

University of Chester

***An exploration of the impact of diversity and culture
on the journey of faith and spirituality of the
counsellor who is a Christian.***

**Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the
University of Chester for the degree of Doctor of Professional
Studies in Counselling and Psychotherapy Studies**

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Declaration

The material being presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award of this or another Higher Education institution except in minor particulars which are explicitly noted in the body of the thesis. Where research pertaining to the thesis was undertaken collaboratively, the nature and extent of my individual contribution has been made explicit.

Heather Barber

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I am grateful to all participants for their contribution and time. I hope I have done justice to your experiences and represented you well.

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Abstract

An exploration of the impact of diversity and culture on the journey of faith and spirituality of the counsellor who is a Christian.

Heather Barton

Aim: The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of diversity and culture on the journey of faith and spirituality of the counsellor who is a Christian. This is an under-researched area. *Method:* The study explored the experiences of eight experienced counsellors who were also Christian. It was conducted by means of semi-structured qualitative interviews. Data were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Results:* Analysis of data identified five superordinate themes: 1) thoughts on motivations; 2) perspectives on training; 3) experiences in supervision; 4) experiences of faith and spirituality; 5) experiences of diversity and culture. *Discussion:* The data revealed that participants believed their faith to be a vital part of their desire to become a counsellor. In spite of this, they received little preparation for the diverse clients they were to meet and found little support in the areas of diversity and culture, or faith and spirituality, in training or supervision. They also faced challenges to their own faith and spirituality. This has, however, resulted in what participants believe is a broader and deeper faith. A move to a new stage of faith, which they may not have reached had they not become counsellors, was also identified. *Conclusion/Implications:* Gaps in training and supervision were highlighted, and areas for further research are identified.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

This thesis will explore the experiences that counsellors have of working with clients who are very different from themselves, and who may have a diverse range of views and opinions. In particular, this research will explore the impact this has had on the counsellors' own faith and spirituality. It examines the perspectives of people who are qualified counsellors and who profess to have a Christian faith.

1.1 Background

Explorations for this thesis began before Covid-19 brought many changes to the way of life in the United Kingdom and all around the world. At that time, there had been an ease of movement from one country to another that has transformed the twenty-first century world into a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multinational society (Palmer & Laungani, 2009). In the West, almost every culture in the world is now at least represented in any given country (Owusu-Bempah, 2018). In this increasingly mobile world, working with difference and diversity has become an integral part of everyday practice for many therapists (Parritt, 2016). This means that multicultural counselling has become an important part of many therapists' daily work.

Difference is at the forefront of work for the therapist, not only in race and culture, but also in areas, such as physical and mental health, class, status, disability, and many more fields (Ballinger & Wright, 2007). Every person also has a set of beliefs, values and truths about the world that make it believable

and understandable for themselves (McLeod, 2016). Diversity and difference exist within a complex matrix that involves various levels and overlapping concepts (Parritt, 2016).

The therapeutic relationship between counsellor and client does not take place within a cultural or political vacuum. There are many aspects to it (Parritt, 2016). A person's worldview can be defined as the way in which they perceive their relationship with the world. Nature, institutions and perceptions of other people are highly correlated with a person's cultural upbringing and life experiences (AMCD, 2017). Cultural patterns of thought and action, which guide and control each person's life, and influence their decisions, are within them from before they were born (Pederson, 2002). These were inherited from parents, carers and teachers, who taught the rules they were to follow and how they should live. Other cultural patterns were learned as they became aware of more people, and discovered that their own culture was one among many possible ways of being in the world (Vacc, DeVaney & Brendel, 2003).

Each person will bring their own particular opinion to their situation, and how their world has been shaped. They will have a unique and individual perspective on their life and their distress (Parritt, 2016). Everyone will use their own lens to interpret experiences that dictate who they are (Hayes & Smith, 2012). It is important, therefore, that counsellors are culturally competent, and are able to achieve an accurate awareness of their own culturally learned assumptions. It is vital that they comprehend the meaningful

facts and information that describe each client's cultural context, in order to help the client achieve positive outcomes (Pederson, 2002).

Beliefs cannot be neutral (Kearney, 2018). Every person values some things, people or events, over others. Therefore, everyone has a unique combination of cultural and racial context. By trying to relate to another person without taking into account these psychosocial contexts, something is likely to be missed (Eleftheriadou, 2015). Religion, faith and spirituality are also important factors of diversity, that play a vital role in the deepest part of an individual's life (Pargament, 2011; Jewell, 2004).

This means, however, that therapists are called upon to explore, understand and have empathy with contexts that may well be outside of their comfort zones (Ross, 2016). Therefore, in an effort to be open and receptive to the client, this study questions whether the therapists themselves may be vulnerable, and at risk of losing their own identity, and what is important to them (Kottler, 2010).

Whilst the importance of multicultural counselling is not in dispute, I have found that the main focus of current literature and research is on the understanding of how the client is affected in the therapy room. I have found no literature exploring the impact on the therapist. I have also found no literature exploring the importance to the therapist of their own faith, or how they may be able to ensure their own identity, and in particular their spirituality and faith, whilst

working with diverse clients. This study will examine how, and if, participants have been able to do this. It will also explore the impact that working with diverse clients has had on them.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore the possible impact of diversity and culture on the journey of faith and spirituality of a counsellor who is a Christian. Although there has been a great deal of literature written regarding multicultural counselling, there is an absence of literature discussing the impact on the therapist themselves and how their faith and spirituality may be affected. Indeed, there is a dearth of literature exploring how therapists may be able to take care of their own spirituality and faith, whilst working with diverse clients.

Throughout their career, therapists encounter many aspects of diversity that require them to explore, understand and have empathy with contexts that may be well outside of their comfort zone (Kottler, 2010). They are expected to achieve cultural empathy, and develop a socially aware practice that takes into account class-based value systems, mental health issues, differences in religion, faith and spirituality, as well as a variety of disabilities, and different cultures (Ballinger & Wright, 2007).

Working as a therapist requires intense involvement with individuals who may be witnesses to traumatic events. The therapist holds stories of great pain and

difficulty (Kottler, 2010). They are required to be open and empathic to the pain and experience of others, whilst at the same time still being human themselves, with their own wounded histories, difficulties, and trauma (Wheeler, 2007). It is important, therefore, that the therapist is able to understand the need to take care of themselves. Clients may be let down badly by counsellors who do not attend to their own needs (Adams, 2014). Therapists, therefore, hold the balance of the well-being of the client, the client's autonomy, and also responsibility for their own self-care (Welfel, 2006).

In this study, participants will be given an opportunity to reflect on the journey they have undertaken as a counsellor. This thesis will consider the importance of faith and spirituality to the participants themselves, and the impact diversity and culture may have had on their faith. This research may be valuable in helping therapists to gain insight and understanding into their own faith and spirituality, as well as their own self-care needs in this area. It could also inform therapists about ways to better understand and meet clients' needs regarding faith and spirituality, and diversity and culture.

This study offers the opportunity for participants to review where they stand regarding their own faith and spirituality, and how their spiritual journey may have been impacted by their counselling journey. In addition, participants will be able to reflect on how much faith and spirituality, and diversity and culture, play a part in the therapy room.

1.3 Research question and aims of the study

This study seeks to answer the question:

Do issues of diversity and culture impact the journey of faith and spirituality of the counsellor who is a Christian?

The aims of the research are:

- To explore the thoughts and feelings that participants have regarding how their faith and spirituality has been affected by diversity and culture, throughout their counselling career.
- To discover the impact that diversity and culture has had on the participant themselves, and their journey of faith and spirituality.
- To explore if, and how, participants have been able to take care of their own spiritual well-being throughout their counselling journey.

1.4 Originality of the research

This study adds a new perspective to literature surrounding multicultural counselling. It explores a largely under-researched field by investigating the

impact that working with diverse clients has on counsellors who are also Christian.

The study adds to the knowledge and understanding of how counsellors themselves may be affected by their work in the following ways:

- It explores the impact that working with diversity has on a counsellor's faith. This has never been researched before.
- It examines how counsellors who have a faith, take care of their faith when working with clients who have a different faith to their own. This has never been researched before.
- It explores how faith motivates some counsellors to become counsellors. This has never been researched before.
- It examines how therapists are able to care for their own faith when working with diversity. This has never been researched before.

In these ways, and through the methodology used, the research makes an original contribution to literature.

1.5 Definition of terms

Throughout this study the terms counsellor and therapist, and counselling and psychotherapy (or therapy) will be used interchangeably, consistent with guidelines in literature (Cooper, 2008).

The research is conducted with regard to the following areas:

- Motivation - this is an important aspect of becoming a therapist that is a largely under-researched area. This study will investigate the areas of motivation that participants had for starting out on a counselling career.
- Training - this study will explore participants' perceptions of the training they received with regard to faith and spirituality, and diversity and culture.
- Supervision - this study will explore whether participants consider they have received adequate supervision in areas of faith and spirituality, and diversity and culture.
- Self-care - this study will investigate whether therapists are able to care for themselves with regard to their own faith and spirituality, whilst working with clients who are very different from themselves.

1.6 Opening positioning statement

There are a number of reasons for undertaking a professional doctorate. I

have been committed to my work as a counsellor for many years, and also to ongoing study and personal development in this area. I have enjoyed previous research that I have undertaken, and value the opportunity that the professional doctorate has offered to further this interest, as well as to raise my own standard of education to a higher level. I have also, as a Christian, been interested in how my journey of faith and spirituality has run alongside my counselling journey. Each part of the journey of both has influenced the other. Both have brought challenges to the other and have played an extremely important role in my life as a whole. Sometimes these two parts of my life have seemed to be integrated, but at other times they have run parallel to each other and have been quite separate.

This study has been partly a quest to find out if other counsellors, who are Christians, have had this same experience, and also to help those about to begin a counselling career to understand how they may be affected or impacted by it. I also want to bring some understanding to the profession and those who are experienced in this field, namely trainers and supervisors, to be aware of the gaps there may be in this area for the well-being of both counsellors and their clients.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature regarding diversity and culture, and faith and spirituality. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological choices and methods used to answer the research question. A reflexive

statement considers the impact of the research on myself. In Chapter 4 the research findings are presented. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings in the light of literature. Chapter 6 presents the conclusion, the limitations of the research, and considers how the research could be developed. The relevance of the research is offered, and the original contribution to the field identified.

1.8 Summary

In this chapter, the context and background to the research has been introduced. The purpose, aims, and research question have been presented. The methodology has been explained. Terminology has been clarified, and an explanation of the ways that the research will be conducted given. A positioning statement has been included. The structure of the thesis has been outlined. The next chapter will present a review of the literature.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the existing literature and research on the theme of diversity and culture, and how this might impact the faith and spirituality of counsellors who are Christian. This is an exploratory study of the experiences that counsellors, who are Christian, have of working with clients who are very different from themselves.

There is a growing emphasis, interest, and indeed, a great deal of literature that argues the importance of multicultural counselling (e.g. Lago, 2011; Lott, 2010; Palmer & Laungani, 2009; Casas, 2017). It is evident from this that great importance is attached to the need for the counsellor to develop a socially aware practice that considers class-based value systems, and mental health issues, as well as culture and diversity (Ballinger & Wright, 2007).

It is within such a context that this review will aim to draw together, and explore, literature that concerns counselling, that is commensurate with living in the multicultural British society, which is now marked by multiple truth criteria and worldviews (McLeod, 2016).

I have found, however, that although literature argues the importance of multicultural counselling for the benefit of the client, it fails to consider how the therapist themselves may be impacted. While arguing, for example, the importance of truth and worldview for the client, there is no investigation into

whether therapists are able to value and take care of their own truth and worldview, whilst working in a multicultural context.

Together with worldview, faith, religion and spirituality are factors of diversity that play a very important part in people's lives (Pargament, 2011). Recent changes and challenges regarding spirituality have also led to an increased interest in the spiritual and supernatural (Jankowski, 2002). It may appear that institutionalised religion is becoming less popular, but people are not necessarily becoming less spiritual (Swinton, 2001). Swinton believes that it would be a mistake to think that people are no longer searching for transcendence and spiritual fulfilment. To this I would add that many clients who come to therapy may also be searching for spiritual fulfilment and desire answers in this area of their lives.

Indeed, clients may bring many and varying issues relating to religion, faith and spirituality to the counselling room, which will involve a wide range of spiritual and religious orientations (Hepburn, 2019). Some clients may even enter therapy because they are seeking answers to spiritual concerns, although they may not recognise this (Barnett & Johnson, 2011). Although many clients have no grounding in a particular tradition, they may still find themselves looking for guidance, relief or meaning in life (Hepburn, 2019). In my view, this is a much-neglected area in terms of literature and research.

Every individual has spiritual values whether they believe in a particular

religion, follow a certain faith, or practise none of these (Callen, 2001). Some clients may be a staunch follower of the religion in which they were raised, others may or may not have explored options to deepen or further their faith (Hepburn, 2019). Therefore, religion, faith and spirituality are areas of diversity that counsellors will inevitably encounter in the therapy room. It is, I believe, of the utmost importance that therapists do not ignore this area of their clients' lives.

However, the terms religion, faith and spirituality can be confusing and challenging, because they will mean different things to different people. Definitions have changed over time (Hepburn, 2019) and the terms are often used interchangeably to mean the same things (Belo, 2019). It is useful to consider the terms, which I have outlined below.

The term religion refers to a formal system of beliefs that centre on some conception of God, that expresses the views of a particular religious group or community (Swinton, 2001). Religion is described by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2018) as a particular system of faith and worship. Organised religions are built around traditions that provide a powerful worldview and hermeneutical framework, in which people seek to understand, interpret and make sense of themselves, their lives and their daily experiences, according to Swinton (2001). Swinton believes that this can be a powerful force in a person's life that needs to be taken seriously. It has great importance for the process of mental health care, as well as the maintenance of good mental

health.

Faith can be defined as a general religious attitude or an accepted set of beliefs (Newman, 2004). The term can be used to describe one's inward belief in a doxology or teaching (Belo, 2019). This may be based on personal conviction, or trust and confidence in something or someone. Faith can be termed as something deeply personal as well as extremely private (Newman, 2004).

Spirituality, Jewell (2004) argues, is the deepest dimension of all life, and not just one small part of it. It is the ultimate ground of all our questions, hopes, fears, and loves. It is, Jewell believes, at the heart of questions about our own struggles, loss, and self-worth.

However, spirituality can sometimes be seen as an aspect of religion (Reeves, 2018). It is described in the *Cambridge Dictionary* (2013) as "the quality that involves deep feelings and beliefs of a religious nature, rather than the physical parts of life". Historically, spirituality was considered to be a part of religious life (West, 2010). However, in contemporary Western cultures, spiritual beliefs have tended to move away from institutionalised religions, and towards other forms of spirituality (Swinton, 2001). It could be described as a part of an individual's approach to life that affects the way they behave and engage with life (Jewell, 2004). Indeed, spirituality has changed from being viewed as a specifically religious concept, that is located within a religious

tradition, to a much broader and wider form that has many possibilities (Swinton, 2001). This means that there are many different, and much more diverse forms of spirituality than was once thought to be normal.

In view of the above, it can be seen that the multicultural nature of the present, postmodern, British society has resulted in many types of religion, faith and spirituality living side by side (Lago, 2011). It is, therefore, not only essential, but expected that therapists have the ability, and are prepared, to work with clients whose spiritual and cultural values and attitudes differ in many ways from their own (Falender & Shafranske, 2014).

There is, however, no recognition of how working with such diversity may affect or impact the therapist themselves. This subject ventures into the arena of therapist self-care, which is currently a very unclear and under-researched area in British literature. This literature review takes into account the need that therapists may have to take care of their own spiritual health, which again is an under-researched area. It also examines and considers the view that training and supervision, in the area of the impact of diversity and culture on the therapist, is further developed.

It is my intention to firstly consider in some detail how literature views the importance of multicultural counselling. I will then outline why there is a need for faith, religion and spirituality to be recognised as a priority in therapy. I will then explore faith from the more specific point of view of the Christian faith. I

will also consider how faith and spirituality may become challenged and changed.

This chapter proceeds as follows: Section 2 details the search strategy used in this research. Section 3 investigates counselling in the diverse British society, and will explore some of the situations that counsellors are working in. Section 4 examines the requirements and expectations of the culturally skilled counsellor. In sections 5 and 6 attention is paid to the importance of worldviews and values in the therapeutic process. Section 7 briefly reviews some of the challenges that are faced when working in a multicultural setting. This is followed in Section 8 by a discussion regarding diversity within faith, religion, and spirituality. Section 9 presents an overview of the Christian worldview. A discussion regarding spiritual growth is presented in Section 10. In Section 11 questions are posed, asking if this is too much to expect of the counsellor, and if it is a “Bridge too far”? This will conclude the review, and lead to the research question:

Do issues of diversity and culture impact the journey of faith and spirituality of the counsellor who is a Christian?

2.2 Search strategy

In order to answer the research question, a detailed search strategy was developed and revised appropriately. The search for current journals was conducted via the Chester University online library, using English-only text

from established peer reviewed journals. These databases included *Sage Journals*; *PsycNet*; *Scholar Works*; and *Microsoft Academic Research*. Google and Google Scholar were also utilised to locate open access articles. I also reviewed relevant academic books from Chester University library, as well as those searched for and purchased online.

There is a great deal of literature available that concerns multicultural counselling, and so it was necessary to select that which was deemed pertinent to this particular research.

The following search terms were used to locate articles specific to this study: *multicultural counselling*; *diversity and counselling*; *culture and counselling*; *religion, faith, and spirituality and counselling*; *motivations in counselling*; *faith and spirituality*, *and diversity and culture and supervision*; *faith and spirituality, and culture and diversity and counselling training*; and *therapist self-care*. Variations of these terms were used to ensure exhaustive search results.

2.3 Multicultural counselling in a diverse British society

In order to understand how diversity and culture may impact the faith and spirituality of the counsellor who is a Christian, it is important to first understand the context of multicultural counselling in British society.

Travel and migration have resulted in the United Kingdom society becoming increasingly diverse. People from many different countries have come to live in

Britain for a vast number of reasons. They may be asylum seekers, refugees, tourists, job seekers and many more (Palmer & Laungani, 2009). This means that society in the United Kingdom is made up of many different nationalities, ethnicities, cultures, and faiths. In fact, the multiracial and multicultural composition of British Society is not only increasing in diversity but becoming enormously complex (Lago, 2006). Worldwide communication can be made at the click of a button (Palmer & Laungani, 2009). This ease of communication and movement means that millions of people live in this multicultural, multi-ethnic and multinational country (McLeod, 2016).

Therefore, it could be argued that counselling does not take place in a social or ideological vacuum. Culture and diversity permeate every aspect of the work of the counsellor (Kearney, 2018). Issues are raised that affect clients' daily lives in many different ways. These include differences in sex; age; physical abilities; class; gender; socio-economic status; sexual orientation; heritage; and general experiences, as well as religion and/or spirituality (Rock, 1999). Each individual client has their own context of family; social identity; history; language; ecological; biological or environmental factors (Smith, 2004). Cultural ideas have also evolved to fit political climates, and counselling itself will reflect the political perceptions of the time (Kearney, 2018).

Multicultural counselling places an emphasis on human diversity in all its forms. Addressing this in therapy is, therefore, a vast task (Lago, 2011). It involves gaining an understanding of each client's worldview, as well as

recognising one's own. It also means paying attention to previously held ideas that have been established about a population, based on their ethnicity, race, nationality, etc. (Sue & Sue, 2016). All beliefs and values are deeply rooted and an integral part of upbringing, which means that today's multicultural and multiracial world cannot be ignored (Eleftheriadou & Psychol, 2014). Palmer & Laungani (2009), however, suggest that an attitude can be found in the United Kingdom that people migrating to Britain ought to leave their cultural baggage behind and take up what is normal in the host country. This is based on a belief that it is only the culture of the host country that matters, and there is a failure to understand that individuals are made up of a unique combination of racial and psycho-cultural context (Eleftheriadou & Psychol, 2014). Often these views are subconscious, and many people are not even aware that they hold them (Kearney, 2018).

Therapists are faced on a regular basis with many and varied aspects of diversity (Parritt, 2016). Indeed, they are called upon to explore, understand, and have empathy with contexts that are often well outside of their comfort zone (Ross, 2016). Kottler (2010) argues that each client brings something different and profound to therapy, so much so that it may even alter the way the therapist views their own world. However, although I do agree with this argument, I found no research exploring how the views of the therapist may change, and how their own lives may be impacted.

The work of the therapist involves intense involvement with individuals who

may test their patience, flexibility, or resourcefulness in ways they had not believed possible (Kottler, 2010). They are only human themselves, and have their own history of wounds, trauma and difficulties (Wheeler, 2007). Even so, the therapist enters the personal world of the client, seeking to understand how their world is structured and expressed (Cowan, 2017). At the same time, they are vulnerable to the loss of their own self as they experience assaults on their self-esteem and worth (Kottler, 2010). In my view, therapists are also vulnerable to the loss of their own sense of purpose and “calling” as they work with their clients.

Indeed, given the emphasis on multicultural counselling, it can be seen that there are many requirements for those who are counselling in the British society of today. Yet, according to Sue & Sue (2016), the counselling world continues to ignore the multicultural context of this society, and continues to act as if all counselling theories are applicable equally to everyone, regardless of differences in race, culture and ethnicity. Sue believes that an inexperienced counsellor may do great damage to a culturally different client. Also, because counselling is predominantly white and middle class, clients who differ in race, culture and ethnicity may be placed at a disadvantage in this helping relationship.

Kottler (2010), however, suggests that it is an unrealistic expectation, and may even be impossible, for all the demands of multicultural counselling to be met by therapists. Although this is a valid argument it could be extended to include

how therapists themselves may be impacted and changed by the very nature of their work with clients.

2.4 The culturally skilled counsellor

It can be seen from the above that culture is complicated. This means that counsellors have often been tempted to ignore or minimise the attention they give to a client's cultural context (Pederson, 2002). However, people who seek counselling come from different walks of life and often very disparate backgrounds. As populations grow increasingly diverse, it has been argued that the need for multicultural counselling increases (AMCD, 2017). It is, therefore, important for the counsellor to be able to approach the client through the context of their world. The counsellor who is culturally skilled will be aware and sensitive to valuing and respecting differences. They must also be able to recognise the limits of their own competencies and expertise (Sue & Sue, 2016).

No one definition of culture can encompass what it means for any individual at any given time. This is at the core of the multicultural British society (Ade-Serrano, Nkansa-Dwamena, & McIntoshh, 2017). Each person is a product of their own time and history, and has a culture that is diverse and unique. Therefore, it is argued that counselling takes place in a multicultural context at all times (Pederson, 2002). Even the decade into which an individual enters life will influence and affect their perspectives, education, politics, or views on war and success (Ade-Serrano, Nkansa-Dwamena, & McIntoshh, 2017).

Counselling multiculturally can be an extremely complicated task. The culturally competent counsellor faces a difficult job, and there is no easy way to accomplish it (Pederson et al., 2002). It is essential that the multicultural counsellor's own values and bias does not take precedence over that of the client (AMCD, 2017). Martin (2017) argues that a lack of awareness of race, culture and difference is unethical for the counsellor. No matter how skilled, trained or intelligent the counsellor is, if they make wrong or culturally inappropriate assumptions their assessment will be inaccurate. Their understanding will also not be meaningful and their intervention inappropriate (Pederson, 2002).

It is important, therefore, that the therapist develops an understanding of their own strengths, defences, prejudices, past hurts and ways of addressing conflict, in order to deal with the wide range of challenges and conflicts they will be called upon to deal with in the course of their daily practice (Kottler, 2010). A lack of cultural self-awareness and acknowledgement of their own cultural beliefs, attitudes and values, biases or faulty assumptions is a major barrier to effective multicultural counselling (Buller, 2016).

All aspects of human life are involved in culture, and all human beings have a culture, regardless of their ethnic and racial background. Culture informs identity, attachment, and engagement styles, and is therefore continually changing (McIntosh, 2017). Seeley (2000) contends that becoming a multicultural counsellor means more than gaining knowledge of other cultures.

It means appropriately understanding the complex processes through which people become members of communities and societies, and construct their worldviews, basic attitudes, values, norms and more. Gaining cultural knowledge is a continuous and crucial process.

All of the above factors are important, but it may be difficult for them to be directly taught (Pederson, 2002). Even so, in order to work ethically and holistically with progressively diverse clients, it is vital for the culturally skilled counsellor to understand how this affects the process of counselling (Sue & Sue, 2016). It is important that counsellors are aware of their own cultural identities, and also able to hear the voices of clients who are culturally different (Pederson, 2002). Counsellors who are unaware of their own cultural and ethnic heritage run the risk of imposing values on clients made from their own assumptions (Vac, DeVaney & Brendel, 2003).

