idea of inviting clients into a spiritual discourse within the counselling setting.* I would like to identify 5 therapists and 5 of their clients to engage in a 1-1 ½ hour interview/discussion with myself. Prior to this interview, I will request that one of their therapy sessions be videotaped and that the client will then independently review and reflect on the taped session before coming to the interview.

The criterion is that you and the client have been involved in therapy for no less then 4 sessions and that you are interested in topic of my thesis.

If you are interested, could you please refer me to your clients who me may be interested in participating. If interested they can then contact me at 964-2149 to explain more details of the study and to express interest in participating in the study. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Margaret Ann Fuller, BEd.
9485 Robson Road, Prince George
(250) 964-2149
email mdfuller@netbistro.com

Tom Strong, PhD, R.Psych, Assistant Professor
Education Program (Counselling Specialization)
Thesis Advisor
College of Arts, Social and Health Science,
University of Northern British Columbia
333 University Way
Prince George, BC, V2N 4B7
(250) 960-5401 strongt@unbc.ca

Appendix B

Consent Form

Informed Consent

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study (thesis) to be undertaken by Margaret Ann Fuller as part of her Masters in Education (Counselling) degree, at the University of Northern British Columbia. I understand that the purpose of this research is to *explore the experience of being invited into a spiritual discourse from within the counselling environment.* The information gathered from this research will help counsellors and other helping professionals to better support people.

I acknowledge and understand the following:

1. My therapist referred me to Margaret Ann Fuller because I have been seeing my therapist for more then 4 sessions and we (my therapist and myself) are interested in participating in this research topic. Margaret Fuller was not given my name, number, or any other information before I contacted Margaret Fuller (964-2149) to express my interest to participate.
2. I will permit the video taping of a 1-hour session with my therapist. I will take the video taped session home to review and choose one moment from the tape that is most alive for me. At an agreed upon date, I will then participate in a 1-1 ½ hour interview with Margaret Ann Fuller in the presence of my therapist, who will, toward the end of the interview, join us in a debriefing discussion around the interview. At a later date, I will be asked for feedback on my understanding of the themes revealed in the transcriptions. The interview sessions will be audio taped and transcribed in full or part. My name will be omitted from the transcriptions and a pseudonym used in the transcriptions, compilation of themes, and descriptions. I will not be remunerated for my participation in this study.

3. At any time during the study I am free to withdraw my participation and the information obtained from me will not be used. I am free to limit areas of my experience that I do not wish to share or reveal.
4. The information provided by myself and others will be amalgamated together and the results will be used for research purposes, for application in future counselling services, and may be reported in academic journals. Before publication and presentation, I will be given the opportunity to review and to then accept or to decline the inclusion of information given by me. I can contact Margaret Ann Fuller at (250) 964-2149 or through email mdfuller@netbistro.com to get a copy of the research results.
5. Using pseudonyms will ensure confidentiality and my anonymity.
6. Transcriptions and notes will only be available to Margaret Ann Fuller, to her advisor, and to her thesis committee members. Raw data will be stored in a locked cabinet for 5 years following retrieval of information and destroyed thereafter.
7. Margaret Ann Fuller will be working under the supervision of her faculty advisor, Dr. Tom Strong, at the University Of Northern British Columbia. He can also be reached for inquires regarding this study at (250) 960-5401 or email: strongt@unbc.ca. Or you can contact the Faculty of Graduate Studies at UNBC at 960-5820 for further inquires.

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Reflection of Videotaped session

What the client will be asked to do after reviewing the video taped therapy session: Select one moment in the videotaped session with your therapist that for whatever reason stands out to you as being striking or somehow more alive for you. This moment may be when dialogue is or is not occurring. Describe the moment by noting the time on your video machine for future reference.

The following questions will serve as a vehicle in a discussion with myself and the client after the client reflects on the tape. The therapist will be present for this dialogue and will be invited afterwards for the debriefing session.

1. In your own words, describe what is happening in this moment (the words, actions, gestures, postures, etc.). Try to recall what you were thinking and what you were feeling at this particular moment. What is it about this particular moment that made you decide to choose it from all the other moments in the session?

2. What is it about this moment that is representative (illustrative) of the depth of what is going on in your life, presently? Does the reflection of this particular moment, invite you to re-examine or somehow see your life situation differently?

3. Reflecting on the "alive" moment that you chose is there something you would regard as spiritual about this moment? Can you describe how you understand this moment and its spiritual aspects or not?

4. How does the feeling of being "alive", for you, in that moment, relate to your views of spiritual? What words would you use to describe the qualities of this moment?

5. Does the reflection of this moment bring you to examine (or look at) your spirituality?

6. Having discussed this alive moment with me in this way, is their anything about our discussion that you feel will influence how you go forward?

Therapist, Client, and Myself De-Brief the Above Interview

1. Ask the therapist their thoughts at this point of the conversation. What was evoked for you from our prior conversation? Or, what were your perceptions of hearing the conversation about the alive moments?

2. Invite the clients responses to the therapists' response.

3. How would the therapist envision proceeding or where would they be curious in going from here?

4. How would the client like to proceed in the subsequent therapy sessions?

Follow-Up "Check-in" Questions

1. After reading and discussing the themes that I outlined from my interpretation of the data, what fit and what did not fit for you from these themes?

2. Has anything changed since our last conversation as result of thinking about what we discussed during the original interview?

Appendix D

Participant Profile

Participant Profile

Anne: is a Caucasian female of 35 years of age. Anne and her husband were attending couples counselling at the time of the interview.

Fred is a Caucasian male of 38 years of age who was attending individual counselling at the time of the interview.

John is a Caucasian male of 38 years of age who was attending individual counselling at the time of the interview.

Joyce is a Caucasian female of 55 years of age who was attending individual counselling with a certified art therapist.

Marilyn is a Caucasian female of 45 years of age who is attending individual counselling with a certified art therapist.