However, while this is an important argument, there is little evidence to suggest that therapists are encouraged to explore their own cultural and ethnic heritage, in order to learn that this is an important part of their work. I believe training in this area would be a valuable addition to the work of the therapist.

2.5 Worldview

Counsellors are required to consider the different worldviews that are brought to the counselling encounter, by both themselves and their client (Sue 1996). This is agreed by Baldwin (2014). His opinion is that differing worldviews are a

vital aspect of multicultural counselling that need to be taken into account by the therapist.

Worldview can be regarded as a person's relationship with the world, that guides and leads them to their own way of finding situations, solutions and decision making (Baldwin, 2014). Some individuals have a well-defined worldview, which they have carefully chosen, after examining various options. Others may have a mix of personal and culturally popular options that satisfy them, and give direction to their lives (Phillips et al., 2008).

Worldview deals with specific beliefs that everyone has, as an individual, as a society, or as a culture, and is related to social identity. It includes individual, group and universal dimensions that are not only cultural, but affected by upbringing and individual life experiences (AMCD, 2017). Individuals take their worldviews as given realities and are the maps they use for living (Hiebert, 2008). Everyone is influenced by their worldview to varying degrees, and it is an important part of communication, encompassing the conceptions of the individual (Baldwin, 2014). It can be seen as an explanation and interpretation of the world, and how this is applied to one's view of life (Phillips et al., 2008).

It can therefore be argued that it is important for counsellors to be aware of worldviews. Ignorance of this may cause bias in a counselling session. The worldview of the counsellor may unconsciously be imposed on the client, without either of them even being aware of it (Goldberg, 2009). Sue & Sue

(2016) argue that counsellors who gain knowledge of their own and their clients' worldviews, will more accurately understand diverse clients' experiences, issues, goals, and their way of being during the counselling process. Clients also need to be helped to understand more about their own personal worldviews (Goldberg, 2009).

Worldviews, however, are confrontational by nature, because they embrace ultimate existential questions about the meaning of life (Phillips et al., 2008). Therapists are taught that they must be able to de-centre themselves away from their preferred worldview, in order to engage with a worldview that is not familiar to them, and which they may even dislike (McLeod, 2018). Kearney (2018) believes that therapists are socially conditioned in their training to do this, without even realising it.

Although this is a valid argument, further research and reflective practice is needed in this area. It is important that therapists become more aware of their own underlying worldviews and the importance of this in the therapy room. Indeed, in my view, it is essential that therapists understand how they may be affected or influenced by the impact of alternative and very different worldviews.

2.6. Values

As well as a worldview, everyone has a set of beliefs and values which may be held knowingly or, more often, unknowingly (Kearney, 2018). Core values are

the fundamental beliefs of a person or organisation. They inform a person's approach to life and are guiding principles that dictate behaviour. They may also help individuals to understand the difference between right and wrong (Lucas, 2016).

It is essential for the counsellor to recognise that they do not enter the counselling process value free or value neutral (Vacc, DeVaney & Brendel, 2003). Sue (1998) stresses the importance of the counsellor not imposing their own values on their culturally different clients out of ignorance. It is vital that they explore the value system that is inherent in their theory of helping, and also to investigate the values that underlie the strategies and techniques used in counselling. Without this, counsellors run the risk of coercing clients to make decisions or behave in ways that are consistent with their own values. Also, they may make judgements about clients, and view them as right or wrong, moral or immoral, instead of just different (Vacc, DeVaney & Brendel, 2003).

Core values may not always be positive, however. They can stop people living the kind of lives they want to live, and bring problems when values are less than positive (Hayes, 2005). Negative core values can develop when people live in fear or insecurity and are forced to focus on survival in difficult circumstances. Some people may be driven by self-interest or greed, which are also core values, if they dictate the way that people live their lives (Lucas, 2016).

People do not necessarily choose their own core values. Often these are instilled in them in the way they are raised by their parents, their community, or even the country they live in (Harris, 2011). Values give the individual a choice about engaging in certain patterns of behaviour (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2016). They define what is deep in the heart, and what is worth living for (Harris, 2009). Clarity about one's values can provide important direction and an increased sense of meaning in life (Lucas, 2016). It is important, therefore, that therapists take into account their client's values, and how these may bring conflict into situations. Respect for the values and beliefs of the client is a high priority for counsellors. Imposing their own values can be seen as being judgemental and cause the client to withdraw from therapy (Geldard & Geldard, 2005).

Differences between client and therapist in the area of values may lead to misunderstanding and conflict of opinion. Kottler (2010) argues that therapists are hardly ever neutral, and in the midst of their posture of positive regard and neutrality, other thoughts may exist. This means that they are required to suspend their own value system in order to allow the client to be able to share their feelings.

As a therapist I agree with Kottler's position and have indeed been taught to suspend my own worldview and values in the therapy room. However, as a researcher my concern is the impact this may have on the therapist

themselves, as they continually suspend their own value system. I believe that much more research is needed in this area.

2.7. Challenges of multicultural counselling

Paradigms in working with diversity and culture are continually changing and evolving (MacWilliam et al., 2017). Every client brings about a different and diverse encounter. Indeed, anyone, from any different world, could walk into the therapy room, at any time (Lago, 2011). Therefore, counsellors are called upon to understand the unique experience of each of their clients (Sue & Sue, 2016). However, Leach et al. (2010) point out that it is impossible to be knowledgeable about all other cultures, when the possible combinations of cultures and cultural influences are considered. They argue that therapists cannot completely know all other cultures, and only developing respect, openness and empathy toward other cultures can reasonably be obtained. Reeves (2018) argues that it would be wrong to assume that the therapist is in the dominant position regarding diversity, and the client in a more passive position in the therapy room. In fact, the client may have much stronger feelings about their assumptions than the therapist who has worked through many of the issues around diversity for themselves.

It can be seen that it is extremely likely that most therapists will come into contact with clients of a different race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, religious belief, political belief or other varying ideologies, worldviews and values. It is important, therefore, for the therapist to develop an awareness and

thoughtfulness to the client's culture within the relationship (Reeves, 2018).

Counselling and psychotherapy is itself set within a historically and culturally narrow structure that is at odds with an increasingly multicultural society (Palmer & Laungani, 2009). Many of the humanistic, cognitive behavioural and psychodynamic models have evolved from a deeply embedded monoculture framework. This means that the dominant groups of society have been served, while those of other cultures have been ignored (McLeod, 2018). Counselling theories are still often based on a set of assumptions that are predominantly male, Western, white and middle class (Kearney, 2018). Similarly, the majority of counsellors are white, female and middle class, which means that clients of other ethnicities have very little choice in finding a therapist of their own culture or ethnicity (Lapworth, Sills & Fish, 2001).

The uniqueness of each individual needs to be explored and recognised in a safe and nurturing environment. It is important for therapists, therefore, to have an understanding of the ways that culture, as well as experiences of distress or dysfunction, affect each person (Falender & Shafranske, 2014). Respect for each other's differences is an important aspect of therapy, so that challenges of complex and controversial issues can be worked through (Haldeman, 2002). Kottler (2010), however, argues that it has become so important to be politically correct, as far as diversity is concerned, that therapists can fail to appreciate the real depth and influence of the challenges faced on many different levels.

It is vital that therapists educate themselves about clients who come from backgrounds that are beyond their own experience or comfort level (Kottler, 2010). Lago (2011) contends that it is necessary for counsellors to develop their capacity to understand the many kinds of difference they encounter. Kottler argues, however, that counsellors may build up unrealistic expectations and unreasonable goals for themselves, and feel troubled when these do not happen (Kottler, 2010).

It can be seen that there are many challenges in multicultural counselling. Some of these are explored briefly in the following sections.

2.7.1. Family life

Diversity within families is a vital issue that must be taken into account by the therapist. It must, however, also be realised that this may cause conflict in worldview or values for the therapist themselves (Richardson, 2010). For example, the image of the nuclear family governs the expectations and feelings of many therapists, and they may still hold a traditional view of family life. However, statistics reveal that the nuclear family is now in decline (Dallos & Draper, 2010). In current Western culture, many couples choose cohabitation rather than marriage, and there is an increase in the numbers of single parent families. At the same time, the numbers of gay and lesbian families are also increasing (Richardson, 2010).

2.7.2. Class

Class plays an important part in the way that families are structured. Power imbalances in the relationship between client and counsellor may be reinforced by differences in language, values and beliefs that are due to class (Kearney, 2016). Ballinger & Wright (2007) argue that class plays an important and distinctive role in understanding the differences between people. However, this seems to have very little emphasis in counselling training, and therefore counsellors may be unprepared to take issues of class into account (Kearney, 2018). This causes biases, prejudices, blind spots and over-reactions to occur, because the therapist is ignorant about the cultural context for the client's behaviour (Kottler, 2010).

2.7.3. Financial status

There are many conflicts for the therapist in the area of financial status. Potential clients from working class backgrounds may be unable, or reluctant, to access counselling due to financial constraints. It may be difficult for the therapist to conceptualise how those from oppressed and marginalised groups actually feel, think or view their world (Parritt, 2016). Clients from ethnic minority and low-income backgrounds, who have little or no prior understanding of counselling, may be distrustful of the process (Buller, 2016). Low cost or free counselling may be available for some who belong to a particular minority, or vulnerable and at-risk group. In this case, issues such as addiction, domestic violence or sexual abuse, may be targeted, and the individual person may become lost as problem management is focused on, rather than the individual (Parritt, 2016). Fewer sessions may be available to

the client, and the therapist has to work with the knowledge that more are needed. Differences are downgraded or ignored, as cost-effective treatment is preferred, and symptom relief and outcome measures are the focus, which means that expectations may also be lowered (Parritt, 2016).

2.7.4. Disability

People with disabilities have many problems, some that are predictable and others that are associated with their disability (Vacc, DeVaney & Brendel, 2003). Disability is probably the largest, most diverse, marginalised and oppressed group in the world (Parritt, 2016). Unlike other groups, an individual may be born with a disability, but anyone, at any time, may also become a disabled person, without any choice in the matter. Early retirement due to ill health, for example, may bring additional problems (Casas, 2017). It is, therefore, essential for the therapist to understand the social and personal impact of disability.

There is a common misconception that the disability is the primary and presenting problem. However, this may not be the defining issue, and there may be many other issues that accompany the disability that are a greater obstacle to the client's well-being. There is, for example, a long history of people with disabilities being shunned, segregated, discriminated against, publicly ridiculed and even imprisoned (Vacc, DeVaney & Brendel, 2003).

2.7.5. Mental health

Mental health is a serious public health problem that is often presented in the therapy room (Biddle & Asare, 2011). Competent multicultural work in all areas of mental health is therefore a critical aspect for therapists (Falender and Shafranske, 2014). Issues involving mental health problems are on the rise in all areas and age groups of society. However, Mander (2007) argues that therapists can be unprepared for the difficulties that are raised by clients who are suicidal or in deep despair. There is, therefore, a need for the therapist to develop their own capacity to take care of themselves spiritually, mentally and emotionally (Siegel, 2010). Unless the therapist pays attention to self-care and self-knowledge and is then able to be resilient enough to pace themselves, there is a danger of them becoming burnt out, and suffering from exhaustion (Kottler, 2010).

Individuals who suffer from mental illness are often stigmatised, as it can be viewed by fear and is often seen as shameful and embarrassing (Plant & Stephenson, 2011). It is important that therapists have an awareness of how the client is affected and influenced by their culture, as they may be unaware of the impact of their actions on other people's mental states (NHS Choices, 2014).

2.7.6. Racism

Racism is a contentious issue that impacts on all areas of the life-span. Race and culture interact with other components of identity, settings and contexts (Eleftheriadou & Psychol, 2014). McKenzie-Mavinga (2018) contends that

therapists may be unwilling to raise the issue of race in a session, due to a fear of the personal and social impact it will raise. It is, therefore, not given the attention it deserves in therapy. Therapists may fear being thought of as racist themselves, or there may be powerful, hidden emotions that need to be considered. Lago (2011) believes that such differences need to be valued, and the person who is different to them respected, in whatever way that may be. It is vital that the discrimination the client has already suffered, is not added to.

2.7.7. Sexuality

Sexuality is an integral part of being human. Love, affection, and sexual intimacy contribute to healthy relationships as well as individual well-being. Indeed, sexuality may be regarded as a vital aspect of a person's identity. However, sexuality is also diverse and personal (Barker, 2018).

Sexuality differs from biological sex, which refers to how a person's anatomy, physiology, hormones, and genetics are classified at birth (male, female, or intersex). Sexuality is also different to gender identity, which is the concept of self as male or female or both or neither. This is distinct from sexual orientation which is the individual's sexual attraction to a particular sex or gender (Reeves, 2018).

However, many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals are reported to be poorly treated by professionals who believe that sexual orientation and/or gender identity are something that can be cured. Same-sex

relationships, especially between men, was considered deviant, sinful, and even criminal for centuries. In the late 19th century psychiatrists and doctors began to label same-sex desire in medical terms and looked for ways to reverse it (Blakemore, 2019). Homosexuality was classified as a mental health disorder and included in the first edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders (DSM) in 1952. Electroconvulsive therapy and other extreme techniques were inflicted upon some LGBT people, while others were treated with shocks administered through electrodes implanted directly into the brain. Although LGBT people protested against these forms of treatment, the concept that homosexuality was a disease was accepted by the majority of the medical establishment. However, in the 1960s and 1970s a vocal gay rights movement began to demand equality. In 1973, homosexuality was removed from the DSM and medical professionals began to distance themselves from the techniques they had once used (Blakemore, 2019). This removal contributed to a change of attitude in some countries towards homosexuality, and gradually the view began to be accepted that homosexuality is a normal variant of sexual expression (Drescher et al., 2016). Conversion therapy is an umbrella term that describes a wide range of interventions used in the belief that a person's sexual orientation or gender identity can and should be changed. This takes place in many countries in all regions of the world. Those who practice conversion therapy include private and public health-care providers, some faith-based organisations, and traditional healers. The practices are rooted in the belief that LGBT persons are inferior, and their orientation or identity must be remedied to heterosexual

and from transgender or gender diverse to cisgender. The aim of such practices is to change people from gay, lesbian or bisexual (HRC, 2020).

Conversion therapy may also be known as “cure” therapy or reparative therapy and refers to any form of treatment or psychotherapy which aims to change a person’s sexual orientation or to suppress a person’s gender identity. Evidence suggests that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people continue to experience these harmful and unethical therapies with a view to being “cured” (Stonewall, 2017).

Conversion therapy is especially harmful when patients blame themselves for failure to change. This may lead to depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. Individuals may be encouraged to marry someone of the opposite sex during a course of conversion therapy, and therefore they may have a spouse and children by the time they accept that change has not taken place. Their families may have become dysfunctional, leading to heartache and even more damage occurring. In some cases where religious beliefs discourage divorce, couples attempt to stay together with disastrous results (Drescher et al., 2016).

Recently in the UK, all NHS and major counselling and psychotherapy bodies have concluded that conversion therapy is dangerous, and have condemned it by signing a “Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK” (MOU). This is a joint document signed by 20 health, counselling and psychotherapy organisations which aims to end the practice of conversion therapy in the UK. It was released in 2015 and focused on sexual orientation.

The updated version 2 published in 2017 (MOU2) makes it clear that conversion therapy is unethical and potentially harmful, and not supported by evidence. This version also includes gender identity and sexual orientation (BACP, 2021).

The MOU2 intends to ensure that the public are well informed about the risks of conversion therapy. Also, that healthcare professionals and psychological therapists are aware of the ethical issues relating to conversion therapy. It is important that new and existing therapists are appropriately trained and evidence into conversion therapy is kept under regular review. It emphasises that professionals from across health, care and psychological professions work together to achieve all of these goals (BACP, 2018).

There is a greater likelihood of poor mental health amongst young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, as well as a higher risk of suicide. Individuals who have been oppressed due to their sexuality often have a reduced sense of worth (AMCD, 2017). Despite this, there is little acknowledgement that sexual orientation and gender identity may be associated with risk factors. Although there have been changes in attitudes, and it seems that people have become more liberal and accepting of homosexuality, same-sex desire and non-binary gender identities are still stigmatised. A LGBT person is still likely to encounter hostility, homophobia, transphobia and social exclusion (McDermott, 2013).

Smith (2019) believes that for those who grew up gay and Christian, or in another faith culture where there may be homophobic views, there will be experiences of pain and fear from past abuse. Smith asks what role counselling plays in helping clients to integrate their faith with their spiritual and sexual identity. It is Smith's experience of his Christian faith background, that although there is much talk of unconditional love, the reality is that love is conditional and based on interpretations of specific Bible verses. This brings overwhelming feelings of shame, judgement and condemnation.

Todd (2021) contends that the therapeutic community, and society in general, do not fully understand the problems or complexities that exist in this area. There is a lack of understanding of what it means to be gay, and a presumption that it would be homophobic to consider that there might be issues that affect the gay community disproportionately. Todd is of the opinion that there is much work to be done so that the LGBT community feel comfortable enough to attend therapy. LGBT youth are reluctant to seek help due to the shame they feel. They are more likely to try coping alone and dealing with the emotional distress by minimising its importance (McDermott, 2013).

Smith (2019) argues that person-centred therapy demands that the core conditions are offered not as a professional technique, but as a deeply lived embodiment. He argues the importance of counsellors accepting that which the client cannot accept about themselves. This includes whatever they

express about their spirituality and sexuality. Hales (2014) contends that empathy is the bedrock of therapy and without this, clients will not feel listened to, respected and acknowledged in the counselling process. Clients may need space in therapy to explore religious issues and redefine their understanding of religious texts. There is a responsibility for all therapists to increase their cultural competence regarding sexuality and gender, and to consider whether their clients are allowed the space to work through the issues that are really important to them (Bow, 2020).

The MOU2 does not intend to stop therapists working with sexuality and gender questioning clients, but it does require them to have adequate knowledge and understanding of relevant issues. Some adults may still seek out conversion therapy in the belief that they can bring their personal lives into alignment with their religious beliefs. Children may also be taken for conversion therapy by parents who believe it is in their best interests. A person who seeks therapy for feeling conflicted about their sexual orientation is not wrong to do so. However, an ethical therapist will work collaboratively with their clients and not from any personal bias or ulterior motive. Their aim should be to grow and heal their clients from difficult life experiences and not attempt to “convert” or “repair” what others see as flawed or broken (Good Therapy, 2016).

Counselling and psychotherapy can help individuals to clarify their identity and sense of self thus allowing them to make healthy choices. It is important,

therefore, that therapists have adequate knowledge and understanding of gender and sexual diversity. It is also vital that they have no agenda that favours any gender identity or sexual orientation over another (UKCP, 2022).

Working with sexuality is challenging. Many clients are still uncomfortable talking about sexual problems in therapy. In fact, many therapeutic practitioners reflect that sexual issues do not come up in sessions, and clients are reluctant to talk about them (Jackson, 2016). There are conflicting opinions within the LGBT community about what healthy relationships and boundaries look like. It is therefore difficult for therapists to understand the complexities and options (Todd, 2021). Some practitioners may be reluctant and uncomfortable to raise issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. A better understanding is needed of what is allowed, having been told what is not allowed. Much more training for therapists is therefore necessary in these areas so that understanding is gained, and therapists become better informed and more competent to deal with these issues (Jackson, 2016).

2.7.8. Other challenges

There are many other challenging issues that there is no room to develop in this literature review but briefly they include:

Refugee families – refugee families often present with a wide array of problems. This often depends on the referral process. For example, some may

be referred by professionals, without any desire for counselling themselves. Some may come with expectations beyond the scope of counselling, hoping for a solution to problems that are not of a therapeutic nature (Sveaass & Reichelt, 2001).

Language - the world is moving and changing at a fast pace, which means that new challenges and questions are constantly arising. In London alone, in 2006, more than three hundred languages were spoken by the people living there. Although this is unique to London, the rest of Britain is also quickly changing (Wood, Landry, Bloomfield, 2006).

Grief and loss - cultural identities can impact the way we view grief and loss. This includes how death is perceived, for example, which will also shape the way we view experiences of life (MacWilliam et al., 2017). There will be differences in how funerals are carried out. For some there they may be a loud, joyful celebration, and for others there will be a quiet, solemn event.

2.8. Faith, religion and spirituality

Faith, religion, and/or spirituality are important aspects of diversity that will be important to most clients who come to therapy. In fact, Barnett & Johnson (2011) suggest that many clients come to therapy seeking answers to spiritual concerns.

There is a difference, however, between faith, religion and spirituality.

Individuals may be spiritual and not religious or vice versa. They may profess to have no faith but still be deeply spiritual (Callen, 2001). Many human beings adhere to some form of religion, and there are many different faith traditions. In fact, each major religion has its own form of spirituality (Jewell, 2004).

It is recognised that an active interest in religion and/or spirituality contributes to well-being and health (Jewell, 2004). There is evidence and awareness of the importance of spirituality to wellness in almost every domain of life (Moberg, 2012). However, there are very few counsellor training programmes that recognise this and integrate this into their core training (Christopher & Maris, 2010). This means that counsellors may be wary of approaching the subject in therapy, and so do not address this issue at all. Those that do will be left to draw on their own understanding and beliefs (Reeves, 2018).

The therapeutic relationship requires all aspects of the client to be engaged with. Faith, religion and spirituality are important aspects of the life of the client encountered in therapy (Pargament, 2011). If these are not addressed, therefore, a vital element that is important to the client may well be missed (Milton, 2016). However, there is an argument that whether the spiritual side of the work is deliberately accessed in a therapeutic session or not, there is still potential for therapists to affect individuals on a far deeper spiritual level than could be imagined (Kottler, 2010). It is also a difficult and contentious issue because spirituality is a word that can be used in various ways, and by people in different religions (Collins, 1998).

It is recognised that counsellors are legally and ethically required to respect faith and religious traditions in their therapeutic practice, and must not impose their own view (Plante, 2007). It is also essential that boundaries are adhered to, and this includes spiritual boundaries (Barnett & Johnson, 2011). The therapist needs to be grounded enough in their own spiritual journey that they can meet the client where they are, and not impose any unwanted change on them (Cashwell & Young, 2011). It is important, therefore, that counsellors increase their competency in diversity issues regarding faith and spirituality, and also have a strong awareness of their own spiritual value systems (Nickles, 2011).

Although in the past there has been some caution around referring to spirituality in the counselling room, both client and counsellor do not leave their religion, faith or spirituality outside of the therapy room when they enter it (West, 2000). Each person has spiritual values whether they believe in a particular religion, follow a certain faith, or practise none of these. Spirituality is part of an individual's approach to life and is their way of thinking, being, doing, believing, behaving and engaging with life (Butman & Kruse, 2007). As may happen in therapy, if spirituality is separated as though it were irrelevant, then this dimension of the client's life is also discarded (Pargament, 2011). It does seem, however, that spirituality has been neglected, particularly with regard to mental health issues, which has resulted in clients' needs not being met (Richards & Bergin, 2005).

There has been an increase over the past 40 or 50 years in spiritual practices such as yoga, meditation and mindfulness (West, 2010). There has also recently been an increased awareness and willingness to explore spiritual and religious matters in the counselling room (Cashwell & Young, 2011). There has also been an increased openness to spirituality that can involve talking about beliefs around death and dying, or forgiveness. Therefore, it deserves to be given an important focus within a holistic framework (Pargament, 2011).

Butman & Kruse (2007), however, argue that spirituality in general is best avoided altogether in the counselling room. This is an interesting argument that may seem to be a resolution to issues regarding faith and spirituality. However, it would mean that this important area of the client's life is likely to be ignored, and their questions and issues remain unanswered and not dealt with. In view of the importance of faith and spirituality, as already discussed, I believe this area is too important not to be raised in therapy. Unless issues are uncovered and discussed they will remain in the background of the client's personal life, which may cause long-term harm.

2.9. Christian worldview and counselling

A Christian has a perspective that views everything through the lens of scripture, rather than allowing culture or experience to determine worldview (Phillips et al., 2008). Even so, individual Christians who know a great deal about the Christian tradition that relates to their own denominational perspective, may know very little about other Christian traditions (Plante,

2007). Some Christians, for example, believe that it is necessary to go to church each week. Others may have given up going to church because of their disillusionment with church or being hurt by the church. They still, however, consider themselves to be Christians. For some Christians, their experiences of church or religious practice may have led to hurt and discrimination, and so they may not wish to bring spirituality into the counselling session and may see it as an unwanted intrusion (Reeves, 2018). However, Jenkins (2010) contends that a client's spirituality should be addressed in assessment so that the client is aware that they can talk about spirituality, faith and beliefs.

There are many religious beliefs, theology and traditions with which people may identify in the belief that they are Christian, but which in fact have been passed on from tradition or customs. Some people, for example, may call themselves Christians because they were born into a "Christian country". Indeed, they may attend church on special occasions, such as Easter or Christmas, but have no real understanding of the fundamental beliefs of Christianity. The authenticity of someone else's Christianity may be judged by an individual's own beliefs and values (Plante, 2007).

A Christian counsellor will work from a biblical foundation, believing that the Bible has all of the solutions to a person's problems (Collins, 1998). They believe that the answers to a client's issues and their brokenness will be found in God's word, and that the Bible is the only textbook needed. Collins contends that the Christian counsellor will be dependent on the Holy Spirit, prayer and

the use of scripture as a reference guide, which makes this means of counselling very different from others. Their morality and ethics are defined by scripture rather than being led by society, the individual or the experience of the moment. They may also expect their clients to bring problems concerning prayer, doubt, doctrine, spiritual growth, or guilt over their sinful behaviour. This type of counselling is also known as nouthetic counselling, and is often used as a form of Pastoral Counselling (Adams, 1979). Faith Community Counselling (FCC) (2020) argue that this is not a neutral form of counselling.

Alternatively, this is opposed to a counsellor who is also a Christian. Although their core beliefs are Christian, the counsellor who is a Christian will seek to help their client towards constructive change and growth that is right for them, irrespective of their own beliefs. Most counsellors who are Christians will have beliefs about the attributes of God, the authority of scripture, human nature, the reality of sin, and hope for the future (Collins, 1998). However, they will use psychological insights, and techniques they have developed to help their clients, and not bring their own beliefs into the counselling room. This is done through a caring relationship and within agreed boundaries according to the Association of Christian Counsellors (ACC) (2014).

However, despite this, some counsellors who are Christian may hold very strong views on a number of issues. It is therefore important that personal and professional boundaries are monitored by the therapist at all times (Plante, 2007). There may be consequences if this is not done. For example, if a

counsellor refuses to counsel a homosexual or transgender client because of their own personal belief, there could be serious repercussions (Hermann & Herlihy, 2006). Counsellors should at all times act professionally and in a way that prevents harm to the client (Plante, 2007).

West (2004) believes that the very practice of being a therapist is in itself a spiritual experience. Many counsellors who are Christian believe that their faith is part of the therapeutic process, even if others do not recognise it (Harborne, 2012). According to Butman & Jones (1991) therapy is a healing encounter, and in a unique way Christ is present when the sick or hurting are being ministered to. Christian therapists often believe, therefore, that healing will flow through the quality of the relationship they have with the client, whether the client is a Christian or not.

It is important for spirituality to be explored in a session so that an understanding of the client's faith is gained (Aten & Hernandez, 2004). It is, therefore, extremely important that the client's beliefs are clarified (Nickles, 2011). Even among those of the same faith, there is a great deal of difference of opinion, and so assumptions should not be made about the beliefs held by an individual. West & Biddington (2009), however, believe that many counsellors are not well enough equipped to deal with religious and spiritual issues. It is not easy to help people with their spiritual struggles, and counsellors who are Christian may also find this difficult, especially if they are struggling with similar difficulties themselves (Collins, 1998).

There are particular tensions and dilemmas faced by Christian practitioners. For example, when with a Christian client there may be an expectation on either side, that there will be prayer in the counselling room. However, the integration of prayer in counselling could bring about various problems (Gubi, 2007). It may, for example, change the way that the counsellor is perceived by the client. It may also be used negatively as a power dynamic where one person is seen to be more in touch with God than another. A counsellor may use prayer to impose faith or scripture on a client or to enhance their own prayer. More positively though it can be used to bring insight and revelation.

Prayer can be used as both a defence and for avoidance. The counsellor may feel under a cultural pressure to pray, but this may not be what the client wants (Gubi & Jacobs, 2009). Any use of prayer, according to Gubi (2001), should have regard for the client's welfare and spiritual development. The use of prayer should also be supported by good supervision. Appropriate action can then be discussed and attention drawn to any details that the counsellor may not be consciously aware of (Wheeler & King, 2001). If prayer is used it is important that a contract is in place for this, and informed consent gained. Time must be managed carefully and boundaries agreed and honoured. This is confirmed by Jenkins (2010), who is of the opinion that there should be adequate boundaries around issues concerning spiritual interventions such as prayer, rituals and guided meditation.

Another dilemma faced when counselling in a Christian context is the differences and overlaps between pastoral care, counselling, spiritual direction/accompaniment, and discipleship. Not only are there differences between each of these, but there is also a distinction between various types of pastoral care (Collins, 1998). It may refer in a general way to the church's overall ministries of healing, guiding, sustaining, and reconciling people to God and each other. There may be a more specialised form of pastoral counselling, that seeks to help individuals, families or groups, as they face crises or the pressures of life. There may also be a form of pastoral psychotherapy where fundamental changes to behaviour are sought, by removing blocks from the past that inhibit spiritual growth.

There may be transference and counter transference issues if the client regards the therapist as an authority figure on spiritual matters. There may be an overlap, in some cases, if the counsellor gives advice which could be looked on as spiritual direction. However, according to Pickering (2008), there are distinct differences between counselling and spiritual direction. For example, the aim of spiritual direction is to help the client discern the movement of God in their lives, while the aim of counselling may be to help the client to develop strategies and become better able to function. Spiritual direction is a relationship where an individual is accompanied by a guide or companion who helps them to focus on their relationship with God, and to live their lives as a disciple of Jesus, according to Leach & Paterson (2015).

2.10. Spiritual growth and development

As has previously been stated, it can be argued that every person is a spiritual being whether they recognise it or not, or whether they believe in a divine power or not. This is confirmed by Jewell (2004), who believes that spirituality relates to the person's inner being. Hay & Hunt (2000) contend that spiritual awareness is a necessary part of our humanity, which is biologically built into us, whether we have a religious belief or not. Rohr (2016) however, has found that many formally religious people do not believe in the reality of spirit in any active or effective way.

Spirituality represents a distinctive resource for living and must be understood from a much broader perspective than religious practices (Jewell, 2004). Rohr (2016, p.11) believes that authentic spirituality is "a matter of emptying the mind and filling the heart at the same time". According to West (2000) spirituality lies at the core of each person's being and is an important aspect of people's lives. It has a significant impact on personal health and well-being and gives meaning and purpose in life, even giving strength to go on living (Jewell, 2004).

Everyone has mental and emotional parts of them that cannot be fulfilled in isolation. Personal values, relationships, the natural world, music, art amongst other things are spiritual aspects important to most people (Jewell, 2004). Although some counsellors or mental health professionals are often uncomfortable with questions around spirituality and religion, there are often

times in therapy that are experienced as “special moments”, where it seems that something different is taking place, something beyond the “normal”. This is described by Pargament (2011, p.11) as a “meeting of souls taking place”.

Rohr (2012) believes that this part of our spiritual being, which he calls the soul, is given to each of us by God, at the moment of our birth. It is the individual’s “unique blueprint, installed by the manufacturer within the product, at the beginning” (p.ix). The work of each person, contends Rohr, is to discover their own deepest identity, their “True Self”. Much of the work of spirituality, he states, is to awaken and grow this part of our lives. Not everyone, however, is able to make this crucial discovery. Much depends, he believes, on the amount of time one is given, and the freedom allowed to make choices within this time. Some people may have spiritual struggles even though they have been a Christian for many years. This may be because they have had no interest in pursuing spiritual maturity and growth, according to Collins (1998).

2.11. Stages of faith

Psychologist, James Fowler, in his work *Stages of Faith* in 1981 (Fig. 1) suggests that there are six stages of faith that people go through as their faith develops and matures. Although this work dates back to the early 1980s, it is an important part of discussion regarding spiritual development. Fowler explains the concept of faith and differentiates it from religion. His theory contributed greatly to research and influenced the work of other theorists (Andrade, 2014).

Figure 1. Fowler's Stages of Faith

1. Intuitive–Projective: (ages 3-7) – this first stage comes with the development of language and imagination. Fantasy and reality often get mixed together. Ideas about God come from parents and/or society.
2. Mythical-Literal – (school-age children) – children respond to religious stories, myths, rituals in a literal way, rather than symbolic.
3. Synthetic-Conventional – (teenagers) – most people move on to this stage as teenagers. Their life has grown to include several different social circles and an all-encompassing belief system is often adopted. Fowler suggested that most people do not go any further than this level.
4. Individual–Reflective – a shift from believing because others do and instead developing own beliefs and taking responsibility for own beliefs. This can be a deep time of anxiety and soul searching where the individual begins to critically examine their beliefs and may become disillusioned with their former faith.
5. Conjunctive – few people reach this stage. A time of change – individuals have their own views but move from being preoccupied with themselves and are much more open and tolerant of other points of religious and cultural points of view. Individuals begin to accept the paradoxes in life. They begin to see life as a mystery and often return to sacred stories and symbols but without being stuck in a theological box.
6. Universalising – Few people reach this stage. Those who do are likely to be older adults who look for universal values such as unconditional love and justice.

(Osmer & Bridgers, 2019)

Fowler's basic theory can be applied not only to those in traditional faiths, but also to those who follow alternative spiritualities or secular worldviews. Fowler believed that if individuals learned warmth, safety, security and love from their early upbringing and development, they would have a sense of trust and safety about the universe and the divine in later life. Conversely, if they had a negative experience at this time, which was involved with abuse and neglect, they would in later life develop a distrust of the universe and the divine (Osmer & Bridgers, 2019).

Following on from this early development, Fowler offered six stages of faith. At Stage Three, Fowler believed, people rely on some sort of institution, such as a church or temple, to give them stability. They become attached to forms of religion, getting very upset when these are called into question, and don't recognise that they are "inside" a belief system. This is a stage in which many people remain and is often expressed in dualistic understandings and black and white thinking (Jamieson, 2002). Individuals do not usually move out of Stage Three until they begin to seriously question and take responsibility for their own spiritual beliefs. They then move on to begin questioning their former faith. This can be looked on by some as if they have become backsliders, where, according to Fowler, they have actually moved forward in their spirituality. This transition between stages, however, is not easy, and may often be experienced as radical upheavals and major crises (Jamieson, 2002).

Spiritual growth, however, does not happen sequentially or in a neat order,

even though some models of spiritual growth, such as those of Fowler, use the term “stages” (Pickering, 2008). A person in one stage does not make someone better than a person in another stage, contends Pickering. It is a way, instead, of understanding a journey of a combination of life stages and life events, questions and answers, invitations, and resistances. However, those counsellors who are able to understand and make some sense of their own spiritual journey may be able to understand something of the spiritual journey of another individual.

In her experience, Pauline Andrew (2011) believes that most counsellors are in Stage Four of their faith, as they have been affected by the lives of people they are trying to help, and the cumulative effect of hearing sad stories takes its toll. Stage Four believers can often feel and sound critical, as they learn to think for themselves, and not just accept what they are taught. This can also lead to a place of cynicism and bitterness (Andrew, 2011), and sometimes to an apparent complete loss of faith. However, Andrew contends, it can alternatively lead to a broader frame of reference for what is believed, and a new stage of faith.

Those in Stage Five have the sense that the truth is much bigger than either/or thinking (Andrew, 2011). They are able to hold the tension of opposites, and to accept that both can be true. According to Fowler, few people reach this stage. Perceptions have changed and individuals are no longer preoccupied with themselves. They are much more open and tolerant of other points of religious

and cultural points of view, and are able to accept the paradoxes in life. They see life as a mystery and often return to sacred stories and symbols but without being stuck in a theological box.

2.12. A life of two halves

Rohr (2012) understands life to be made up of two halves, or two major tasks. The first of these is to build a strong “container” or identity. This first task can be taken to mean the very purpose of life, which does not necessarily mean we always do it well. It involves establishing an identity, a home, relationships, friends, community, security, and building a platform for our lives. Much of culture is concerned with the first half of life and surviving successfully. Institutions and expectations, including those of churches, are almost entirely made to encourage and support, reward, and validate the tasks of the first half of life.

The second half of life, according to Rohr, is to find the contents that the container was meant to hold. This second task, Rohr believes, is more encountered than sort after. He contends that no one goes into spiritual maturity completely of their own accord. Life is made up of failings and fallings that neither culture nor church has understood. Most people are never told that there is a possibility of a further journey towards spiritual maturity. This means that most people and institutions remain in the preoccupation of the first half of life. There are some young people, especially those who have learned from early suffering, who are already there, while there are some older people who

are still quite childish in their understanding.

Characteristics of being in the second half of life, according to Rohr, are a return to simplicity, brightness, and clarity. The boundaries of the first half of life container or identity have been enlarged by the constant addition of new relationships, and experiences. Instead of looking for differences, things that are shared in common are searched for. There is no need to prove that “I” or “my group” are the best or superior, there is instead a desire to give back to the world, and to let go of preconceptions and preoccupations. There are no longer strong opinions, or a need to change other people to suit ourselves.

In this stage of life, a capacity for non-dualistic thinking is found, according to Rohr. This may have grown unconsciously over many years where there has been conflict and confusion. It is the ability to be non-judgemental, and to embrace “both and thinking”, rather than “either/or”, and to embrace the paradoxes of life. Relationships are not characterised by defensiveness, but by openness and authenticity.

2.13. Toxic faith

When faith and spirituality are healthy, individuals will mature and grow over time, according to Arterburn and Felton (2001). They believe that as faith grows, respect for others grows with it, and individuals are appreciated for their strengths, as well as for their weaknesses. The marks of a healthy church are that it is energised by faith and characterised by individuals who seek to find

out what God wants, as well as the quality of relationships within the church (Warren, 2012).

Those who are Christian are not bound, but “called” to be free to serve others as an act of faith, argue Arterburn and Felton (2001). Healthy faith is restorative, gentle, loving and safe. It is based on grace and not performance (Diederich, 2017). Healthy faith accepts that life is not black or white, it understands and allows believers to struggle with the parts of life that fall into grey areas. Healthy faith allows believers to listen to what others have to offer, and evaluate it, rather than judging it (Arterburn & Felton, 2001).

Spirituality, however, is not always healthy, and may instead be toxic (Arterburn & Felton, 2001). In some cases there may be an addiction to religion that is unhealthy. While healthy faith allows a person to express their faith individually, as well as a part of a system, religious addiction takes away a person’s identity. Some people get trapped in legalistic religion because they have a desire to know God, and are seeking to serve him (Diederich, 2017).

Toxic faith distorts a person’s view of the truth (Diederich, 2017). A struggle some clients may have, is in dealing with the distorted images of God they have gained. This may be to do with the way that women have been treated in their particular church, for example, or there may have been an overemphasis on punishment for wrongdoing (Parkinson, 2003). This problem may be much greater than most people realise, and can range from there being an unhealthy

amount of manipulation present, to individuals subjected to being part of a toxic cult (Diederich, 2017).

Toxic faith is performance-based. This means having to earn God's approval and acceptance by appropriate behaviour. Some people may be made to comply out of a sense of duty or by the use of shame or guilt. They may not be aware that what they are experiencing is abuse because they have been conditioned to believe that this is what religion is (Diederich, 2017).

Toxic faith may lead to a serious form of abuse known as spiritual abuse. This is a safeguarding concern, which may not be recognised by some counsellors. It can be extremely subtle, and aspects of coercive control may be involved. Some of the key characteristics of spiritual abuse have been identified by Oakley & Humphreys (2019). These include manipulation; pressure and exploitation; enforced accountability; requirement for obedience; fear; isolation and rejection; public shaming and humiliation. It may also involve the use of scripture to coerce and control; the use of "divine calling" and the use of God's name or suggested will to coerce; and threats of spiritual consequences. It is important to recognise that it is not only members of a congregation who experience spiritual abuse, church leaders can and do experience this kind of abuse from members of their congregation (Oakley & Humphreys, 2019).

Spiritual abuse is traumatic (Diederich, 2017). It is, however, not something that is new. Indeed, individuals may have been caught in this subtle trap for

many years, or may have left a church where they experienced it, only for it still to be affecting areas of their lives many years later. Those who are perpetrators are also trapped in their own belief systems and actions, and may unwittingly be carrying out the abuse (Johnson & VanVonderen, 2005).

Oakley & Kimmond (2013) suggest that spiritual abuse is directly related to positions of power within the church. Johnson & VanVonderen (2005) agree that a power dynamic is involved. Individuals in the church may be condemned for not being good enough, or for not reaching a certain standard. However, Johnson & VanVonderen also state that the spiritual leader of the church needs to have authority. They have responsibility for making decisions, using their judgement, and holding on to certain standards. This becomes abusive, however, when they devalue someone else's spirituality by their words or actions. Johnson and VanVonderen also recognise that another form of abuse may take place, where a faction of the congregation bully their leader or minister, in an attempt to have things their own way.

Spiritual abuse can affect every area of a person's life. Those who experience spiritual abuse may feel manipulated, controlled, shamed, or condemned, rather than affirmed and encouraged in their place of worship (Johnson & VanVonderen, 2005). Physical symptoms may include stress, chest pains and physical exhaustion. There can be emotional symptoms of very low self-esteem; feelings of inferiority; shame; depression; loss of confidence; fear; strong feelings of anger and fear. There can also be outcomes of lack of trust,

especially of those in authority, and loss of friendship, due to people taking sides (Cochrane, 2004). Some people experience post-traumatic stress symptoms and are unable to reconnect with God or a healthy faith community (Diederich, 2017).

Spiritual abuse, however, is much larger than just one religion or faith, and may be thought of as the abuse of the human spirit (Mathews, 2019). It happens in all populations and religions, and also includes those who may see themselves as spiritual but not religious. Counsellors who have little understanding of religion, faith or spirituality, may not be sympathetic towards religious issues or issues of faith and spirituality (Collins, 1998). They may have had minimal training in these areas, and little experience in helping individuals with such struggles. They may not understand the terminology and be unfamiliar with the beliefs of people who hold religious or spiritual views. Counsellors indeed may not recognise the effects or seriousness of spiritual abuse, and the consequences for the individual (Johnson & VanVonderen, 2005).

Those who have suffered from spiritual abuse can be helped by counsellors who listen to their story; validate their experience without judging; don't offer quick fixes; give space and time to heal; and appreciate their sensitivity, and the effects, seriousness and consequences of the abuse (Diederich, 2017).

However, in my view, much more training around the area of spiritual abuse is

necessary for all counsellors, regardless of whether they have a faith background or none. It is something that may well arise in the therapy room, and lack of knowledge on behalf of the therapist may mean that this is not recognised as abuse, and therefore not addressed as such.

I believe that more research is also needed in the field of spiritual abuse, to ascertain how often this may occur, and the severity and long-term effects of the abuse.

2.14 Aspects of counselling

There are many different aspects of counselling that therapists are required to navigate during their training and practice. These include motivation, supervision, training and self-care.

2.14.1 Motivation

Motivation is an important aspect of becoming a therapist that often may not even be considered. There is, in fact, very little research to be found on the reasons that therapists become therapists. This is, in my view, a very important issue that is neglected to the detriment of both therapist and client.

Considerable money, time and energy is spent in training counsellors, and very little attention given to examining the motives and suitability of those who enter the profession (Kim, Wampold, & Bolt, 2006). Therapists are particularly vulnerable to becoming vicariously traumatised when working in areas of

mental health (Harrison & Westwood, 2009). However, even though clinical issues are dealt with in counselling training classes, it is generally found that trainers rarely broach the subject of the needs and motivations of practitioners (Christopher & Maris, 2010).

The term “wounded healer” is often used in connection with those who work in the helping professions (Wheeler, 2007). This was first used by Carl Jung (1951, cited in Wheeler, 2007), and refers to someone who is motivated to help others by the wounds they themselves have received, particularly in childhood. This is often thought to be the latent motivation for many trainees to begin their career in counselling (Kirmayer, 2003). Fletcher (2009) argues that individuals may be drawn to careers such as counselling because they are aware of what it is like to be wounded by the events of life. They also know what has helped them to overcome their own pain and move on from it.

Dicaccavo (2002), in her investigation into the influence of early caretaking roles within the family, found that a lack of empathic mirroring in childhood may often be the motivation for drawing some individuals into the caring professions. Dicaccavo also found that those who experienced neglect of their own needs, from an early age, learned that caring for others is more important than caring for themselves. It is important, therefore, that therapists have an understanding of their own needs and wounds, in order to prevent countertransference from their own issues from obstructing the progress of their clients (Cain, 2001).

There is, however, very little research to validate these claims. The arguments would be more compelling if more research were available.

2.14.2 Training

It is important that all aspects of multicultural counselling are explored in training. It is also vital that therapists develop the capacity and awareness for taking care of themselves spiritually, mentally and emotionally (Siegel, 2010). Therefore, it is important that development for this begins during training.

Although some training courses have modules examining the need for the therapist to work multiculturally, it seems that these do not devote time to understanding how racial and cultural issues may impact the lives of the therapist themselves (Eleftheriadou, 2015). Indeed, it seems that few training programmes deal adequately with the concept of therapist self-care or stress management (Therriault & Gazzola, 2006; Christopher & Maris, 2010).

In her study “An Exploration of how trainee counsellors who are practising believers of a world religion experience undertaking counsellor training”, Hunt (2018) found that all participants reported that they received no training around religious issues, although they would have liked to have had some training in this area. Also, Scott (2011) in her study found that trainees were reluctant to talk about their faith in training.

More research is needed to understand the implications of these studies. They

indicate a lack of understanding and sensitivity to faith in training, thus making it a serious issue. This is a much-neglected area of research.

2.14.3 Supervision

It can be very difficult to find an experienced supervisor who is able to deal adequately with issues of diversity and culture, and faith and spirituality (Gubi & Jacobs, 2009; Scott, 2011). Also, for supervisees to know that they have received adequate supervision. However, the use of appropriate supervision is crucial to working with all areas of diversity (Parritt, 2016). Parritt contends that having a safe place where the therapists' own beliefs and attitudes can be reflected upon and explored, is vital. In his opinion this needs to be with someone who has extensive knowledge, or experience, of diversity and culture. Shohet & Shohet (2020) argue that supervision can be seen as a form of spiritual practice that is beyond technique and training.

It can be seen that further research and training in these areas is much needed.

2.14.4 Therapist self-care and well-being

Therapist vulnerability is an area of concern that in itself is under-researched. Many counsellors may find that they are inadequately prepared for the demands of practice, and become subject to fatigue and burnout (Sussman, 2007). According to Gilroy et al. (2002), self-care is so important that it should be viewed as a moral imperative for the therapist. Unless the therapist pays

attention to self-care and self-knowledge, and is then able to be resilient enough to pace themselves, there is a danger of becoming burnt out, and suffering from exhaustion (Kottler, 2010).

It is also important that therapists are able to care for themselves with regard to their own spirituality and faith, whilst working with clients who are very different from themselves. A healthy spirituality (Hepburn, 2019) can be a help in making sense of life, and finding peace with and in life. It can bring a resilience that strengthens the individual from trauma and adversity. Hepburn believes it is important for therapists to gain a deeper understanding of the roots and foundations of spiritual resilience, and to be able to not only help themselves, but also to encourage clients to build on their own spiritual resources and strengths.

The ability to be aware of the need for self-care is essential to the therapists' ongoing well-being. However, according to literature, therapists are often less inclined to give themselves the same level of self-care that they would encourage their clients to do, and are reluctant to take notice of warning signs of burnout (Welfel, 2006; Kottler, 2010).

However, Barton (2019) found in a study that experienced therapists had learned how to take care of themselves emotionally, mentally and spiritually over the course of their counselling journey. Participants in that study claimed they were able to sustain their practice, and were also able to enjoy their lives

away from the counselling room.

2.15 A bridge too far?

It is evident from all of the above, that multicultural counselling is extremely challenging for the therapist. Counsellors are required to achieve cultural empathy, as well as an openness in addressing cultural issues, and exploring the challenges that may present (Lago, 2011). It can also be seen that many of the views could be quite contentious or controversial in a counselling setting, and so great care is needed by the counsellor to withhold their own views, and have the ability to suspend their own judgement on these issues. There may be a danger, therefore, that practitioners become desensitised to human need and emotion, whilst attempting to keep boundaries firmly in place (Kottler, 2010).

It is understood that vicarious trauma can manifest in many different ways, and it is important that therapists are aware of their own process when being exposed to the client's trauma (Barnes, 2019). Regardless of what is happening in the therapist's own life, Kottler (2010) argues, they must be attentive and attuned to the client. Counsellors are witnesses to many traumatic events, even as their own ways of thinking, biases, prejudices and perspectives are raised. They hear stories of terror and atrocity; mutilation and injustice; stories that are so deeply heart wrenching that have never been told before (Kottler, 2010). Therapy is an intense form of contact with clients who identify with many forms of diversity (Parritt, 2016). Therapists themselves may

be vulnerable and at risk of having their concentration and effectiveness harmed by becoming vicariously traumatised. They may also suffer compassion fatigue. This places them in an extremely vulnerable position, where they may be liable to developing burnout and fatigue (Christopher & Maris, 2010).

How do therapists manage to hold the stories they hear, and how do they live with them? In their effort to be receptive to the client, is the therapist at risk of losing their own identity along the way? Are therapists in danger of putting their own well-being at risk?

As well as the dangers of vicarious trauma, counsellors are required to respect the client's religious views, values, beliefs, indigenous practices, language and lifestyle. It is considered essential that they possess knowledge about each client group they work with. They must be aware of the impact of therapy on each of these cultural groups, and how each group is influenced by family dynamics, hierarchy and discriminatory practice. They must be able to engage in verbal and non-verbal communication that transcends all of this (AMCD, 2017).

This research project asks if all of this is actually possible for the therapist? If so, is there a cost to it? What is the price that is paid by those who are able work in this way?

Secondary traumatic stress and emotional duress may occur when the therapist repeatedly hears the first-hand trauma experiences of their clients. They may experience compassion fatigue as well as significant health challenges. In fact the therapist's own senses and previously held understandings of the world, faith and spiritual beliefs may be so overwhelmed that their ability to work effectively, think critically and maintain boundaries is affected (Hiser, 2020).

Faith is a fundamental dimension of the human self. Faith is present in one form or another in all human beings, whether they have a religious belief or not. Faith gives purpose and direction to life, and shapes and involves individuals' hopes, passions, will, and intellect (Benner, 2012). Faith is also an important part of the therapist's own life that requires care and attention. Therefore, it is vital that therapists develop the key elements of spiritual self-care and spiritual resilience that will enable them to work sustainably with people who have experienced trauma and difficulties in life (Hiser, 2020).

One of the fundamental challenges for the multicultural therapist is to build a bridge across the contrasting worlds of their client and themselves (McLeod, 2018). However, it can be seen that there are indeed, not just one, but many and various bridges that lead in different directions. Is this asking too much of the therapist? Are they putting their own well-being at risk by doing this?

As previously stated, there is a great amount of literature regarding multicultural counselling. However, what is not clear from this, is how the therapists themselves are influenced by clients who are very different from themselves. How do stories of tragedy, hardship and trauma affect the therapist? Does this contribute towards burnout and compassion fatigue? How can therapists ensure their own well-being? Is it important that they do that?

Counselling can be seen as extending an invitation to others to talk about their own unique experiences. They offer a space in which the individual can be heard and understood. They give room for clients to tell stories that have never before been told. Stories that are important and need to be told. A sacred space for individuals to be seen, and where their voice can be truly heard. These voices are often ignored or misunderstood in the world, society and even the church.

The counsellor has the opportunity to listen to voices that have opinions that can be very different to their own. They have the opportunity to create a space for those who don't look like them, think like them or speak like them. Even for those who live on the fringes because society has no interest in them, many counsellors offer their services. Are therapists able to ensure their own faith and spirituality while they do this, and if so, how?

How is the counsellor who is a Christian impacted by the influence of diversity and culture? How important is the therapist's own faith and spirituality to them?

How has their faith and spirituality been impacted, from when they started out in training, and over the years of being an experienced practitioner?

This research project will explore how participants have been impacted by the diverse clients they have worked with, and how they have been able to take care of our own faith and spirituality, whilst also working ethically and multiculturally. It will focus specifically on counsellors who are Christian, although it could be viewed in the same way by those who have a different faith, or none.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology and Methods

3.1 Overview

This chapter will discuss the methodological considerations and the methods used to answer the research question:

Do issues of diversity and culture impact the journey of faith and spirituality of the counsellor who is a Christian?

I am bringing my own particular lens to the data in the analysis. Another researcher may bring their particular lens and find different themes. However, this does not invalidate the truth of both perspectives.

The exploratory investigations for this study will be carried out through a qualitative methodology, and specifically, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This has been chosen as particularly suitable for this type of research, as it allows an in-depth investigation of experiences (Smith, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). IPA allows an understanding of participants' experiences to be gained by the use of a small sample size (Smith, 2018). This is based on the belief that the experiences of a few participants examined at greater levels of depth, is more valuable than simply describing the experiences of many individuals (Reid et al., 2005).

This will be a small-scale study, using semi-structured interviews. These are viewed as the best way of collecting data in an IPA study (Smith, Flowers &

Larkin, 2009). Each interview will be carefully analysed in detail, in order to ensure the participants' experiences are captured, and their voice is heard. This will enable a good level of interpretative engagement with the text (Smith, 2011; Smith et al., 2009).

The chapter outlines the rationale for qualitative methodology adopted in this research. It incorporates participants, recruitment procedure and data analysis. It also discusses validity and reflexivity components and concludes with ethical protocols that will be implemented in the study.

3.2 Methodological considerations

3.2.1 Rationale

This study sought to examine an area of clinical research and experience that is relatively neglected. Its aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of a small number of participants (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Its purpose was not to test a predetermined hypothesis based on a large sample, as in quantitative research (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Therefore, a qualitative methodology was deemed as being most appropriate for this exploratory research.

Qualitative research enables the views and experiences of participants to be taken into account, so that richness, depth and detail may be found (Creswell, 2015). It begins with an open research question, and asks "how" and "what",

rather than “why” and “how many” (Finlay, 2015). This study aims to explore certain aspects of the life of the counsellor, as well as part of their life history. Qualitative methodology is, therefore, a suitable means of inquiry, as opposed to quantitative methodology.

Quantitative methodology would not give the richness, depth and detail that is being looked for in this study. It is, in contrast to qualitative methodology, concerned with discovering facts about social phenomena, and is used to quantify a problem by generating numerical data. This is so that answers to questions may be found by applying scientific procedures (Davies, 2007). Techniques used in quantitative methodology mean that results produced are both quantifiable and generalisable (Bell & Waters, 2014). Quantitative research aims to be scientific in its approach. Questions asked have been developed in order to ensure that the information gathered is relevant, unbiased and reliable. Data is collected by means of structured techniques, such as surveys and questionnaires. This is then transformed into usable statistics and numerical values (Smith, 2015; Wyse, 2011). The relationship between one set of facts is studied, against another, from the numerical and structured data collected (Bell & Waters, 2014).

Quantitative researchers tend to remain objectively separated from the subject matter (Silverman, 2000). As far as possible all trace of the researcher and their effects on the research is removed. In fact, controls are enacted in order to prevent the researcher from having any effect upon the research (Sanders &

Wilkins, 2010). Qualitative researchers, however, aim to gain insight into the individual's relationships, their views on life, and how their worlds are seen and constructed. Unanticipated findings are allowed for, as the researcher tries to understand the complexities of getting involved in the study (Silverman, 2000).

3.2.2 Qualitative research

The qualitative approach is considered to be flexible and grounded, and also subjective and speculative (Silverman, 2000). In qualitative research, human interaction is deliberately exploited, as the researcher endeavours to understand the complexities of getting involved in the study (Sanders & Wilkins, 2010). It is considered an important means of evaluating therapy, as well as informing practice in the fields of counselling, psychotherapy and psychology (Denscombe, 2017). In these fields, therefore, it may be used as a springboard to making improvements in many areas that would promote understanding of the situation. Action can then be taken to improve conditions, and long-term goals of development contributed to (McLeod, 2010).

This form of research adds to the evidence base of practice, as well as to the knowledge and interest of practitioners (McLeod, 2010). It is often used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations, as an exploratory form of research (Wyse, 2011).

The qualitative researcher gathers information and/or stories in the participants' natural conditions. The individual human being is, therefore, the

primary instrument (Sanders & Wilkins, 2010). By listening to, and collecting stories, the researcher is seen to be writing a story in the form of narration. Meaning is therefore discovered or created through the narratives that are collected (Creswell, 2015). In this way, salient features of the experience of the individual may be drawn out (Sanders & Wilkins, 2010). Qualitative methodology also enables actual words spoken by the participants to be recorded, which is an important part of this particular study (Creswell, 2015).

3.2.3 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

There are a wide range of diverse, qualitative research methodologies and methods to choose from (Finlay, 2015), and several were considered for this study. However, when considering that the primary aim of this research is to investigate the lived experiences of participants, and the meaning they make of their experiences, I deemed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as the most suitable.

IPA is a distinctive approach to conducting qualitative research that has its theoretical roots in hermeneutics, phenomenology, and ideography. It investigates the experiences of people within their specific socio-cultural and relational contexts (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

My choice of IPA is because it allows an in-depth investigation of the experiences of participants where the researcher is considered part of the co-creation of participants' meaning making (Smith, 2011; Smith et al., 2009).

By using IPA an understanding of participants' experiences can be gained using a small sample size (Smith, 2018). Engagement with individual transcripts allows a detailed and nuanced account of the personal experiences of a smaller sample, which therefore, is in keeping with the aims of this study (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

The aim of IPA is to explore in detail the processes through which participants make sense of their own personal and social world (Smith and Osborn, 2007). IPA considers the experiences and views of individuals and aims to get as close as possible to the participants' subjective conscious experience (Creswell, 2015). This is in order that the psychological meaning behind their everyday communication can be uncovered. There is acknowledgement that the participants' own views will influence the process, thus enabling the researcher to investigate how the participants make sense of their own experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

The advantage of using IPA is that it is centred around the experience of individuals. This allows their views and experiences to be taken into account (Creswell, 2015). IPA attempts to explore personal experience, and thus is concerned with an individual's perception or account of an object or event (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Consideration of the narrative allows sense to be made of the participants' experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

IPA is concerned with subjective experience and perceptions of the world (Smith, 2003). Therefore, as this research was committed to understanding individual experiences and not seeking to generalise the findings IPA was used in preference to other methods.

Of central concern to IPA is in-depth exploration of the individual's lived experience of a phenomenon, its meaning for the individual and how the individual understands and makes sense of their personal and social environment (Lyons & Coyle, 2007). By focusing on the lived experience and personal world of the individual this study will interpret the meaning participants make when answering the research question.

3.2.4 Ontological and epistemological positioning

There are a wealth of methodologies and methods available to choose from (Crotty, 1998). However, the choice of methodology is often influenced by the kind of research questions a study is seeking to address. Therefore, the methodology underpins the overall research strategy (Silverman, 2000).

The strengths of quantitative methodology lie in facilitating generalisation of findings over large populations, and can be seen as offering an outsider perspective (Cresswell, 2003). In contrast, qualitative methodologies allow the researcher to be more present within the research, and thus gain an "insider" perspective (Cresswell, 2015).

Qualitative methodologies have developed broadly within phenomenological and social constructionist traditions. Both traditions share a number of similarities, including the assumption that reality is not a primary concern, and that meaning is preferable to measurement (Krauss, 2005). Also, that language can help the researcher to understand the thoughts and feelings regarding the inner world of the participant (Barker et al., 2002). Qualitative research engages overall with meaning-making and constructing meaning, therefore, many qualitative researchers embrace a constructivist perspective, which invokes a realist ontology (Willig, 2016).

Ontology is concerned with the nature of being. Positivist approaches have traditionally sought to adopt an objectivist ontological view of the nature of reality. A positivist approach to knowledge and understanding of the world suggests that there is a single reality that can be researched through rigorous applications of scientific methodology. It assumes that the world is based on common sense perceptions, and is real in some definable way (Madill, et al., 2000).

Epistemology is philosophically linked to ontology and is concerned with how we know what we know and, therefore, the theory of knowledge, and the methods used in relation to gaining an understanding of social reality (Grix, 2001).

IPA is committed to the examination of how people make sense of their life experiences. It attempts to uncover the meaning of the individual's reality in their social world (Smith et al., 2009). IPA does not view reality as objective and does not attempt to obtain facts or define truth. Instead, it seeks to understand the individual's own experience, and the meaning they make of it. It allows rigorous exploration of the subjective experiences and social cognitions of individuals (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). This then allows the researcher to attempt to understand the meaning that the individual is making of their experience (Smith et al., 2009).

The researcher in IPA is seen to take an active role (Smith & Eatough, 2007), where the focus is on the individual's understanding of their lived experience, and interpretation of these experiences. The researcher can also be considered as part of the co-creation of the meaning-making of participants (Love, Vetere, Davis, 2020).

Therefore, IPA is grounded in a phenomenological epistemology (Smith et al., 2009). It allows the researcher to develop research data that is applicable in real world settings that exist outside of an individual's experience, which pure constructionist approaches fail to do (Reid et al., 2005).

IPA uses the concept of lived experience, borrowing from phenomenology theorists such as Husserl (Finlay, 2011). Experience can be said to be lived and reflected upon, which is central to the practice of research in IPA.

Phenomenological approaches endeavour to study the experiences of individuals to discover a perspective on life in relation to particular phenomena. This is an attempt to uncover what matters to people within their own lived worlds.

IPA is situated within a continuum of phenomenology, which has description at one end, and interpretation at the other (Smith et al., 2010).

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach, initially articulated by Husserl (Smith & Osborn, 2015). It recognises that there are factors that affect the individual's perceptions of reality and overall experience (Eatough & Smith, 2008). Phenomenological approaches tend to fall between the "realist" and the "relativist" ends of the continuum. A phenomenological position tends to argue that although experience is always the product of interpretation, and is therefore constructed, it is nevertheless real to the person who is having the experience. IPA allows for a flexible approach that draws from across phenomenological traditions, combining aspects of hermeneutics (Barker et al., 2002). IPA, therefore, offers a means of accommodating a realist and relativist position (Ware & Raval, 2007).

As well as drawing on the philosophy of phenomenology, IPA is theoretically underpinned by the key principles of hermeneutics and ideography (Harris, 2012).

IPA is underpinned and strongly influenced by hermeneutics, which is the theory of interpretation. IPA does, in fact, identify strongly with hermeneutic traditions, and the works of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre, in attempting to explore and interpret personal lived experience of the participants (Smith & Osborn, 2015). However, there is also a double hermeneutic that is referred to in IPA, where the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant, who is trying to make sense of their own world and experiences (Smith & Eatough, 2007).

Ideography is concerned with how to understand the concrete, the particular and the unique, whilst also maintaining the integrity of the person (Eatough & Smith, 2008). IPA is ideographic in its commitment to examining the detailed experience of each participant in turn, before moving to more general claims (Smith & Osborn, 2015). It is also committed to the detailed analysis of the phenomenon that is being investigated (Eatough & Smith, 2008). Researchers are required to value each case under its own merits, before examining the convergence and divergence between cases (Smith et al., 2009).

In conclusion, this IPA study has a qualitative approach, underpinned by and drawing inspiration and influence from, philosophies of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography, focusing on the subjective lived experiences of individuals.

3.3 Recruitment and research sample

3.3.1 Recruitment

For the purpose of this study, in order to answer the research question, the inclusion criteria for participants were that they were qualified and experienced counsellors who also professed a Christian faith. A qualified counsellor and a Christian are defined in this study as follows:

Qualified and experienced integrative counsellor - To qualify as a counsellor takes an individual many years of study and supervised practice as a trainee. British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) recommend a three-stage route that can take three or four years. This starts with an introductory course where counselling theories, ethics and self-awareness are introduced. Through the second stage skills and understanding are developed, till at the third stage in-depth practitioner training takes place.

Once training has been successfully completed, counsellors may continue to practice within agencies or organisations to gain experience in various settings. After having completed a certain number of hours of supervised practice post qualification, the counsellor can then apply for accreditation to belong to a professional body e.g., Association of Christian Counsellors (ACC) or British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), who have taken on the role of self-regulating the profession. This means that counsellors who are accredited by a professional body have achieved a substantial level of training and experience approved by their member organisation. Accreditation

is reviewed annually and so the counsellor will also continue to meet strict requirements of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and agreement to abide by a code of ethics (BACP, 2016).

For this study, those who are qualified would have followed this procedure and have continued counselling a diverse range of clients. Experience will have been gained over their many years of practice.

An integrative counsellor is one who uses a combined approach to psychotherapy. This brings together different elements of specific therapies and combines therapeutic tools to fit the needs of the individual client. Integrative counsellors take the view that there is no single approach that can treat each client in all situations and each client needs to be considered individually. Therapy is therefore tailored to the needs and personal circumstances of the client (Megase, 2022). All participants in this study considered themselves to be qualified and experienced integrative counsellors.

Definition of a Christian - A Christian is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2018) as an individual who professes belief in the teaching of Jesus Christ and follows his teachings. Christians believe there is only one God, and that he is revealed in three different forms: God the Father, God the Son, The Holy Spirit. There are, though, various opinions of what it means to be a Christian. Many people, for example, think that going to church occasionally or simply believing in God makes them a Christian (Plante, 2007). However, the Bible presents a Christian as someone who has put their faith

and trust in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ through His death on the cross and subsequent resurrection. Christianity teaches that upon repentance of sin God is willing to forgive and give each person a fresh start. A person's relationship with God is then restored and eternal life received by the individual (Brooks, 2011).

A Christian may also be a member of a Christian church or denomination according to the *Collins English Dictionary*. There are many Christian denominations around the world that have different histories, different traditions and a variety of styles of church services. Not all agree on every aspect of doctrine, belief and practice, but the core of any genuine Christian denomination is the belief that Jesus Christ is the son of God and that anyone putting their trust and faith in him is forgiven by God (Brooks, 2011).

Once ethical approval had been gained a recruitment poster (appendix i., p. 289) was emailed to potential participants who had heard about the subject of this study from their peers on one of two training programmes. The programmes were for qualified and experienced counsellors where most of the attenders were Christian.

Eight counsellors responded to the recruitment poster and were all identified as being suitable to take part in the study as they met the inclusion criteria. They were emailed further information in the form of a Participant Information Sheet (appendix ii., P.290) and an Informed Consent form (appendix iii., p.

293). They were asked to sign and return the informed consent form if they were willing to participate. All eight consented to take part and were then given pseudonyms.

In Chapter 4 quotes from each participant are referenced by their pseudonym, page(s) of transcript, and line numbers of their interview.

3.3.2 Research sample

The emphasis within IPA research is on using a purposive homogenous sample (Denovan, and Macaskill, 2013). IPA researchers, through purposive sampling, find a closely defined group for whom the research question will be significant (Smith and Osborn, 2007).

In keeping with the requirements of IPA to have a small and homogenous sample, participants for the purposes of this study were counsellors who are also Christian. This means that the research question was relevant to them, and that they were able to answer the research questions meaningfully. Please see Table 2 for more information about the participants.

In this study the context was considered to be the clinical practice of the counsellors. The lived experience of participants, and how they make sense of their experience, is investigated by the use of IPA (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This approach fits well as it is concerned with the examination of

particular experiences of people within their relational contexts (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

There were eight participants who met the inclusion criteria of being both a qualified counsellor and a Christian. They all considered themselves to be integrative counsellors and had been qualified and in practice for twelve years or more. They all belonged to professional counselling bodies. They all considered themselves to be Christian and belonged to Christian denomination churches. Other characteristics were left open and not restricted by age, gender or ethnicity. However, all the participants were white British and female, with ages ranging from 35 to 60 plus.

Table 1: Demographics of participants

Pseudonym	Church/Denomination	Type of counsellor
Lucy	Baptist	Integrative
Mary	Assemblies of God	Integrative
Rachel	Anglican	Integrative
Anita	Baptist	Integrative
Sally	Anglican	Integrative
Paula	Anglican	Integrative
Val	Methodist	Integrative
Tina	Baptist	Integrative

3.4 The interview process

Participants were emailed the interview questions in advance of the interview. This gave them an opportunity to reflect on the process or journey they had been on throughout their career as a counsellor. They were also able to review

where they stood regarding their own faith and spirituality, and how their spiritual journey may have been impacted by their counselling journey.

A semi-structured interview was used in this research. These are viewed as the best way of collecting data in an IPA study (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to follow up interesting issues that may emerge (Willig, 2013). Each interview lasted for between 50 and 65 minutes. They were audio recorded with a digital recorder.

The interview focused on the following questions:

1. What was your motivation for training to become a counsellor?

Was your faith involved in this decision?

Did your motivation change over time?

Were your expectations realised or did something different happen?

How was your faith and/or spirituality affected by this?

2. Tell me about your training as a counsellor?

Was your main training primarily from a non-Christian provider?

How did this fit with your beliefs as a Christian?

How was your faith, spirituality and/or religion handled in this training?

How did your training affect your faith?

3. What forms of difference or diversity/culture have you found when working with clients?

How easy has this been to work with?

4. How has working with clients who are very different from you affected you personally?

Can you give me any examples?

5. How is diversity and/or culture and faith and/or spirituality explored in supervision?

Is your supervisor knowledgeable about diversity and culture?

Is your supervisor open to discussion about faith and spirituality?

6. Do you consider that your training prepared you adequately for the journey you have been on?

What else could have been done?

How would you prepare a trainee counsellor who is a Christian for their journey to come?

7. How have you been able to take care of your faith and spirituality throughout your faith journey?

What are the obstacles to caring for your own faith and spirituality?

What else could you have done?

8. How has your faith and spirituality been impacted by your counselling journey?

3.5 Procedure

It is usual for data for IPA research to be collected by means of semi-structured interviews. This is consistent with the aim of IPA to elicit rich and detailed accounts of each person's experience. Formal interviews where set questions are asked, or informal where the interviewer is free to modify questions in response to the interviewee, may be asked (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

In this study interviews were informal and took place in a conversational style, where key issues were raised. Interviews took place at a mutually agreed time and venue and lasted for between 50 and 65 minutes. All participants were given an information sheet to read, which provided information about the research study, and a consent form. A digital recorder was used for recording the interviews.

3.6 Data analysis

In an IPA study, rather than being an objective observer, the researcher is expected to be fully immersed in the material (Willig, 2013). This means that the content of the data is read and reread, allowing understanding to be gained and different meanings to arise (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This helps the researcher to recognise points that may recur, and that are important and meaningful (Sanders & Wilkins, 2010).

In this study data were analysed using IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The analysis was started by repeatedly listening to

the recording of the interviews. These were transcribed verbatim into a Microsoft Word document. The transcripts were read through several times noting down any thoughts or questions that arose. These included noting down when a participant used a powerful term to describe how they were feeling, for example, “I wasn’t getting sufficient job satisfaction in the job I was in” (Anita, p.1,10-22), and “it was a feeling that I wasn’t using myself to my full capacity” (Anita, p.1, 10-22) (see appendix v., p. 295).

The second stage involved identifying and labelling themes that characterise each section of the text, for example, motivation and dissatisfaction, (appendix vi., p, 296-301), which came from the excerpts of Anita above.

Clusters of themes were labelled in a way that captured their essence. Quotations were selected that illustrated the themes, and themes that were not well-represented were abandoned. Emerging superordinate themes and subordinate themes were identified and interpreted (see Table 1) (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

The themes were then transformed and constructed into a cohesive narrative account (Smith & Osborn, 2003: Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). In Chapter 4 these have been explained and illustrated using verbatim excerpts from the transcripts (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

3.7 Sensitivity to context

This is a small-scale study from which meaningful conclusions have been drawn. Although the number of participants is small, the aim was to provide an adequate cross-section of variety and experiences, as well as examples of diversity. The research has been supported by the data collected (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Yardley (2008) states four criteria that enable trustworthiness in qualitative research. These criteria will be met in this thesis as follows:

The first criteria stated by Yardley is “sensitivity to context”. This will be evidenced in this study by paying careful attention to ethical issues and through the use of semi-structured interviews and open questions. Attention will be paid to participants’ perspectives. Sensitivity to the context will be shown at all times as well as sensitivity to the data collected. The study is suitable to be repeated by others, following the same criteria (Morrow, 2005).

The second criteria ‘commitment and rigour’ will be evidenced through purposive, snowball sampling, through depth and breadth of analysis, through methodological competence, through in-depth engagement and through delivering additional insight. The analysis will be conducted thoroughly and systematically, showing commitment and rigour to the participant and the quality of the study (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

The third criteria 'coherence and transparency' will be evidenced through an 'appropriate fit' between theory and methodology by the use of transparent methods and data presentation. Researcher reflexivity will also be in evidence.

The fourth criteria 'impact and importance' will be evidenced by noting the impact of different perspectives on professional practice. Also, by identifying theoretical importance and by suggesting further research and implications for professional practice.

3.8 Ethics

3.8.1 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are a crucial aspect of research that have become increasingly important (Bond, 2015). According to Hammersley & Traianou (2012), the risk of harm in any research activity is probably unavoidable. However, researchers would want to avoid harm of any kind as a result of their research. Therefore, this study followed the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) (2016) and Association of Christian Counsellors (ACC) (2014) ethical frameworks. The work was carried out in compliance with Chester University Governance procedures (2019).

It is important that research is undertaken with integrity, and that high standards of honesty and transparency are maintained throughout the process. The design, methods and implementation must be consistent with the

research question being investigated, so that academic standards are met, and rigour shown (Bond, 2015).

It is accepted that, in counselling and psychotherapy research, decision making is informed by five moral principles of autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, justice and fidelity (McLeod, 2010). In this research project these principles were adhered to as follows:

Autonomy - The participants' right to autonomy and their best interest was respected at all times. Participants were free to decide what was best for them (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). They had the choice not to participate in any aspect of the research or activity without judgement. They were also encouraged to seek support if they felt they have been affected in any way by participating (McLeod, 2010).

Beneficence and non-maleficence - The study was considered safe for participants, and there was no risk of physical harm to them. There was also no risk of sociological harm or deception. If any part of the research, hypothesis or methodology had appeared to be in conflict with the best interest of the participants, then the research process would have been paused, reconsidered and if necessary, redesigned (Sanders & Wilkins, 2010).

Justice - The interests of minority groups were kept in mind during the process of the research (McLeod, 2010).

Fidelity - Participants were at all times treated in a fair, compassionate and consistent manner (McLeod, 2010).

Confidentiality - Confidentiality is a vital issue in the research process; therefore, participants were fully informed about anonymity and its limits. Only information that was relevant to the research was taken from the participant, and any information that could identify the client was removed (Sanders & Wilkins, 2010). Participant anonymity was respected at all times throughout the research process.

3.8.2 Ethical approval

Ethical approval was sought and gained through the University of Chester's ethical approval process (Appendix iv, p.276).

3.8.3 Complaints

No cause for concern was raised. However, participants were aware that any cause for complaint could be raised with the researcher at any time during the research project. Appropriate action with the complainant would then have been taken, and the complaint recorded and agreed on.

3.8.4 Informed consent

Informed consent to take part in the study was gained from each of the participants (Denscombe, 2017; McLeod 2010). Information regarding the procedure of the study and what would be expected of them was given to the

participants (Sanders & Wilkins, 2010). They were not under pressure to give consent to participate, and no inducement was offered.

Each participant was given adequate information regarding the following:

The aims of the study – this was to hear the stories and voices of experienced counsellors who are Christians, in order to explore the experiences they had of working with clients who are very different to themselves.

What would be expected of the participants – for example, that they would be interviewed, they would be recorded, the digital recording would be transcribed, etc.

Possible risks and disadvantages associated with taking part - if personal issues were stirred for them, they would be supported by myself during the interview process, and they would be given names of therapists on their local area for support following the interview or advised to see their own personal therapist.

Possible benefits of taking part - the interview experience would give the participants time to reflect upon the process they had undergone throughout their career as a counsellor, and how this has impacted their faith journeys. It would give them a platform to share their thoughts and experiences. This could potentially contribute to research and policy.

The right to withdraw without prejudice - participants had the right to withdraw up until the thesis had begun to be written up.

How the data would be stored - each transcript would be allocated a pseudonym or code to protect their anonymity, and any identifying features in the data would be deleted.

How long data would be stored for - all recordings and transcripts would be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's study. Transcripts and consent forms would be stored separately for a period of 2 years following the completion of the research project. The data would then be destroyed.

3.9. Reflexivity

In qualitative research the process and outcomes of the inquiry are informed by the researcher's own experiences and interpretation (Etherington, 2004). In view of this, whilst I acknowledge that my own views may have had an impact on the research, I have endeavoured throughout this thesis to capture the true voice of the participant. This is an important part of a study using IPA, and I am confident that my findings and interpretation reflect experiences that will be shared by other counsellors, like myself, who are also Christian.

It is understood, in using IPA, that the researcher's own role is part of the complexity of the research, as well as the research context (Finlay, 2015). This

is something I can identify with. As a Christian, I became interested in the process of my own counselling journey, and the changes I had noticed in my thoughts and beliefs about faith and spirituality. I reflected on whether these changes had been influenced in any way by the variety of clients I had worked with, and wondered if working with such a wide range of diverse clients had made an impact on my life and spiritual journey. I was curious to know if my peers had been on a similar journey to me, or if the whole experience was unique to myself. This research was an important part of finding out the answers to this question.

3.9.1 My own counselling and spiritual journey

Since reflexivity involves reflecting on the impact of the researcher on the research process (Spencer, 2003; Yardley, 2000), I feel it is important to discuss how my own counselling and spiritual journey may have impacted this current research. As the researcher, I am a qualified counsellor and also a Christian. Both of these facts strongly led to my interest in exploring the experiences of my peers in their counselling journey, and also influenced my choice of research topic. Whilst carrying out the interviews for this study, I found that I related very much with the journey of the participants. I feel it is important therefore, to explain my own counselling and spiritual journey.

At the beginning of my counselling journey, in a similar way to participants, my own faith was very much part of the desire to become a counsellor. Having been involved in pastoral work and children's ministry in my local church for

many years, I saw training to become a counsellor as a way of honing my skills, and being able to help others in a much deeper and more meaningful way. Whilst in training, however, it was strongly suggested that the reasons for becoming a counsellor were about being a wounded healer, which I found puzzling given my own perspective and reasoning. Therefore, when embarking on my dissertation for the BA in Integrative Counselling, I chose the topic of *Motivations for Becoming a Counsellor*, to try and find out the motivations for others. My results for that study are awaiting publication in the article *Motivations: A study*. That study shows that there were various reasons for the participants to become a counsellor, none of which related to being a wounded healer. In this current study, I have again touched on the area of motivations. The results show that, for most of the participants, like me their faith was the biggest motivating factor for becoming a counsellor, along with the desire to help others in a deeper and more meaningful way.

As I started out in my training, I had first chosen to undertake a Bible-based counselling diploma, which was totally Bible-based and related every problem back to the Bible for its solution. This was an interesting course and I learned much from it. It also meant that I had some understanding for the participants in this study, who were clear that, although they had wanted their training to have a Christian ethos, they did not want a totally Bible-based course.

On completion of this course, although it was helpful for my counselling and pastoral work in church, I realised that, because my main aim was to become

a school counsellor, a biblical based qualification would not allow me to do that. I began to understand that I needed instead to complete a secular qualification. I therefore started at a local college and then went on to university to allow me to do this.

However, whilst studying, I found some of the lecturers were very discriminating against the few of us who were Christians on this course. Indeed, the Christian faith was ridiculed, by one lecturer, and dismissed as a “myth amongst other myths”. I found this difficult and struggled not only to complete the course, but with thoughts and questions about my faith. Thankfully, none of the participants in this study have reported similar occurrences, but those who had not chosen to undertake a course with a Christian ethos at the start of their training, certainly chose later to do a course that had more spiritual and Christian input, and which “touched the heart and spirit”. This is what I did for myself, as I chose to carry on to do an MA in Relational Counselling and Psychotherapy at a Christian college, feeling that my Christianity needed some validation and reinforcement in the counselling world.

For my dissertation on the MA, following my previous experiences, I chose to investigate how other counsellors who were also Christians, take care of their own mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. The results of this have been published in an article referenced in this study.

As I came to choose the subject for my doctorate and this current study, my thoughts were very much again focused on how my spiritual journey and my counselling journey interlaced and intertwined. As stated earlier, I had found my faith had transitioned through various changes, and my relationship with church had also changed. I wondered if this was just my own experience or if others had also experienced this.

3.9.2 My research journey

As already explained my own story played an important part in the choice of subject for this thesis. As I began to think about the subject for my thesis, I realised that I wanted to revisit ideas from my previous dissertations, e.g., motivations, and spiritual self-care, as well as to take the topic on to broader areas of experience such as supervision and training. I also wanted to explore possible areas of struggle with faith and in church. I therefore needed to look for participants who were Christian and who had been qualified counsellors for several years. I intended to advertise the project through the Association of Christian Counsellors, but as I talked about my ideas to peers, the project was spoken about in two training programmes that were taking place where the majority of the attenders were Christian. Some of the individuals expressed an interest in taking part and I sent them details by email. In response to this, eight of the individuals expressed an interest and consented to take part in the study.

I prepared questions that covered a broad area of research which I hoped would give a picture of the experience of a counsellor who is also a Christian. However, when carrying out the interviews, it was important for me to be aware of the power imbalance that is an inevitable part of the process. For example, all the decisions are made by the interviewer, from deciding which questions to ask, how these are followed up, how the interviewee may be led, and when to start and end the interview (Kvale, 2006). These imbalances however, as already stated, are part of the process, and unlikely to be removed. I therefore intended my interview questions to be very specific, and I was clear with participants about the research areas I wished to cover.

As I began to carry out the interviews, I found that patterns appeared in the participants' stories which were very similar to my own, particularly in areas of struggles with church. I found it interesting and intriguing that there were so many similarities in experiences in the stories of the participants, not only to myself, but to each other. I felt empathy towards the participants as they talked about their struggles with church and could relate to this because of the difficulties I have experienced in my own church. There has been a change for me from being totally involved in church, to being on the periphery, and then moving on to a different church. This was the same for many of the participants.

The feeling of being in a kind of limbo, such as described by one of the participants, was something I resonated strongly with. This came from being

unable to discuss certain topics such as homosexuality either in supervision, or in church, for fear of being judged, either by the supervisor or those in church leadership. There was a feeling of not being able to belong in the counselling world and the church at the same time.

However, I also identified with participants as they talked about feelings of having found a deeper relationship with God – a relationship that is broader and more accepting than may be acknowledged in some “church circles”. Several of the participants seemed to have found this deeper relationship while others were still struggling with this part of their spiritual journey.

Another surprise to me was that most of the participants were grateful to be able to tell their story and said that they had never spoken about many of these things to anyone, and were glad of the opportunity to do so. Again, I was able to identify with this, as I had never spoken to anyone about my own struggles with the difficulties of being both a counsellor and a Christian. It made me wonder if the voice of the counsellor is taken away by the very work that they do, by being conditioned to be the listener in the background, and to give understanding and empathy without ever revealing anything of themselves. Do counsellors become so experienced in hearing the voice of others and allowing their worldview and values to be voiced, that their own become diminished? Is their own voice lost as they themselves are not heard, listened to or understood?

Following the interviews, as I began to transcribe and read through the transcripts, I found other thoughts coming to my mind. I was quite surprised, for example, that each participant found a different form of diversity the most challenging. I had anticipated that participants might all find one form of diversity most difficult, and that there would be an agreement on one topic, such as racism, for example. However, each participant talked about something different being most challenging, some of which I could relate to. For example, one participant viewed a client having an abortion as the most difficult they had dealt with, due to their views that God created each person and therefore each foetus as unique and valuable. Her wrestles with this were difficult to contain as she talked with her client. I have also been in a very similar position with a client and could identify with this participant's struggles.

Another participant found working with individuals who were disabled or in pain as the most difficult because she came from a position where she was healthy and didn't have to struggle with an illness or disability. As I read through this transcript, I thought of my own experience of working with a client who had a disability and how difficult I had found this.

As I continued to immerse myself in the transcripts thoughts about spiritual abuse came to me and I pondered over what participants had told me, wondering if what they experienced could be this. I felt that I needed to add something about this to the literature review and began to explore this topic, which also led me to wonder if spiritual abuse was something that would be

recognised by counsellors or indeed supervisors if it were brought to supervision.

Whilst thinking about this I realised that there were many areas from this thesis where more research could be done, or which I could have looked at in more detail with participants, spiritual abuse being one of those. I also identified supervision as something that could be explored in far more detail. Indeed, it seemed quite shocking that participants could not talk to their supervisors about certain topics because they believed the supervisor would judge them or their church. Participants were very defensive about their church even though they had struggles with it themselves and did not want to talk about anything that would make it look bad to their supervisor. They also struggled to talk to their church leaders because they might be judged by them as becoming too liberal.

Another area that could be researched in more detail is that of training. I began to wonder if I had done the wrong thing in wanting to paint a broad picture and should maybe have studied one of these areas in more detail. However, there was no going back, and I needed to continue with where I was and maybe take up one of the areas of research at another point in time. I could also write articles for these subjects for the Association of Christian Counsellors or BACP which I still intend to do.

3.9.3 Conclusion

It has been an engaging and cathartic experience to not only listen to but share in and understand the thoughts and feelings of the participants, as they revealed their travels through journeys so like my own. I feel privileged and honoured to have heard those stories. I hope that others who feel this way may gain some understanding for themselves from this project.

The process of undertaking the Professional Doctorate has enabled me to reflect on my own counselling and spiritual journeys, both of which are very important to me. It has shown me that there has been a process, that I can only describe as a “gestalt”, a completion, something that I have worked through, where the whole is more than the sum of its parts. I am thankful for the opportunity to undertake this thesis, and not only to give others the chance to have their voice heard, but to feel that my own voice is verified and holds weight. I have been able to bear witness to stories like my own, which have made some sense of my own journey in counselling. I am very grateful to all of those who have taken part, and who have shared their story with me.

3.10 Summary

The methodology and methods used to carry out the research have been presented in this chapter. Attention has been given to quality, ethical and reflexive issues. A reflexive summary of my own journey has been given. The findings that emerged from the analysis of data will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 4. Results and analysis of results

This chapter will outline the themes that emerged from the analysis of data that were created from the interviews with participants, in response to the research question:

Do issues of diversity and culture impact the journey of faith and spirituality of the counsellor who is a Christian?

Data was analysed and viewed through the lens of the researcher and themes arose from this perspective. Another researcher may view the same data and find different themes. This does not invalidate the truth of both perspectives.

In this chapter quotes from each participant will be referenced by a pseudonym, page(s) of transcript, and line numbers.

4.1 Overview of superordinate themes

The analysis of data produced a total of five superordinate themes and fifteen subordinate themes (see Table 1 below). These themes illustrated the experiences that participants have had of faith and spirituality, and diversity and culture, during their career as a counsellor.

The first superordinate theme, “Thoughts on motivations”, captures the participants’ motivations for becoming a counsellor, changes in motivation during their career, and the importance of faith as a motivation.

The second superordinate theme, “Perspectives on training”, considers the importance of having a Christian training provider, and participants’ views on the adequacy of counselling training they received regarding faith and spirituality, and diversity and culture.

The third superordinate theme, “Experiences in supervision”, investigates the experiences that participants had of faith and spirituality, and diversity and culture, in supervision.

The fourth superordinate theme, “Experiences of faith and spirituality”, captures the views that participants have of taking care of their own faith and spirituality, how their faith and spirituality has changed, and their thoughts about God.

The fifth superordinate theme, “Experiences of diversity and culture”, captures the view that participants have of their experience of diversity and culture, whilst on their counselling journey. It explores the different forms of diversity that participants have worked with during their time as a counsellor and investigates which is the most challenging form of diversity that participants have found in counselling. Participants also express their views of diversity and culture within the church.

Table 2. Summary of themes

Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme
1. Thoughts on motivations	1.1 Dissatisfaction and desire 1.2 Struggles and strength 1.3 Faith as a motivation
2. Perspectives on training	2.1 Christian ethos 2.2 Minimal preparation 2.3 Expressions of belief
3. Experiences in supervision	3.1 Complications in supervision 3.2 Power dynamics 3.3 Perceptions in supervision
4. Experiences of faith and spirituality	4.1 Care of own faith and spirituality 4.2 Challenges and changes 4.3 Change of view
5. Experiences of diversity and culture	5.1 Views on diversity and culture 5.2 Differences in the therapy room 5.3 Challenges of difference 5.4 Frustrations in church

4.2 Superordinate theme 1: Thoughts on motivations

The first superordinate theme explores the motivations that participants had for beginning their training to become a counsellor. This follows with an examination of how their motivation has continued, or if it has changed as they

have travelled along their journey of counselling so far. The theme also focuses on whether the faith of participants was an important factor in their motivation. The subordinate themes are as follows:

The first subordinate theme captures the participants' initial motivations for becoming a counsellor. The majority of participants expressed views of dissatisfaction with their previous careers, and wanting to help people in a deeper way as being the biggest motivating factor.

The second subordinate theme investigates whether the participants' initial motivation had changed over their years in practice, and if so, how it has changed. Some of the participants felt there had been no change in motivation, and their desire to help others remained very much the same. However, others revealed that their motivation had changed, and there is now something different taking place in their work.

The third subordinate theme aimed to examine whether the faith of the participant had been an important factor in their becoming a counsellor. All of the participants viewed their faith as an important factor in their decision to become a counsellor.

4.2.1 Subordinate theme 1.1: Dissatisfaction and desire

There were various motivations for training to be a counsellor that were revealed by participants as they talked about the process of beginning training. One of the reasons was that they were not enjoying their career, or had become dissatisfied with it, and wished to have a greater involvement in helping people in a more direct way.

Lucy, for example, explained that she had been involved in caring for people for most of her personal and professional adult life:

I was a nurse, a children's nurse and social worker, so, most of my adult life has been involved in caring for people at times of crisis in their life in some form or other. (Lucy, p1, 5-7)

However, Lucy continued by describing how, as she rose in management, she found that she was less involved with the people who were in crisis:

In the mid-80s the nature of the work I did changed in that instead of doing direct work with people I went into management, and so I found that increasingly, while I was managing people who were handling people in crisis, the reality was that I wasn't doing it. The more senior I became, the further I went from it, so I tended not to see people unless they had really, really, really bad complaints. (Lucy, p1, 7-13)

Lucy's discourse reveals her desire to help those in crisis, and her growing feelings of dissatisfaction as her role in work became more managerial. She was also involved in a local church where she felt that people there were well looked after, and had a network of care, where they could go to get the help they needed. Her concerns were for people outside of the church who didn't have that support:

I was involved in a Church where I'd been involved with people who had problems, and I had a sense of it's all right - not it's all right for them, but actually they've got somewhere to go. They've got a network of people who care ... actually there's all of these people out there that don't have that. (Lucy, p.1, 17-23)

This eventually led to her training to become a counsellor, and subsequently to set up a Christian counselling agency.

So [I] became interested in the development of a Christian counselling service in the area. So, in the early 90s I became involved almost looking at that a bit more ecumenically, and then in 1995 that was confirmed, and we began looking very seriously at the creation of a local counselling service. (Lucy, p.1, 25-29).

Anita shared her experience of looking back over her past. This showed that she had been a Samaritan and had then done a Certificate in Counselling course:

You see things different looking back that you maybe didn't see at the time, but I was a Samaritan in my early 20s, and then I did a short certificate in counselling when I was in my 30s.
(Anita, p1, 5-9)

However, it wasn't until 10 years afterwards that Anita decided to take this further. Over time she had become dissatisfied with her job, as well as having thoughts that she was not sufficiently reaching her full capacity:

But it wasn't until 10 years later that I just felt as if I wasn't getting sufficient job satisfaction in the job I was in, and I had a bit like an epiphany, and I thought actually maybe It's time to explore counselling. So, it was a feeling that I wasn't using myself to my full capacity. And that was something that seemed to be there, but it had never kind of been taken as far as it could have been. (Anita, p1, 10-22).

It can be seen that Anita had already explored thoughts about counselling but had never taken these any further. It was only when she reached a point of having no satisfaction in her job that she had a sudden realisation that there

were other options that could take her towards better reaching her full potential.

Another aspect of this theme was that participants had found they had compassion for those they already worked with, and desired to help them in a different way. Mary, for example, had become a teacher after leaving university:

One of the motivations was definitely the kids that I was working with in school. I've always worked in schools right from when I finished uni because I went to be a teacher. So, I kind of went in and taught middle schools. (Mary, p1, 3-11)

Whilst working as a teacher, she found that one of her strengths had been working pastorally. This was what she enjoyed the most and felt drawn towards it:

And right from the off my, I suppose, one of my strengths was working pastorally with the kids. Actually, the bit that I really enjoyed was being with the kids, talking through any problems they might have. It was seeing the kids that were at the back of the class that looked a bit despondent and kind of hooking in

with them. That was the stuff that I felt drawn to. (Mary, p1, 11-22)

Two incidents of children being bereaved helped her to see that help for children and young people was quite poor in school. This led to her believing that she could help in a different way by becoming a counsellor:

I was actually at a special school at one point. And two of the kids, one of them had both her parents wiped out in a car accident at the time. And another boy had his mum die. And the support that was offered was really kind of patchy and limited. And I just found myself thinking, do you know what? I want to be able to better help people and young people. So that was the kick really to start the training. (Mary, p1, 24-33)

Similarly, Paula was a teacher when she made the decision to begin training as a counsellor. She had returned to teaching after a long break in which she had children, but was not particularly happy with the job:

I was in teaching. I'd returned to teaching after an 18-year break, being a mum. So, when I went back to teaching the youngest was 8, and the eldest was 18. And I did that for 7 years, during that time I wasn't particularly happy. I did it for the money rather than the joy. (Paula, p1, 5-10)

As she continued in her teaching role, she found that different people began to say to her that she would make a good counsellor:

And on three separate occasions, different people both in my work and also my church said, "Oh, you'd be a really good counsellor". And I just thought about it for a while. And that's probably over the course of the year or 18 months. (Paula, p1, 11-14)

Then an incident in school, where she was injured, meant that she was away from school but on full pay. When she eventually went back to school she had to have more time off due to stress.

... and then I didn't go back to school, with, sort of, stress and all that kind of thing. So, I thought, well that's the end of my teaching career. I'd had enough by then. (Paula, p1, 15-20)

As a result, Paula never returned to school as a teacher, but took the opportunity of having some free time and money to do a counselling course.

And then, as a result of doing that and enjoying it, and actually understanding a bit more what a counsellor was - then I did a certificate course there. So, the motivation was - partly it had been recognised from outside, that I wasn't great with a

classroom of children, but I understood people. I got people - both the staff and the kids. (Paula, p1, 22-36)

It can be seen that people recognised something in Paula that made them think she would be a good counsellor, and this encouraged her to go ahead with beginning training. This was also the case with Tina. She had previously been a client and had counselling herself for 6 weeks when things had become too much for her. At the end of this her counsellor asked if she had thought about being a counsellor herself. This encouraged the participant to begin reading about Jung and counselling, and she became interested in doing this, when she had the opportunity to. (Tina, p1, 3-11)

Another participant, Rachel had also previously had counselling herself. She had several blocks of relationship counselling when her marriage was breaking down. She could therefore, understand from personal experience how being able to talk to an independent person helped:

So, I think I could see how having counselling, being able to talk to somebody independent, helps. To say things I wouldn't say to my family, because I didn't want to worry or upset them ... it was useful. And I think I could see myself doing it. I found that people could talk to me a lot, about all sorts of things and, you know, if they had problems. (Rachel, p1, 7-17)

Sally had experience of being a carer when she was quite young and her sister was born:

On looking back, I think my mother suffered from post-natal depression though that was never diagnosed, and I think the seedlings started right back when I was really quite young, and I also had the tendency to help others or want to help others.
(Sally, p1, 3-20)

This participant suffered bereavement when her niece was killed in a hit and run accident:

I lost my niece, my 18-year-old niece, in a hit and run accident ... she died just before Christmas in 1985. And I think I understood bereavement, started to understand the bewilderment of bereavement. And ... I thought "I want to help others". I really wanted to help bereaved people, so I did bereavement listening and all of that. And then in the late 90s I did Introduction to Skills and an Introduction to Theory course.
(Sally, p1, 21-31)

Sally continued to complete further training and become a counsellor.

4.2.1.1 Summary

Overall, this subtheme explores the motivations that counsellors had for beginning their training as a counsellor. For the majority, there is some aspect of being dissatisfied in their careers, alongside a desire to help others in a more caring and deeper way, that led to their initial training. This theme also illustrates that for some there was a natural inclination towards this role.

4.2.2 Subordinate theme 1.2: Struggles and strength

As participants talked about their experiences as a counsellor, some claimed that the motivations they had at the start were still present now, and had not changed.

Sally, for example, claimed very strongly that her motivation is still very much the same, and that she is in the place that she needs to be:

I don't think it has [changed] actually. I think that the very clear words that I had at that time, and this is many years later now, is actually what sustains me in practice and remains my motivation. And the day that I feel that I'm no longer in the right place, that is when I will start to wind up my practice. So I think my motivation has remained constant. (Sally, p3, 64-75)

Lucy also felt that her motivation had stayed the same. When she retired from her paid employment, she decided the time was right to begin training as a counsellor. This was out of her desire to start a Christian counselling agency:

The training came from the desire to be actively involved in a counselling service that was showing God's love to a wider community, so that's what drove me. (Lucy, p2, 63-65)

She continued that by saying, "That hasn't changed" (Lucy, p2, 76). It can be seen that this is a desire that hasn't changed, and still remains the same now that the work has been running for many years.

For Anita, however, the situation is very different. She explained that her aim when she started out in training was just to see if she could do it. Counselling as a living was never her plan. However, over time, it has become that, and is now her main calling and means of earning a living.

It was such a long process for me to become a counsellor that when I first [started], my motive was to see whether I could do it at all. And then I felt I could develop it. Then in the end, you know, I found myself counselling as a living and the job that I was in then isn't part of my life any more. So that was never my plan when I began ... But I guess now my motivation is my main calling now. (Anita, p2, 45-59)

Counselling as a means of earning a living was never the plan for Anita, but this is very different now as she considers how to view the future:

And I think I've had a very different feeling about that because when you're doing something round the edges even though it's very significant, it has a slightly different, well a very different role to when it becomes actually your bread and butter. You need to think about it, I needed to think about it, differently. It takes up different amounts of energy and I now need things around it to make sure it doesn't get out of balance, where it was once the thing to make sure my other job didn't get out of balance. (Anita, p2, 64-80)

For this participant, there has been a great change in her career and motivation. Where once counselling was something she did to make sure her work/life balance was under control, she now needs to do other things to protect her work/life balance from counselling.

Two of the participants had become frustrated by not being able to bring their Christian views or spirituality into the counselling process.

Tina expressed her frustration:

I found it quite frustrating I wasn't able to bring in my faith, if you like, or to mention spiritual stuff unless somebody did speak about it, which surprisingly was rather rare. (Tina, p4, 85-90)

This led Tina to investigate a different means of carrying out her what she felt was her calling, alongside counselling:

What happened was I carried on working as a counsellor after I had done my 100 hours for the years that we were there, and then I got interested in spiritual direction. And so, I then trained as a spiritual director. And you know, I was trying to sort of find ways of integrating it all so it all fitted together. (Tina, p4, 92-101)

Paula started training in a Christian approach when she felt she needed something that touched the heart, rather than a cognitive approach:

Having started in the secular models of self-actualisation behavioural demands and dynamic type of approaches, I was increasingly aware that it didn't touch the heart, that's the spirit. (Paula, p3, 70-73)

However, this also led to some frustration for her:

But rather than ... bringing my Christianity alongside the counselling, and you know, fully understanding it, it almost put more barriers in the way. Because, of course, it's not ethical to share your faith with people and sometimes it felt like I was

sitting on my hands. You know, when I was with a client and I'm thinking, I wish we could, you know, share in a more spiritual way. But we can't because this is boundaried by our ethical structures and it would not be appropriate. (Paula, p3, 75-94)

She has now though, become more at ease with this way of working:

And I actually have come almost full circle now to think that, because spirituality is so personal it always has to be totally ... led by the client. So if they want to bring in something of their own spirituality we can hold that in the space. But if I want to express my spirituality I'm simply taking up that space. So I am very comfortable with not proselytising, not manipulating anything, you know. But I do see it as a totally individual experience. (Paula, p3, 99-115)

4.2.2.1 Summary

It can be seen from the above that there were struggles for some of the participants in reconciling the changes that took place as their counselling journey continued. Others felt very strong in what they had originally planned, and this continued to be their motivation.

4.2.3 Subordinate theme 1.3: Faith as a motivation

This subordinate theme investigates whether faith had taken any part in their motivation to become a counsellor. All of the participants identified faith as having played an important part in this.

For example, Mary described how her faith was very much involved in her decision to become a counsellor. She explained:

I think it fits really well for me ... I don't count myself as a Christian counsellor. I'm a counsellor who's a Christian. And the reason that I say it that way is that I feel very much that I'm not coming from, you know, I'm not selling myself as somebody from a religious perspective as such. (Mary, p4, 98-103)

Mary went on to explain further:

I think the Christian faith is all about kind of being there for people, supporting people. So, I feel that what I'm offering them by sitting with them, by empathising, by kind of exploring with them from their perspective, I'm showing them none-judgement, I'm showing them acceptance, I'm showing them love which for me is very closely akin to, you know, the love of God. (Mary, p4, 98-103)

Tina was a Christian minister when she began her training to become a counsellor. Although she had trained for the ministry she recognised that there were techniques available to her which she could learn in an effort to further hone her means of working:

I was in ministry then, Christian, full-time Christian ministry. I did feel that I had been set on this journey inward. And that I wanted to have the proper skills. We were trained in ministry with a set of skills but I wanted to have some better skills to be able to come alongside other people really. (Tina, p2, 35-44)

Val said that her faith was fundamental to all of her counselling, and this had been an extension of the pastoral care she had been involved with in church. However, as a counsellor she had become less involved in pastoral care than she had been previously:

It's a fundamental in that is all my training has been faith-based in the sense of that I'm an ACC member rather than the BACP. And all of my training has been with Christian organisations and I have always seen it as an extension of pastoral care. ... Ironically, I'm less involved in pastoral care in church than I was when I started because then it becomes kind of a busman's holiday. (Val, p2, 49-61)

Anita was very clear in her belief that faith had played a major role in her decision-making process:

Definitely, because even though I had gone to church as a child, I didn't become a Christian until an adult at around 34. So there was a feeling that if this was something God wanted from my life, then he would be part of the process to establish whether that was yes or no. ... It got clearer as the time passed on. The feeling that if it was something he wanted, it would go in right direction, and I would feel that it was meant to happen. (Anita, p1, 24-41)

Paula believes that her work as a counsellor is a calling from God that is at work in her life:

I really felt that there was a call of God working in it as well. Because the confirmations through work and through church contacts and my own thoughts. And I think the timing was very much part of what I felt God was doing ... Faith was very much involved in the decision. It was the still small voice actually. (Paula, p2, 54-62)

4.2.3.1 Summary

This subordinate theme explored whether faith had been an important factor in the motivation and continuing journey of the participants' counselling work. It can be seen that participants expressed very strongly their views that their faith had been an important factor in their decision to be a counsellor.

4.2.4 Summary of the superordinate theme “Thoughts on motivations”

Overall, this superordinate theme explores the motivations that participants had for becoming a counsellor, and how this changed throughout their career. Most of the participants had felt that this would be a worthwhile career, where they could help people in a more specific way than in their previous career. This motivation continued throughout their counselling journey, as they found satisfaction in the role, and as they grew more able to help clients in a much deeper way. All of the participants expressed the view that their faith had been fundamental in all of their counselling work, and that it was an important part of their care for people.

4.3 Superordinate theme 2: Perspectives on training

The second superordinate theme explores the experiences that participants had of diversity and culture, and faith and spirituality, during their professional training, and the foundation that was laid for them in their subsequent career.

The first subordinate theme investigates whether participants considered it important to have training by a provider of the same faith. The second subordinate theme explores whether participants consider that training

regarding faith and spirituality was adequately provided in their training, and whether they were sufficiently prepared for the diversity and culture they have met in their counselling journey. The third subordinate theme considers the view of one participant who has encountered issues in the training she has herself provided for others.

4.3.1 Subordinate theme 2.1: Christian ethos

This subordinate theme addresses the importance to the participants of having their training provided by a Christian organisation. There were a variety of responses, which on the whole, showed that participants had desired a course with a spiritual or Christian aspect to it, at some point in their training, if not at the start.

Anita talked about her experience of a course where there had been some Christian content, but it was not a specifically Christian course. However, the course had been provided by a faith-based organisation. Her discourse shows the range of training that took place, which included a module in Christian counselling:

It wasn't a non-Christian provider, except it wasn't expressly a Christian course ... it was part of a faith-based organisation. And they did have a section on the course on Christian counselling, which looking back I appreciate actually that was quite unusual to have one of its modalities specifically on

Christian counselling ... It was very unusual, but they taught us person-centred, we had CBT, we had a little bit of psychodynamic and we had Christian. So, it was definitely there in a way. But I don't know, in fact, I also remember that several people on the course were Christians. Quite a large number were Christians. (Anita, p4, 118-159)

Paula explained that she had chosen to take some training provided by a Christian organisation. This was when she became aware that non-faith-based models of counselling she had already studied, were not touching her heart or spirit:

The second part of my training, which is the diploma part of my training I did at a Christian organisation ... which used a model that had a faith element to it. So, it definitely had a spiritual aspect to it and having started in the secular models of self-actualisation and behavioural demands, and dynamic type of approaches, I was increasingly aware that it didn't touch the heart, that's the spirit. (Paula, p3, 64-73)

Training for Rachel was with a non-Christian provider. In her experience faith and spirituality did not play a part in the course:

Faith did not come into it at all in the teaching. I do know that one of my tutors is or was a Christian. She was my supervisor for a while. No. I don't recall faith or spirituality coming up at all. I could be wrong, but it's not something that I remember. (Rachel, p3-4, 90-106)

However, Rachel went on to expand on the difficulties that may be felt by a tutor bringing Christian counselling into a course:

I suppose that depends on, you know, who's leading the course or certainly who's teaching at the time and whether they have a faith and whether they're kind of comfortable with teaching, bringing that in. I don't know. Perhaps one might worry about it not being accepted or, you know, or I suppose not being acceptable to those that don't have a faith or are not [Christians]. (Rachel, p4, 110-121)

Sally had been trained initially in a course that was not based on faith. She explains her reason why:

Back in the day I wanted to go nowhere near Christian counselling training ... because, in my humble opinion, it was pretty bad. I mean, it has improved greatly. (Sally, p4, 92-97)

Sally, therefore, undertook training that was secular. However, later she became curious about integrating her faith:

So, it was a secular course and then I obviously did post-initial qualification - I did quite a bit of training, all of it secular and then I discovered some years later that I was getting curious about how do I integrate spirituality into practice more. (Sally, p4, 118-120)

Sally went on to explain that she felt she needed to know more about integrating her faith, when her placement in a Christian counselling agency, meant that clients would know that counsellors working there, had a Christian faith. (Sally, p4, 121-123)

Val also felt that she needed more in-depth spiritual training and chose to do a diploma with an organisation that was not specifically a faith-based course, but which had a Christian ethos and a Christian perspective (Val, 116-168). She chose this in preference to a course that was specifically Christian after finding that she was not suited to a particular course that she considered had a “heavy” Christian model:

I prefer the more general ... hold it within a Christian perspective. But there wasn't an awful lot of spirituality in it, in a sense that it was, you know, we would learn person-centred, we

would learn psychodynamic we learned Gestalt with them, we learned CBT. But it's within an umbrella organisation that has a Christian ethos. But ... I don't think you have to be a Christian to do those courses. And, in fact, you know, I've taught non-Christians on those courses. Well, I don't think, whereas you would struggle if you were a non-Christian doing the five-circle model ... the need to go back to God and have the spirituality there at the core and, you know, we meet our needs elsewhere and you've got to meet them from God. You know that kind of a quite heavy Christian model didn't fit that comfortably with me. (Val, p4-6, 116-168)

4.3.1.1 Summary

This subordinate theme revealed the desire for participants to have at least some training with a spiritual or Christian element to it, at some point in their training. It seems, however, that the desire was for more of a Christian ethos, than for a model that is particularly focused on the Bible and its teachings. It seems that participants wished to have a grounding in Christian teaching, but not a model that would require everything to be related to directly to the parameters of biblical teaching.

4.3.2 Subordinate theme 2.2: Minimal preparation

This subordinate theme explored whether participants believed that faith and spirituality had been adequately prepared for in their training. Also, whether

they believed they were adequately prepared for the diversity and culture they have since encountered in their practice.

Mary remembered that there had been talk about diversity and culture in the form of gaining criteria for the course:

I think it's talked about a lot in the sense that there's criteria to meet about diversity. But I think you meet that in the training in a very ... sterilised way. ... a very 2D, two-dimensional sense.

(Mary, p17, 511-513)

It seemed to Mary, that gaining criteria was the main reason for teaching about diversity and culture. This had caused it to feel quite sterilised. She continued by voicing her opinion that until the counsellor is actually meeting with a client, talking about diversity is a very cognitive exercise, and difficult to understand how it will impact them:

So, it's kind of presented in a certain way. So, until you actually get with clients ... where there's real encounter with diversity and how it impacts and your response to it. And that's where I think it starts to actually become something. (Mary, p.17, 515-523)

According to Mary, it's not until the counsellor actually encounters diversity, that it really comes to mean something to them. However, as more diversity is met with there is a realisation that there is so much more to learn:

I think the more you go on and the more you realise "I don't know anything. I really don't know anything." And you go and think yes, I know about diversity and then you sit with another client and no, actually I know nothing about that, and I need to find out more. And there's only so much you can learn from a book. I think it's that relationship. It's engaging with somebody. It's sharing that experience. It's trying to kind of literally stand in their place. It's all of that and really hearing their story. I try to shed any of that expectation or previous experience that's ours and really, you know, question. And that's tough sometimes. I think it's harder work than maybe when we first start and we qualify. (Mary, p.19, 572-589)

Mary understands that the way she had been trained did not prepare her very well for clients she would meet. However, she is unsure what, if anything, could have better prepared her:

I think, you know, we did lots of scenarios on a page. I think there's a different dynamic seeing somebody actually tell their story. So, I think people coming in to talk about their journey

and their experiences, I think that would have much more of an impact, and it would take it from more of a cognitive place to an experiential place. (Mary, p.18-19, 551-564)

It can be seen that Mary believes that to see and hear people tell their story, rather than just scenarios on a page, may have been more impactful, and may have been better preparation for her journey into practice.

Anita also reflected on the training she had received. This particular training concentrated on asking trainees to consider who they might have a problem working with:

What I remember from that [training], it was more about asking us how we would feel about working with people who were different from ourselves. And sort of preparing us to do it, which is probably the right approach, you know, saying who are you used to spending time with? What might you find so different from yourself that it might become ... an issue or get in the way or be something that distracts you from what's going on? And I'm not sure it did prepare us very well but I'm not sure what could have prepared me very well because you don't know what you're going to get until you get there. (Anita, p7-8, 201-220)

Anita also reflects that her training was some time ago, and there have been many changes in how diversity is now addressed:

Because when we did it that was about 10 or 11 years ago. And the world of diversity has really moved on, and I'd like to think people are far more open about talking about what they themselves need. (Anita, p.8, 223-229)

However, Anita also wondered if more could have been done on her course to encourage her peers to tell their own stories, and to be open about the way that diversity affected them:

I mean on our course there was somebody who was gay. There was somebody who was black. ... And I think there were people who had disabilities and needed to drop out of the course. There were also a range of ages ... And I wonder, now, whether people would be more open about saying, "This is what it's been like for me." (Anita, p.8-9, 225-245)

Anita believes she was really unprepared for the diversity she has met since finishing her training:

You know, when I think back, you're so unprepared, although you think you can go and do it, but you're so unprepared aren't you when you come out of that training. (Anita, p.9, 274-276)

Anita believes it is better to admit to a client that you don't know about their culture, rather than just not talk about it:

Some people are saying, the last thing you can do is ask a Hindu client what their death practices are. But actually my own opinion would be like well, actually if that's someone you know, better to admit you don't know. (Anita, p.10, 278-284)

Rachel recollects that although some of her tutors were Christian, spirituality was not spoken about during her training, and diversity was only briefly mentioned and not explored in any great depth:

Some of my tutors were Christian actually, which is really interesting and ... one particular tutor, post the initial qualification was a Christian ... I wouldn't say that spirituality was ever really spoken about in any direct way in the training. I mean, we looked in a very perfunctory way at diversity, but I think that was where it began and ended actually. So, we didn't really talk about beliefs very much at all is my recollection. (Rachel, p.4, 99-107)

Rachel believes that her training was “more of a starting point” (Rachel, 498), from which she has continued to learn, through each client. She explained by saying that something new can be learned from each client, and it is all a learning process:

Once you're qualified and you're working with people you just, you just go with the flow really. And in a way, working with those people also adds to what you've learned. I mean, it's all a learning process surely. You can learn something new - you can potentially learn something new with everyone you work with, you know. It adds to the mix. So, I think [the training] prepared me as much as it could. (Rachel, p.17-18, 524-534).

Sally expressed her opinion that her training was a good foundation, but there were certain elements missing, particularly faith and spirituality. However, as practitioners, counsellors should always be engaged in ongoing personal and professional development. This is where she would see that these subjects could receive further development.

I think as practitioners, we should be really engaged in ongoing personal and professional development. I mean, I think my level four training was a good foundation, but it's almost, I see it a little bit like when you pass your driving test actually. And you're allowed to drive once you've passed your driving test. So,

learning to drive is a good foundation for driving. But you know, my original counselling training was good. It set the foundations but I don't think it compared adequately, and one of the things I think that was missing was definitely the spiritual side of things. And as I said earlier, diversity, generally was dealt with in a very perfunctory way. (Sally, p. 21-22, 660-686)

4.3.2.1 Summary

It seems that participants had received minimal training in the areas of faith and spirituality, or diversity and culture, to help them as they made the journey from training into practice. There was very little preparation for the journey that was to lie before them in the variety of clients they would meet, and the differences they would encounter. There was also minimal to help them understand how to approach such subjects in sessions with clients, or how to deal with the feelings and emotions that may be present in the counselling room.

4.3.3 Subordinate theme 2.3: Expressions of belief

The third subordinate theme considers the view of one participant who encountered issues in the training she has herself provided for one particular client group. Although the views of between four and ten participants are advised for an IPA study, it has been argued that the view of a single participant can be justified, providing that they generate a particularly rich or compelling case (Smith, 2004). The discourse of this particular participant

provides a compelling and interesting view on the differences Christians might perceive in the training they receive:

Val is an experienced counselling trainer, who regularly carries out training. Whilst talking about diversity, the difficulties she encountered when she herself was providing training for a particular group of trainee counsellors who were also Christians, were brought to mind. She talked about her experiences of tutoring this group which she had found to be a very difficult task, mainly because the group had very firm and fixed ideas about matters that they agreed with and did not agree with. Whilst teaching them about diversity, and the need to accept diversity and to be non-judgemental in the area of sexuality, she encountered a very rigid fundamental view. This made it hard to deliver that particular part of the training whilst still holding the participants' belief system. She explained that on most courses she teaches there are usually a range of beliefs amongst the group, but because this cohort were from the same church and belief system, they all tended to agree with each other:

And the coming up against the quite rigid fundamental view that most of the participants had, was tricky for me as a tutor to deliver, that to hold their belief system and yet still teach the need to be accepting and non-judgemental. Most courses I teach I've got a broad range of Christian views within that. And so, therefore, you might get a couple of students that are on the fundamental stage, but within the group there will be those that

are pushing the boundaries and saying no, you know? No, we believe this. Whereas in that group, universally, homosexuality is a sin. And therefore, me holding the line as a tutor of non-judgementalism was trickier because I had to teach it from the front. Whereas in other cohorts, they discuss it. They've got the breadth within them to discuss it. (Val, p.6-7, 178-212)

This discourse reveals the difficulties of teaching a group who all have very fundamental views, when the whole of the group are part of the same culture and belief system. It seems that there is not enough space within the group to discuss issues where there might be a difference of opinion. It can be very hard for the tutor to promote ideas and ask them to discuss issues that are not the same as their own belief.

Val continues by explaining how the participants held the biblical view as being the standard that everything should be referred back to:

They would cite the sexuality [teaching] as a liberal, you know, you were just picking up on liberal secularism. You're not holding the biblical view enough, and again with this group, you know, they were wanting to quote Bible verses at people and hold them up to the biblical standard and [I was] teaching them not to use the Bible in that way. (Val, p.17-18, 508-523)

On being asked if she had managed to teach them not to be judgemental, Val did not give a definitive answer, but said that it was still a work in progress:

It was a work in progress, I think because I'd had them at level two and then somebody else took them on to level three and then the group that I worked with, they're just doing their level four at the moment with another tutor. So, I'm sure that she will iron out anything that is left. But I got them as very raw and the expectation of what counselling is and was, wasn't always what counselling is. So fundamentally, having to say, that's not what counselling is. And helping them to see what nouthetic counselling is, that's not what, you know, that's not what is [being taught], and you know if you want nouthetics and if you want to sit with your Bible and say the Bible only says this, and that is this, and that's one thing, but that's not this course. So, this course is holding your Christian faith as a framework rather than as the step-by-step guide. (Val, p.18-19, 526-566)

The experience that Val had emphasises the difference between counsellors who are Christians and who counsel without preconceived beliefs and standards, and those who counsel from a biblical viewpoint only, allowing no other opinion to be heard. Their counselling is based on very rigid beliefs about what the Bible teaches, and that no other understanding is acceptable. This

discourse shows how difficult it is to teach a non-judgemental approach in these circumstances.

So, [they] all [came] from the same perspective. Although there were a few that thought differently and with a bit of bravery said so, but that's quite- That's quite challenging because they're then putting their head above the parapet and, you know, and they're quite tribal as a group. It's quite challenging for them to be able to say that they think differently. (Val, p.19-20, 577-590)

Some of the struggles and difficulties of teaching a particular client group, with their own very strong views, can be heard in this discourse.

4.3.3.1 Summary

The difficulties of teaching a group of very strong minded and pragmatic trainees can be heard in this subordinate theme. Also, there are differences between nouthetic counselling, that is totally faith or Bible based, and counselling that is carried out by a Christian who allows the client to express their own belief and faith, without being judgemental.

4.3.4 Summary of the superordinate theme “Perspectives on training”

Overall, this superordinate theme explores the experiences that participants had of diversity and culture, and faith and spirituality, in their training, and for one participant, of training others. Most of the participants felt that they were

not adequately trained in these areas for the demands of practice but were unsure of how they could have been better prepared. Each of the participants expressed a desire to have training from a provider with a Christian ethos at some point in their career. They did not, however, wish to have training that relied heavily on biblical teaching as the fundamental focus.

4.4 Superordinate theme 3: Experiences in supervision

The third superordinate theme investigates the experiences of faith and spirituality that participants have had in supervision, and also how diversity and culture have been addressed in supervision. The first subordinate theme investigated whether participants felt it was important to have a supervisor who identified with their own faith. It was shown that participants tended to have a supervisor who was a Christian, although they believed they had not specifically sought this. It also emerged that faith and spirituality could cause some complexities and tensions within the supervisory relationship, and this is reflected in subordinate theme two. The third subordinate theme discusses how diversity and culture is addressed in supervision, and participants' perceptions of this.

4.4.1 Subordinate theme 3.1: Complications in supervision

There were a variety of answers when participants were asked about the importance of the faith and spirituality of their supervisor. Although the majority

stated that their current supervisor is a Christian, there is little to suggest that they have deliberately chosen a supervisor who is a Christian.

Anita, for example, said that she currently has two supervisors (Anita, p20, 601-617), both of whom identify with having a form of spirituality. One is a Christian, while the other identifies with a Buddhist spirituality. Ironically, the one who understands best what her faith means to her, is the spiritualist supervisor, rather than the Christian supervisor. Anita feels she is able to work more deeply with the one who doesn't share the same faith. She claims that this means:

“...it's not to do with the faith we have, but the level of our spirituality.” (Anita, p.22, 671-672)

On considering further, Anita stated:

I think looking back there were good or not so good supervisors. I don't think it was to do with their faith or whether it was the same or different to mine. (Anita, p.22, 672)

Lucy answered that of all the supervisors she has had, there was only one who, whilst not being anti-Christian, wasn't a Christian, and that was at a time when she had to have a supervisor who was approved by the course she was doing. Her current supervisor also works as a spiritual director.

The supervisor that I have now, interestingly she did the Brian Thorne, it's a diploma but it's essentially in spirituality and she works as a spiritual director. (Lucy, p8, 253-255)

Mary stated (Mary, p7, 194-206) that both of the supervisors she has worked with have a faith, which she was pleased about. This enables her to talk about her own spiritual journey in the supervisory session. This makes sense to her as she can talk about her beliefs in God and prayer as part of the supervision process. Mary related:

I feel quite happy dipping in and out of my own kind of spiritual journey in supervision, because I think it very much is me, so it makes sense that I'm going to talk about things and my beliefs in God and prayer or whatever as part of the supervision process. (Mary, p7, 204-205)

Val described her experience of making assumptions about the faith of her supervisor:

I had a period of time when my supervisor wasn't a Christian, and actually that's not true, that was my assumption. That's interesting! But I do know that she was married to a vicar and then their marriage broke down. It's interesting, isn't it, how I

should come to the conclusion that she no longer had a faith herself. I don't think I ever asked her explicitly, but there was a little bit of tension in me sometimes about sharing. So, I was with this supervisor when my client was going through her struggles of faith, and so exploring that within supervision, when my supervisor was having, my projection, her own doubts and then moved away from a place of holding faith. It was an interesting struggle for me to be able to bring my struggles of faith into that space. (Val, p.23, 648-667)

Val continued by saying that it would have been easier if this particular supervisor had not had a spiritual background at all, because she had felt "restrained from talking about spiritual issues" (Val, p.23, 675). She had taken the view that faith was a contentious issue for her supervisor and therefore she was unable to talk about it.

Following this experience, Val went on to say that she had chosen her next supervisor partly because she knew he was a Christian, and she wanted to be able to talk about spiritual issues.

Sally claimed that this question had made her realise that faith and spirituality are an important part of supervision that is currently missing from her own supervision. She has peer supervision with a counsellor who is a Christian but

who doesn't go to church. She is also in a peer supervision group where no one would identify as having a faith.

Sally commented further that, from her experience, spirituality was more likely to be discussed within a Christian counselling agency:

When I was working in a Christian counselling agency there was within that context, that spirituality was discussed. I think now it comes in far less often actually, and supervisors, I'm not sure any of my supervisors would necessarily bring it into the room. I think it would be up to me, to bring it into the room. How confident would I feel about bringing it into the room? I think ... it would come in with the one-to-one peer supervision. (Sally, p.21, 637-638)

4.4.1.1 Summary

Overall, this subordinate theme explored the importance, to the participants, of the faith and spirituality of their supervisor. It can be seen that there are various responses for this subtheme. Supervision can be complicated by assumptions about the supervisor or supervisee. It also does not necessarily make it easier to talk about faith and spirituality issues simply because supervisee and supervisor share the same faith.

4.4.2 Subordinate theme 3.2: Power dynamics

At times, it seems, issues regarding faith and spirituality that are potentially contentious may arise in supervision. This is illustrated in the second subordinate theme. Some tensions that were evident arose out of our discussions around supervision. Lucy, for example, said of her supervisor:

She's more damning of the church than I am, in terms of when people are hurt. She's possibly more angry than me about it. I don't think I'm angry about it any more. I think I just accept you have to separate God from the people who go to church. (Lucy, p.8, 276-280)

Val explained how some issues that she has taken to supervision have been contentious. This is due to her perceptions and assumptions about the faith and beliefs of her current supervisor, based on the beliefs of a previous supervisor:

It didn't always feel a comfortable place that I could talk about that. Because on one hand my supervisor before that was a strong Christian who I know has struggles with homosexuality being okay, and I changed from her because I'd been with her too long. And moved to this other lady, and then I'm thinking, oh I'm not sure if ... I've almost gone in the opposite direction, that this is somebody I'm not sure it's safe to talk about spirituality

with, because I'm not sure where she's at. And yet that's all my own projection. (Val, p.23, 675-684)

There were other issues within the relationship with this supervisor that Val struggled with:

There were other issues with ... this second supervisor that I struggled with. And ... in a very specific way that she particularly wanted me to work with the dissociative parts of a client, and so I changed my supervisor simply because there was a continual clash with the way that I was working and the way that she thought I ought to be working. (Val, p.23, 691-697)

Val particularly found it difficult to bring issues of homosexuality that clients had, to supervision. She felt a great deal of tension between how a supervisor would view the issues and how, as a Christian, there might be a different view:

[There's] a sense of you're not supposed to - I think within counselling circles, it's not okay to - it's almost like it's not okay in church to think that homosexuality is okay. And it's not okay in the counselling world to think that homosexuality is wrong. So ... as a counsellor, a Christian counsellor, I'm walking this journey, and questioning my own sense of, is it right or is it wrong? (Val, p.23, 667-670)

It appears there is a tension here for the participant who feels the need to know what is acceptable in supervision, particularly if the supervisor is a Christian. It is difficult to talk about issues that may be viewed as right or wrong inside and outside of church.

Anita revealed her experiences of her supervisor sharing a vision she had of her:

She saw me with a dog collar on. I think she thought oh you've got another career ... She had a vision but she couldn't work out what it meant for me. Actually, what it worked out for me was, I think God was saying, "This is your ministry as a counsellor and it's serious, this is what you were meant to be." So, it confirmed me in my ministry. Whereas I think she thought she might be me telling me I was moving on to another one. (Anita, p.21, 638-652)

Anita went on to explain that this was an example where an element of faith in the form of a vision was shared, but not interpreted correctly by the supervisor. This could have caused a great deal of aggravation for her as a supervisee. However, she continued by saying that she appreciated the supervisor being able to be vulnerable and share with her this vision, even though she did not agree with it. She did though, feel that it confirmed the calling she felt for

herself. There is some element of power dynamics at work in this setting that could be viewed as inappropriate by some.

Tina also identified an issue of power dynamics when she talked about a bad experience of Christian counselling that had taken place for her, and that she needed to take to her own supervision:

I did have a very bad experience of Christian counselling once. Well, it wasn't a bad experience because I was wise enough, and we'd been talking, etcetera. And then she said, "Right. Okay, right so we're just going to sit. And I'm going to talk to God about you. And I'm going to see what God has got to say." And then she sat there talking in tongues. And I was getting really irate inside and thinking "Woah. Who do you think you are?" You know and I don't know what she said. Well, she did say, she did hit the thing, the nail on the head. She told me, you don't really want to be here in this position, because it was a pretty nasty position. We were there to trouble shoot and they were slinging all their, projecting all their rubbish on to us. And so that was really hard. So, I think you have to keep all of that out of the counselling room. There's no autonomy in that is there, it's "I'm the professional. I'm the professional pray-er!" (Tina, p.45, 1333-1360)

Again, this experience identified the issue of power dynamics when a counsellor purported to be in a position to hear from God. This put the client at some unease and feeling unable to address the situation in the session.

Val has experience of clients in school who blame their religion for things they cannot do. This has led her to talk about this to her supervisor, who disagrees that it is because of religion. However, this also then leads on to a contentious subject:

Some of the children in this school say things like, "Well I can't talk to boys because of my religion." And my supervisor says, "It's not religion that's doing it. And this is a bit like, some of them saying they don't do Halloween because of their religion." (Val, p.29, 857-861)

Val herself has strong views about Halloween and felt she had to say to her supervisor that some of her adult clients have been ritually abused as part of Halloween, and so it could be viewed as an occult practice. As a Christian, Val doesn't view the celebration of Halloween as something of high importance. However, she did feel strongly about the fact that her supervisor had made assumptions that she should agree with her about Halloween:

But there was ... an assumption from this supervisor, ... even Halloween's not fun, they won't let him join in Halloween, and

I'm thinking, I don't let my children join in Halloween! (Val, p.29, 857-861)

4.4.2.1 Summary

This subordinate theme revealed some of the complexities and tensions around faith and spirituality in both counselling and supervision. It seems that power dynamics may be at work, making supervisees or clients uncomfortable, and feeling that they do not have a voice with which to address the situation. There are also strong feelings about supervisors making assumptions about the beliefs of their supervisees, and expecting them to agree with their own beliefs, or even lack of knowledge and understanding.

4.4.3 Subordinate theme 3.3: Perceptions in supervision

Interestingly, the majority of participants could not think specifically of times when issues of diversity and culture had arisen in supervision. It seems there is little time given to reflecting on diversity and culture in supervision.

Mary could not think of any explicit times when diversity and culture had come into her supervision sessions, although she was prepared to admit that they may possibly do so:

There will be times [in supervision] where I think diversity issues come up. (Mary, p.7, 205-206)

Val claimed that there had been no diversity issues that needed to be talked about in supervision until she started to work with children in a school. This was because previously she had always worked with women who shared the same faith, and who were of the same ethnicity as herself. She experienced a great deal more diversity with her young clients in school:

If I then reflect on to my new practice within schools, with the children, the diversity there is much greater. I hadn't even considered that as you were asking about diversity earlier. So, I've got two long term, I just picked up a third client, and they are all boys, and one's got an African background, another's got a Cypriot background and they come from a very diverse part of the country. So much more ethnicity. Two thirds of the kids in this school, parents speak other languages so that's very different. I mean we talk about diversity in supervision there a lot more. So, we talk about, obviously, the power dynamic of adult to child, how they perceive me as an obviously, very white old lady [laughter] from their perspective. ... So, diversity there is spoken about quite a bit. Their perceptions of me, their perceptions of how they see me as the parent or a teacher figure, and again fantasies of what they perceive my life to be.

(Val, p.25, 739-774)

Val also talked about her own feelings of being the only white British counsellor in school, and also an older person on the team:

The other counsellors on the team, there's three other [counsellors] ... they were all young and just doing their kind of initial counselling training almost straight out of nappies. And they were young and they were all mixed race of some sort, stunning they were some of those girls. So I've just picked up [one client] that was seen by one of the other counsellors and I get the impression, he [laughs] thinks, he's swapped his lovely counsellor for me, I'm not quite sure that's quite what he had in mind. (Val, p.25, 759-770)

It can be seen that Val has observed that, in her work in school, she has met much more diversity than in her previous counselling practice, and this has been a new experience for her.

Anita (Anita, p.25, 772-798) explains a different sort of diversity. She maintains that the one difference she will always take to supervision, is when she is seeing a client who is suffering from constant pain. She feels unqualified to work with such clients, and that she is really not able to make a difference in their lives. She feels powerless and has to constantly remind herself that what she is doing is better than nothing.

4.4.3.1 Summary

It is interesting to note that participants did not consider that diversity and culture as such were evident in supervision. Participants' perceptions were generally that it was not something that was discussed.

4.4.4 Summary of the superordinate theme “Experiences in supervision”

Overall, this superordinate theme viewed participants' awareness of how faith and spirituality, and diversity and culture, is experienced in supervision. Some tensions and complexity were evident for participants in supervision around the areas of faith and spirituality. However, it seemed that diversity and culture is not a prominent theme in supervision.

4.5 Superordinate theme 4: Experiences of faith and spirituality

The fourth superordinate theme considers the experiences of faith and spirituality that participants have had and explores whether their own faith and spirituality has been impacted by these.

The first subordinate theme investigates if participants have felt able to take care of their own faith and spirituality, whilst also being a counsellor. Participants have had different experiences but are able to give examples of how they care for their faith and spirituality, and also how they are aware when this extra care needs to be taken.

The second subordinate theme explores some of the challenges to participants' faith and spirituality, and how this may have changed over time.

The third subordinate theme reveals participants' personal views about God and church. Although it is difficult to know what would have happened if the participant had not been a counsellor, on the whole they believe that their counselling journey has deepened their faith, due to the diverse nature of the clients they have worked with.

4.5.1 Subordinate theme 4.1: Care of own faith and spirituality

The first subordinate theme investigates how, or if, participants feel they have been able to take care of their own faith and spirituality, throughout their career in counselling. Participants have had different experiences and give examples of how they believe they have been able do this.

Lucy explained that at times she has been able to care for her own faith in ways that were better than at other times (Lucy, p.13, 450). She went on to say:

I think I still have a sense of a presence at times. I wouldn't say I'm conscious of God in the room. I certainly feel the spirit in the room, so it's not a reasoning thing. It's more experiential for the want of a better expression - just that sense of God being in control. (Lucy, p.13, 452-460)

She continued by saying that she does not pray with her clients at all (Lucy, p.14, 460-461)

So even if people say, "Will you pray with me?" I say, "No. I will pray for you but I will not pray with you." (Lucy, p.15, 488-489)

Mary believes that her counselling journey has brought her closer to God. She explained how she feels that part of her self-care is actually being with God:

I think it's brought me closer to God. I think part of my self-care is being with God. And because it's a place I can take things - things that sometimes are really difficult to hear or that are you know, tough to listen to. You can take it there. It's kind of like having the ultimate supervisor. And so, for me, that's incredible to be able to do that. And I kind of feel like I'm placing the client in God's hands. (Mary, p.21, 624-640)

She also talked about other activities she enjoys doing that help her to feel close to God, and these form part of her own spiritual self-care:

I also think for me just being able to enjoy time with God. Like, so for me, walking my dog, going out in nature, and just kind of chatting to God, and praying as I'm going around. That for me is

really important. It kind of sheds away any residue of feeling that I might be carrying. (Mary, p.21-22, 644-652)

At the moment, Mary's counselling work in school is particularly heavy and she feels ready for the end of the school term:

At the moment I feel more full-up. And I'm really aware of this as we get to the end of a term. And, you know, my counselling load is about to drop very shortly. But I can feel that build. So, I know sometimes that, you know, this is where I have to be careful to make sure I do spend that time [with God]. (Mary, p.22, 654-662)

Mary's discourse shows that she is very aware of times when she needs a rest, and to take extra care of herself spiritually, by spending time with God. Another way that Mary ensures her own faith is by attending church:

I go to church - being with other Christians. There's a real dynamic in being with the church family. Spending time with them just on a social basis. And I probably don't do that enough in all honesty - especially at the moment just with everything that's going on ... course, counselling, job. But I think there's a dynamic in going on a Sunday morning and praising. Being involved in praise and worship with a group of people that are

praising and worshipping at the same time. There is just something in that, that lifts me. (Mary, p.22-23, 668-679)

There are also other times when Mary enjoys praising God on her own:

I can do it on my own. In the car I can have a good singsong. I can listen to stuff at home. I can do things on my own. And that's really valuable. And I love that time. You know that quiet time with the Lord, that actually being able to go and do that. You know that idea of where two or three are gathered. It feels like there's a spiritual dynamic in that, that is unexplainable, and that by doing that, we become greater in some way. (Mary, p.23, 681-693)

Anita explained that she prays for her clients, but is very careful that their issues are not taken home with her:

I think about my clients on the way to work, and that will include some prayer for them - not particularly specific prayer. Certainly, in the middle of a session sometimes I will talk to Him. I will pray, "What do You know?", "Be here". And I think those are the people I feel "I'm not quite sure where this is going. This has taken me by surprise." (Anita, p.23, 681-685)

Anita sometimes needs to remind herself that she is not doing this work on her own – God is with her:

So, I will then kind of remind myself, and it's like also an involuntary thinking of, "You're not on your own. God is here too." So, I guess that's taking care. I'm not expecting to do it all on my own, and in my own strength. (Anita, p.23, 687-693)

She is very careful to take time out for herself and not to take her clients' issues home with her, which would drain her own energy:

I do make sure that I take time out for myself. I see so many people now. There might be a few that I see that are actually on my mind, more than the others. But I need to make sure that they are not following me home or taking energy and time that I need for myself. Fortunately, it doesn't normally happen. Whether it's because there are so many of them ... I find myself seeing them as individuals, but individuals that form a mass. There might be people I'm thinking of, "When am I seeing them again?" "Will he come back?" "How has she got on?" And I'm happy to say where I thought, "Well, so-and-so is having her court case", or "So-and so-is having her holiday." (Anita, p.23-24, 695-717)

Anita has found that her car is a good place to think about and pray for her clients, whilst driving to and from appointments, although at times she has to tell herself not to think about them:

Sometimes when I drive home from work, this is the journey that's further away. I will think about clients on the way home and other times I'll say, "Don't think about them, think about something else, like what you're going to do when you get home." It's as if I have a kind of sense of, "Yes, carry it on. You can get something out of this." and, "Actually, this is thinking for the sake of thinking. It's better to switch off." So, I think I've got more of a sense now as to when it's good to switch off. Sometimes. Instead of letting my brain say, "Well, you're in this mode, carry on." (Anita, p.24-25, 724-743)

Paula explained how she believes that life itself looks after her faith, because God is always there to answer her prayers:

I guess just life looks after it, because when I need God, I pray. And when I pray, God answers prayer. Not always as I intend or want. When I worship my heart's lifted, and I feel a sense of otherness. Through my illness, I was convinced again that Christianity was real. And I counselled up until I had my operation in December, I counselled up until the November, you

know, and picked up the counselling again afterwards. I can't say it was very different, it's just part of life. But the spirituality side of things, my faith is taking care of itself, you know in all the different things that I do. And there's a rhythm of reading scripture, at least once a day. I pray lots of times, just short little prayers, and just seeking to do my best. (Paula, p.29-30, 869-896)

Rachel recognises that her prayer life is the way she connects with God, and this is her strong point. (Rachel, p.23-24, 705-709)

Tina revealed that one of the things that keeps her from guarding her spiritual self-care is busyness:

Busyness. That's quite interesting actually because, when I took on this course, having to put a lot of time into it, and I kept getting frustrated, "It's taking so much time." (Tina, p.47, 1396-1405)

4.5.1.1 Summary

It can be seen that participants in this study are very aware of their need to take care of themselves, spiritually. Sometimes this is not easy, but they have been able to do what they need to do and are able to reflect on this. They understand that sometimes they may be too busy to keep self-care in place.

However, they are able to keep connection with God and other Christians, as an important part of their life.

4.5.2 Subordinate theme 4.2: Challenges and changes

The second subordinate theme explores some of the challenges to participants' faith and spirituality, and how this may have changed over time. One participant talked about having her faith in church shaken, although her faith in God is still strong. Another participant reveals how working with one particular client who had struggles with her sexuality has changed her views on certain Bible verses. Lucy explained how, although her faith has not been shaken, her faith in the church has been shaken. This is mainly by Christians who, in her opinion, act in a very unchristian way:

Probably the ones that have challenged my faith more than any others are people who have been judged, rejected or abandoned by the church. So, that's what's shaken my faith. The fact that Christians have been - my point of view - very unchristian. I know there's been a lot of judgement. And so that probably challenges me more than anything else. I think it's never shaken my faith in God, it's shaken my faith in the church. (Lucy, p5, 162-173)

Lucy continued to talk about her own church life:

My life in church is, at this point, quite shallow. I used to do a bit of lay preaching. I would say that we're on the edge of the church rather than integral to it. ... I mean we go to things and we're just about to get a new minister. But we're not involved in the way that we've been involved with church before, where we've been actively involved. (Lucy, p.8-9, 282-320)

Lucy believes that church is still important to her, but talked about the changes that have come about in this part of her own life:

I think church is important. I just think at this point in time, it's the [counselling] that is the living embodiment of our faith. I think we worship in church, and we're linked to it, but we're passengers in that church. Whereas I think most of the other churches we've been involved in, we've been very active. (Lucy, p.10, 334-343)

Lucy continued to express how her church life has changed:

So, we've been people who have done things. Whereas we're not doing things in the church. (Lucy, p.10, 345-346)

Tina states her thoughts on how she now separates her faith in Jesus from church teachings:

And you know church – I mean now I make a difference between faith in Jesus, if you like the teachings of Jesus, which I follow, and actually the church teachings, which I don't think are there to be written in tablets of stone. (Tina, p.19-20, 553-562)

Val talked at length about a client who brought challenges and change to her faith and beliefs, around the subject of homosexuality. This was while she was helping the client to explore her own sexuality:

So, I've been on a bit of a - well we all have haven't we within the church – a journey on the sexuality side. I think that's the most difficult side of things, and my own journey has mirrored one of my clients. And I've probably moved from a fairly traditional, "God loves the sinner but hates the sin". The context there means that it's actually still a sin, so a sense of it's our interpretation. (Lucy, p.8, 217-226)

Val explains that she has become more open-minded about the meaning of particular Bible verses, because of working through the struggles of her client, with her:

I have a more open mind about what those particular Bible verses mean about homosexuality, and the struggles within a particular client, who is a committed Christian and yet finds herself in a same sex relationship. (Val, p.8, 553-562)

Val continued to explain that her client's relationship started out as a friendship, but then turned into a relationship:

But a friendship turned into something else, and they resisted and resisted, and then actually found that, actually, this is the way it is. So, they have now married. (Val, p.8, 231-234)

Along with the client, Val had explored the questions of whether the relationship was right or wrong, and whether she can still be a Christian:

And I've done that journey with her, of questioning whether it was right, whether God was still with her, still blessing her, and is she still a Christian? (Val, p.8, 234-238)

This did, however, change her views on what her church believes:

And I find myself a little bit at odds with my own church fellowship in that respect. So, I'm more liberal they would say, and my husband [would say], than much of my church family.

Even though they would accept, and they would welcome, and say, you can't be judgemental, I still think they have a sense of judgement that is in there. "It isn't right?" "It isn't Godly?" (Val, p.8-9, 240-249)

Val also believes that in years to come, the beliefs of the church, as a whole, will have changed:

I think ... we'll look back in years to come, in the same way that my mother-in-law fought for women to be able to be, you know, deacons, and you know in leadership, within church. And we think back on that now and think, "Really?" And I think that will be the same and will be true for sexuality in years to come. We will look back and go did we really do that? ... In the same way, there are still some churches that won't have female pastors because they're still very fundamental. Or [female] elders. And I think it will be the same for sexuality. (Val, p.9-10, 251-277)

Val explains what it meant for her to be on that particular journey, with her client. She talks of the struggles that her client had, as well as the desire to know what God's will for her was:

To do that struggle with her, and to read the books that she read, to look at the Bible verses together, to look at the

interpretations together. ... To really struggle with what does God think about this. And she was coming from the line of, is it a straight choice between faith and God, and being celibate and not being with this person I love, then I will choose God. You know? But I don't want to choose that way simply because man has told me. I want to know for sure. I want God to tell me, I want to know from God, what is His best purpose for my life? Why would I give up the ability, you know, the place of safety, and security, and love, within the relationship, you know, will God bless that? And you know if he does, then actually it can't be so wrong. (Val, p.10-11, 283-308)

Val concluded that it is very different to have a generalised point of view, than when you are actually involved with a person and the struggle they are having:

And doing that journey with her, and that struggle which was quite a thing. It challenged my beliefs. It did challenge my beliefs. And I think, in all these things, it's when you've got an out-there belief that's to do with people you don't really know, it's just a generalised thing. Then it's very different than working it out personally, I think. (Val, p.11, 310-319)

The challenges faced by both client and counsellor can be heard in this discourse, as well as the challenge and change it brought to the participant's own faith and belief.

Paula talked about a client who had expanded her own views of spirituality:

His approach to spirituality was quite broad and, I would say, had an element of mindfulness. He was a photographer, so he was very moved by beautiful sunsets. He was quite committed to this form of union that was outside of Christianity, that was overtly pagan. But he seemed to be genuinely trying to offer a service, so it broadened my ideas too. I was never tempted to believe what he believed, or compromise in the way of my own beliefs. But I could understand the human side of the search, of the dissatisfaction of just having the physical, emotional time limited, experience of life. And it did seem expansive, and that was attractive. (Paula, p.8-9, 242-264)

Rachel gave an example of her experience of church, and how she has come to the point of having a more "open" faith than others may have:

And where I lived before you know, I attended just a normal, run of-the-mill if you like, Church of England church. Nothing very

kind of outgoing or wacky, but the Reverend was very kind of accepting. (Rachel, p.9, 265-268)

Rachel had an idea about setting up a bookstore. Her vicar was very open to this idea, even though there would be a wide range of spiritual books on offer:

I had come up with the idea of setting up a bookstore that included some wider spiritual books ... that I had read, that I felt I connected to as well. So, you know, and he was very accepting and nurturing of my position and of my reading and learning. And he had a very strong belief in that it was okay to read lots of different things. To learn about other faiths, to learn about other different types of spirituality, but, you know, our core faith remains within us. And despite or because of, if you like, all of my reading over the years, as wide as it has been, I've been able to see that he's been right, you know, that having freedom to be able to read, to listen, has strengthened my faith, but, you know, it is a more open faith than some people's. I still have belief in those basic principles. Those basic tenets of the Christian faith. But I'm just more open, more willing to listen, more willing to learn and read than some, perhaps. (Rachel, p.9-10, 275-302)

Even though Rachel has read and learned about various types of spirituality, the basic foundation of her Christian faith is still in place. Rachel continued to explain her own quest for truth:

So, I think for a lot of the time I've questioned if you like, I've wanted to know what is the truth in this? What, you know, what really happened? Do I believe that? Do I believe that? And so, for him, it was encouraging me to read, but just to recognise that, you know, that we have faith without knowing the absolute truth. Without knowing what actually happened in that situation. And that, you know, from my point of view, we can see things from different angles. And so, therefore, things in the Bible when there are, what some might term discrepancies, or differences in the story, it's because we are all unique individuals, with different perspectives, looking at it from different angles. (Rachel, p.10-11, 305-318)

Similarly, Tina talked about the difference leaders in the church can make to one's own faith and spirituality:

He was really a contemplative, so we were big kindred spirits. And then we have a new oncoming, and she's very charismatic and evangelical. And she's trying to do things and I sit there thinking, "Tried to do this 20 years ago. You'll be lucky. What's

the point?” You can’t change people from the outside. It’s got to come from the inside, and they’ve got to have a big crisis for any change to happen, or suddenly have a big dollop of love from nowhere that makes them think, “Oh my word!” So yeah, it’s frustrating. (Tina, p.36, 1061-1074)

Tina’s frustrations can be heard in this discourse. She went on to explain that her frustrations come from her own experiences with clients she has seen for spiritual direction:

And I think what is frustrating is that, I know, because I see privately people for spiritual direction. And I’ve done retreats and stuff, and people have really responded, and, you know, just found God again, people who have been Christians for years, and how they’re struggling with the church. I think a lot of people are struggling with the church today, but the church seems to be just trying to dig its heels in, and do more of what it’s always done, you know. (Tina, p.36, 1076-1089)

Tina explained how she has taken ideas to her church about running a group for mindfulness or meditation. However, this has been rejected as being too radical:

I'd be very happy to offer a little hour space for people in the village just to come into the church for the mindfulness. And it was like, "Oh, well that might be a little bit radical." And I thought, "Oh well, there you go, don't bother." (Tina, p.37, 1093-1104)

Tina believes that many counsellors are on a deeper journey, and church is not for them anymore:

I think there are a lot of the counsellors, not all of them, but some of them are a bit like "Oh. Do you know. Church just doesn't do it for me anymore" because they are on a deeper journey aren't they, and the church doesn't tend to have much to offer for that. I'm not saying all churches don't, but my experience has been it's been like that. (Tina, p.34-37, 1010-1120)

4.5.2.1 Summary

This subordinate theme reveals that participants have faced challenges to their faith and spirituality, during their time as a counsellor. This has changed their faith in various ways, but often, it seems, making them more broad-minded about their faith, and having a deeper faith.

4.5.3 Subordinate theme 4.3: Change of view

This subordinate theme investigates the views of participants, regarding their counselling journey, and how this may have affected or impacted their own faith and spirituality. Although it is difficult to know what would have happened if participants had not chosen a career in counselling, they believed that this journey had deepened their faith in God. For some of the participants, however, there have also been life events that they have to work through, which has also impacted their faith.

Lucy believes that we are far from knowing God. He is a mystery:

I have huge respect for other faiths, and I don't think that God is that narrow actually. I don't think we even know who God is, or what God is. I think He is a mystery. (Lucy, p.15, 505-507)

At one time, Lucy had turned away from God and became an atheist. However, she returned to God, and now believes that God was with her through all of that time when she denied Him:

And I don't believe that if you were born in a certain part of the world, and the case often that somehow or other that means that God doesn't know you, or you don't know God. I think God reaches us in different ways at different times. I think my experience of being an atheist, is that all of that time I thought I wasn't a Christian, God knew I was. (Lucy, p.15, 509-513)

Lucy states her belief that God is all knowing and all seeing:

He sees the end from the beginning, and he sees what's within us, so I don't have a problem with it. Not just counselling because I've worked in very diverse settings. I've had a lot to do with different faiths. (Lucy, p.15, 515 -518)

Mary considered whether the challenge of her client's abortion has affected her relationship with God:

So, does it affect my relationship with God? No, I don't think it does. I think it affects my spirituality and how I work that out because I would pray that out. I would pray that out, and I would be very much like, "Look this is my feeling on it, this is my wrestle, I want to be there for that person, I want to be able to kind of meet with them with true empathy." I'd pray about the whole thing really, their decision making. I would pray about kind of every aspect, them and perhaps, you know, the baby, all of it. And then also pray for myself in that in the sense that whatever that client decides to do that I can remain, you know, with them, truly with them, and congruent in the sense that I'm not lying to myself about how I feel about it. But can I still wholeheartedly stand with them, and be with them during that process? (Mary, p.11-12, 340-362)

The difficulties of staying congruent in a situation that she finds difficult can be heard in this discourse.

Val shared her beliefs about God, and expressed her view that God may be bigger than Christianity alone:

I could very easily get to a place of believing that there are many ways to God, and that being brought up within a Muslim faith, and following that faith and being faithful to that faith, and God will go, "Yeah." You were faithful to your faith in that sense, and you know, and there's an element of me within this faith. I guess I'm saying there that God can be bigger than Christianity.
(Val, p.31, 940-946)

However, it is through Christianity that Val has found and experienced her own faith, where God is real for her. This makes it the right path for her:

But I experience God through my Christianity, and he's real for me in this. So, for me the right path is this, but I have a sense that God is bigger than that. So, if at the end of the day we end up and we've got, you know, everybody in Heaven. (Val, p.31, 946-949)

Val revealed that it would not necessarily be good to talk to others in her church about this, as she may not get a very positive response. However, in a way similar to Lucy, Val expresses the belief that God is so much bigger than the view that many have of Him:

It's kind of like, God is God, He's big and He can do what he wants to do, and I suppose it's the accident of faith, and accident of birth, that I've been born into this family, into this church, into this part of the world, and I could have been born into a Muslim family, in a Muslim part of the world, or a Hindu family, in a Hindu part of the world. Or into an atheist family. That it's funny that I struggle more with that, you know than I do with Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, because there is a, you know, an element of believing in God in there. (Val, p32, 960-967)

Val continued to talk about how being a counsellor has shaped her faith:

The fundamental basis, I think, for a counsellor, is to place ourselves into other people's shoes. It's to be empathic, it's to get out of my chair and see it from your perspective. And when you do that, there is an element of seeing it from your view, and therefore it widens my view. (Val, p.32, 972-975)

Val's journey with her client's struggles (4.5.2) has particularly changed her views:

So, doing this journey with this client, you know, we went through the struggles of looking at it together, and really understanding her struggle, really empathising with this, "I want to do the right thing, I want to do what God wants me to do, and therefore, if it's to give up this relationship, I'm prepared to do that", and walking with her in that. (Val, p.32, 975-980)

Val was invited to the wedding of her client but did not attend due to it being in a different country. She did, however, record a blessing that was heard at the wedding:

And also, you know she asked me to, [but] I didn't go to the wedding, because actually the wedding wasn't in this country ... But she asked me if I would write a blessing, and that would be read out, you know, would I write something that could be read out at their wedding. And I prayed about it a lot, and I wrote something, and in the end, I said it. I taped it, and so it was played at the wedding. (Val, p.32, 981-988)

Val felt that God was with her in the writing and recording of the message. This gave her the belief that if God was in the spiritual journey with her, she could not say that what the client was doing was wrong:

And I felt God's spirit move within me, as I was preparing it and as I was writing it. And you know, I just felt, "God, you're in this. And if you're in it, then who am I to say you're not?" But I'd been on that journey. It's not an intellectual thing for me. It was a spiritual journey, but it started from wanting to get into her perspective, understand it from her side. (Val, p.32, 988-993)

Val continued by saying that the counselling relationship is different to other relationships, because it opens up an empathic world:

I think in most relationships, it's about a shared perspective. So, most relationships it's, you show me you, I'll show you me. So, in most relationships, the perspective is that we will convert the other person to our view, you know? And all this talk about witnessing, it's all about, you know, me talking to people, meeting them, and then getting your story and telling them your testimony, share your testimony with them and then you'll bring them to Christ. Well, we don't do that in the counselling room, really, because it's not about our story. So, in some ways, they are witnessing to us about their story, and yes, it opens up an

empathic world. Yes. I hadn't really thought of it like that but it's interesting. (Val, p.33, 998-1008)

This empathic world, Val believes, doesn't usually happen unless you are personally involved with someone:

Unless, as I said earlier, unless you have somebody in your family, so I have some really dear friends whose son - how old is he, 8-year-old, 9-year-old son, that loved to dress up in girls' clothes, and even from a little lad, you know, and he was very effeminate, and they have had to grapple with this as a Christian family. This is who their child is, and I think it's in that grappling that you grow, and you change. Whereas if you've got no way, nothing sharp to rub up against, then you don't have to change, do you? (Val, p.33, 1014-1022)

Anita expressed her view that it is difficult to tell what would have happened to her faith, had she not been a counsellor. However, she does know that, through counselling, she has met so many more different people than she would have otherwise met. This has enabled her to meet people with a different faith to her own, which has made her realise that faith in itself is something that is important:

I think it's very hard to tell what would have happened without the counselling, because I think my faith has changed over the last few years anyway, but I imagine the counselling and meeting so many people, I think I've met more people of different faiths through counselling than I would have done without it. So, it's given me the privilege of talking to people at a deep level, who have a really strong faith base that isn't the same as my own. And that has helped me realise that faith itself is something different, faith itself is something that is important.

(Anita, p.14, 417-428)

This has not, Anita believes, taken anything away from her own faith, but at the same time, is beyond her understanding:

Well, in one way you might think that might deplete my Christianity. This is a devout Muslim, and he or she is going through a difficult time, but God is supporting them, prayer is supporting them, the religious community is supporting them That's their version of Christianity. But I don't go along those lines. I think this is beyond my understanding. They have a different faith. They have a different holy book. They believe something that is opposite to me, so they would say Jesus was a prophet. I would say He's the son of God. But I don't disbelieve their faith ... I just think to myself, good, you have

something that resources you, which is deep and eternal, and won't go away. As a counsellor, I'm thinking you have something really valuable in place. (Anita, p.3, 14-15, p.14, 430-457)

Anita believes her own faith has become more inclusive, wider and less dualistic because of this. She would though, choose carefully who she talked to about this:

My faith has become more inclusive and wider and much less dualistic. And I think some of the people I know in real life, in outside life, and who are Christians, I wouldn't talk about what I've just said. I wouldn't talk about it with them in case they thought oh, you're watering down your faith. (Anita, p.15-16, 459-470)

Anita believes she is going deeper in her faith, although others might say she is watering down her faith. Even though she still goes to a traditional Anglican church, she feels she is moving towards a more spiritual approach, which is still Christian:

It feels to me as if I'm going deeper, and I'm getting closer to some of the things that Jesus said that were very paradoxical. And I still go to church, to quite a traditional Anglican church.

So, my churchgoing is quite traditional, but I'm getting more into spirituality, rather than Christianity, or rather the spiritual aspects of Christianity. I'm noticing the books I'm reading now, are more sort of like Richard Rohr, and about spiritual death, rather than about the books of the Bible or what churches are getting up to. (Anita, p.16, 472-489)

Anita also realises she is much now less involved in church life:

And I am less involved in what my church is getting up to than I once would be, now that's partly because counselling is taking up more time and energy, and so does the training. Partly because as I've looked into more self-awareness and things, that I begin to question now why I get involved in things, taking up roles in church ... I was more involved in the nitty-gritty of church, in the meetings and spreadsheets and things like that. ... That's where my faith was 10-15 years ago, but it's not where my faith is now. I'm less in works than I was as a young Christian, which admittedly was in my 30s, I got very heavily involved. Now I'm far more in the idea of grace. And that's for each individual to work out what it looks like for them at any season in their lives. (Anita, p.17-18, 511-538)

Anita reiterates that if she had not been a counsellor she would not have met and worked with such a diverse range of people. However, she has also been on a personal spiritual journey, which has taken her into new territory:

If I hadn't become a counsellor, I would not have met the people that I've worked with, though I'm conscious, and it's maybe worth saying, and I've talked about Richard Rohr, but he wrote a book called *The Second Half of Life*, which I found really profound. And I read it in a time when I was in a real transition from my career of 30 years. ... So, for me I had that falling upwards. So, I fell upwards myself. So that made me far more untethered for a time. And far more aware of the fact that it's sometimes better not to hold on to certainty. So, it has been a personal journey as well. (Anita, p.19-20, 574-596)

Paula believes that her counselling career has broadened her faith, and helped to take away some of the religiosity:

It's broadened it, because I meet more different kinds of people, both Christian, non-Christian and those of other faiths that are genuinely searching for that heart connection. And why would I think that my narrow experience of Christianity is all encompassing? So, I have my own faith, but that doesn't mean to say that somebody else isn't on a faith journey. And why

would it look like mine? So it has actually helped me to strip off the religiosity, get to the heart of why we want that God connection. (Paula, p.4-5, 120-136)

Paula contends that her faith is much more “human” now. She is able to accept people as they are, rather than worrying about the spiritual aspect:

I think my faith has got a much more human face on it now, in terms of accepting people where they're at, without worrying over what's happening spiritually. (Paula, p.24, 696-701)

Paula believes she now has a much bigger view of God. However, this may not be due to counselling alone:

And I've got a bigger view of God now, but it's not necessarily through the counselling alone, it's more to do with having gone through cancer, and having to, you know, sort of reassess my life in terms of issues of death and dying, and significance, and what my faith means to me. So it can't be entirely because of being a counsellor. (Paula, p.24, 707-716)

It is though, through counselling that Paula has met a bigger cross-section of the community:

Through counselling I meet a bigger cross-section, I think, of the community than if I wasn't a counsellor. So, in one way, people with various life issues that feel counselling is what they want. But then it also could be seen as a narrow band of people with problems. So, I don't like to take on too many counselling clients. I like to have time with the family, and with you know, doing other things. Being interested in the news and what's going on, and all that kind of thing. So, I don't dwell entirely on being the best counsellor that I could ever be ... So, it's all of God in all of life, as far as I'm concerned, that expresses my faith. So, you know, it's not just church, it's not you know, just spending quiet time. It's shopping, it's talking to people, it's helping people, it's enjoying babies and puppies. You know, it's like where is God not? He is everywhere. Is he capable of changing situations? Yes. Does he need my help? No. But it's great to be part of the Christian life, just seeing the spirit moving. You know, perhaps being a little cog in the machine that makes it flow a bit better. So, I've got a different concept of my part in my faith, whereas it used to be a bit driven with me. The focus is much more God focused and I lean into him more than do it on my own. (Paula, p.24-26, 718-760)

Paula revealed that this has sometimes caused tension between others of her faith, and particularly her husband:

I think sometimes, between my husband and I, he being very teacher orientated, and you know, doctrine, and you know, what you say has got to be in line with scripture and this kind of thing ... whereas I would take a different view of, "There but for the grace of God go I". You know, we are open to these deceptions. We make mistakes, and you know, we're all on a journey, and who knows fully what, that's going to produce. So, I think he sees me as quite liberal and almost humanistic. (Paula, p.26, 763-780)

Sally talked about how her practices have changed as far as church is concerned:

My practices have changed enormously. I struggle with church if I'm really honest ... and client work may be part of this. It's hard to pull out the strands. And I found I couldn't bear what I perceived as the hypocrisy, and the artificiality of Sunday relationships. And I know it's partly myself, but you know the bumping into somebody, "How are you?", "Fine thank you." "How are you?" "Fine thank you.", and on your way. And I'm sure client work has been part of this, but so has as my personal life. And so has some trauma that's happened within the last three years has led to, I would say spiritual reappraisal,

but at the moment I'm not a churchgoer. I have for the last ten months or so, been unable to go church and it's an incredibly lonely experience actually. (Sally, p.12-13, 361-389)

Sally continued to explain how this has worked out in her life:

I've not lost my faith at all, but I think that spiritual reappraisal yet again ... In terms of prayer and I pray all the time. I prayer walk. I was brought up, you knelt down at the side of your bed, and you had a quiet time. There's nothing wrong with that, but I find the expectations very demanding of that. And so, I personally am finding it much easier to go for a walk and just naturally talk to God. Personally, that's where I am. Reading the Bible I struggle with, I've just bought a passion translation because it brings to life the text for me again, but yes I admit there are elements of the practices that I would say they are under review for me at the moment. (Sally, p.13, 391-408)

Sally believes she was taken out of a church situation by God so that she could meet with him in a fresh way:

I felt actually that God took me out of a church situation to meet afresh with me, and it was quite profound. I'm not sure I feel that at the moment, but it's where I am, and because of my

story and what's happened, it's kind of an okay, but a bit of a painful place to be in. When you've done those practices all your life, it's quite a lonely place to be at times. (Sally, p.13, 411-419)

Sally expresses her feelings that the position of being outside of church is a lonely place for her. There are a limited number of people that she can talk to about this:

I've got one friend in particular who I talk to. And some of my colleagues ... are aware of what happened, and that the last few years have been really traumatic, and we don't necessarily talk about it, because we're there to work and all of that, but there is a mutual understanding. So, if for example I say, "I don't feel able to do devotions this month," or whatever it might be, then that is respected And I'm not the only one in the tutor team who goes through times like that. And I don't feel that my faith has changed. My practices have changed and have changed enormously. But my core faith if you like remains unchanged. (Sally, p.13-14, 422-442).

Sally believes that although her practice of attending church has changed, her core faith remains the same. This is a difficult subject to approach with those in

church leadership, although she has talked it through with the pastor of one church she used to attend with her husband:

Well. I did meet with the pastor of the church that my husband still goes to. And I tried to resign, and he said, "Let's meet." which we did few months ago now. And it was a really useful meeting. And he said to me, "At the moment, you know you are scattered church. That's how I see you", and as it happens his wife is in a very similar place apparently. (Sally, p14, 447-453)

However, Sally is considering the possibility of attending another church in the future:

So, we have some changes going on in a church we used to go to locally, and it may be that I review that over time. But occasionally, I will go there on a Sunday evening, to the quiet and more meditative service. So, that's where I am. And I like the quiet. I can't do that happy-clappy sort of stuff. Just can't do it. So, it would feel wrong to, you know, to even try at the moment. (Sally, p.15, 465-480)

Sally also realises the impact that clients may have had on her, particularly by the questions they may ask. However, she counts it a privilege to work with a client's spirituality:

I do believe clients impact that as well. And they sometimes ask questions that make us think, but I also think it's an incredible privilege to work with a client's spirituality when they are okay for that to come into the room, and sometimes welcome it. (Sally, p.16, 484-491)

Sally believes that her faith is still alive and has firm foundations, even though it may have "wobbled" a bit:

Well, I think my core faith has been wobbled by what has happened. I think it is still alive, actually, because it's got firm foundations. It can wobble but the firm foundations enable it to be there still. (Sally, p.16, 494-504)

Sally revealed that she has been impacted by the recent death of her mother, and this has caused her to do some existential thinking:

I think there's some existential stuff going on. My mum died [recently] and although in theory I knew what a loss of a parent was like ... I knew about it theoretically, but actually experiencing it, and it is very complex what has happened, and all the rest of it. That has brought an existential issue up for me because it feels like the buffer above is getting thinner. (Sally, p.17, 515-530)

There are many changes in her life that are also having an impact on her:

Also, my husband is due to retire later this month, and my eldest grandson goes to university this month. And so, there are lots of changes. I'm aware that grandchildren - I've got four teenage grandchildren, and one that isn't a teenager. And life is passing by very quickly. I think I've got to that age where I've realised that more than anything. I also have a number of people in my life who are really struggling with cancer, and mental health issues. Friends I'm thinking about – there's somebody whose husband is very ill. And it brings up the existential issues of life and death, and the brevity of life, and retirement, and all of that sort of stuff. So, there's a lot of change going on which impacts you know, in a big way actually, I think. So, it's an odd place to be. I love Irvin Yalom's writing because he writes about the different markers in life, and the mile posts in life. (Sally, p.17-18, 532-559)

There are also thoughts of her own retirement on the horizon:

I don't see retirement as imminent by any means. But nevertheless, as everything changes in my home life, and my family as well, I think it makes you think. Makes me reflective, I think. And maybe ask those questions that in terms of spiritual

reappraisal, ask those questions that I was never allowed to ask growing up. You know, I always said I did my teenage rebellion when I was forty, but I actually think if you know, later on in life, maybe I'm asking some of those questions that I couldn't ask. (Sally, p.18-19, 563-588)

4.5.3.1 Summary

This subordinate theme explores the thoughts that participants have about their counselling journey, and how this may have impacted their own faith and spirituality. It can be seen that counselling has changed some of their views on particular issues. However, participants have also faced existential questions about life, through events that have taken place in their personal lives. This has enabled them to think more deeply about God and life in general.

4.5.4 Summary of superordinate theme “Experiences of faith and spirituality”

Overall, this superordinate theme investigates the experiences of faith and spirituality that participants have had, and explores whether their own faith and spirituality has been impacted by these.

Participants revealed that they are very aware of the need to take care of themselves spiritually. They reflected that they have been able to do what they need to do to take care of themselves, even though at times this may not have

been easy. The ability to keep connection with God is particularly important in their lives. Participants have faced challenges to their faith and spirituality during their time as a counsellor. Although this may have changed their faith in various ways, they believe it has made them more broad-minded about their faith, which has allowed them to have a deeper faith. Participants have also faced events in their personal lives that have brought about existential questions. They believe these have, however, enabled them to think more deeply about God.

4.6 Superordinate theme 5: Experiences of diversity and culture

The fifth superordinate theme investigates the experiences and views that participants have had of diversity and culture through their counselling journey.

The first subordinate theme explores the views that participants have of diversity and culture, and how they have encountered this in the therapy room.

The second subordinate theme explores the different forms of diversity that participants have worked with, during their time as a counsellor.

The third subordinate theme investigates which is the most challenging form of diversity that participants have found in counselling.

In the fourth subordinate theme, participants express their views of diversity and culture within the church.

4.6.1 Subordinate theme 5.1: Views on diversity and culture

The first subordinate theme investigates the views that participants have of diversity and culture, and how this has been encountered in the therapy room.

Lucy explained that she believes that diversity and culture have always been integral to how she lives her life, and it is part of who she is (Lucy, p.17, 575-579). She states that there is no difference for her in the counselling room.

Mary, however, explained how her views had changed, before beginning training, during her time at university:

I think it's interesting because my background was an evangelical church. And I think going to university, that was kind of a bit of a shock in terms of sexuality and things like that because of the perception of what, you know, gay was in the church, that you shouldn't really be gay. And it was interesting to me because I think my university experience worked that out ... Some of my best friends were gay, so I did my own exploration, biblical exploration around that, and felt really comfortable with it. (Mary, p.8, 232-244)

It can be seen that prior to beginning a career in counselling, Mary had carried out her own exploration around homosexuality from a Christian perspective, due to being friends with peers who were gay. Despite what her church

background had taught her, this changed her views on that particular form of diversity.

Anita explained that her own faith journey, and those of clients and supervisees she has worked with, has led her to believe that what connects us is more important than what is different (Anita, p.10, 261-262). She also feels, from her own experience, that counsellors should not be under pressure to believe they have to know everything about every form of diversity. She has experienced clients who generally explain how their own culture is carried out:

I see a lot of the clients that I work with, who are clearly different. We have different faith, or we have a different culture. They will say, quite naturally, things like, in our culture, or where you do this, we do this. And they're trying to explain in the same way that you might say, oh, as a nurse, I work on shift time. You know, you need to know this about my life because it's not self-explanatory (Anita, p.10, 287-296)

Anita continued to say that in training, it seemed to her that you had to find out and learn about many kinds of difference, but now she believes that is too much to expect:

I think now, to expect yourself to be [knowledgeable about] LGBTQ+ ... plus every possible faith you might come across,

plus Eastern Europeans who might be Christian but very different, and an array of disabilities that you might not even meet one person with this condition, and never meet anybody else again. I think I kind of more expect the other person to share what they think I need to know, than go with it myself.

(Anita, p.10-11, 302-314)

Anita also admitted that “the more similar someone is to me, well that can sometimes be more challenging”. (Anita, p.11, 329-331)

Anita has some experience of working in sessions with an interpreter, which in itself can be very challenging. She believes this makes a difference to the context, because the interpreter also has their own relationship with the client.

There are also difficulties in language when using an interpreter:

You are not quite sure which are the emotive bits, you can't pick up on a word or a repeated word. So, definitely, there's the language difference that does make a difference (Anita, p.12, 354-362)

Much can also depend on the particular interpreter, as well as the client:

The interpreters are different. So, the two I'm working with at the moment, one [client] could talk for about a minute or two

minutes, which is quite a long time, then the interpreter feeds that all back to me. So, it takes quite a long time and information is coming in big chunks. With the other one, she doesn't say very much, so it's much more immediate. (Anita, p.13, 369-379)

Val, whilst working in a school, has encountered differences in ethnicity, which have caused her to wonder what her new client is thinking about her as a woman:

My new lad's mum wears a burka so, that's interesting, that sense of actually who or what do I represent as a woman ... him coming in to see me not covered up. And what does that mean? And there's the levels of respect for women or whatever that might mean. (Val, p.27, 808-818)

For Val, working with children has opened up areas of diversity that she has not encountered before. Working in school is the first time she has worked in a role that is not set in a Christian context. All of her previous counselling, training, and even the agency she has worked for, have been Christian. This has made working in school very different for her:

So, it's very different. Completely different. And it's not like I talk about faith and God in my adult work all the time. But it's just an

implicit part of who we are. And I do talk faith with clients ... when it's requested, but obviously in school, that is, not at all. And, you know, if we talk about spirituality and I have talked about it a little bit to this 13-year-old, it's in the context of Eid, and what he is hoping for. (Val, p.29-30, 882-896)

Val continued by saying that her own faith has not been challenged by her work with clients of a different faith:

Me and this lad start from completely different perspectives, and I'm stepping into his world, and being in his world, but it's not changing my world. (Val, p.31, 926-927)

Val also talked about the difficulties of stepping into an entirely different culture:

The older one, my 13-year-old, has a disabled father. And a mother that doesn't speak English, a disabled father, and a younger brother who is also disabled, and with some learning difficulties. So he's got a lot of responsibility, adult responsibility, and again that's different. I don't necessarily know what that feels like to be 13 and running the family email account. (Val, p.26-27, 780-793)

Val continued by talking about the differences she found prior to working in a school:

I've tended to work with mostly white women. So, the biggest differences I would have come across were in the economic background, I suppose. So, those that are from a background of deprivation of some sort. I suppose the biggest difference I've come across is actually I came from a family that loved each other, and there wasn't any abuse. I work with highly abused clients that have been abused from the cot you know, really horrific stuff. And so, the biggest difference between me and my client is that I have parents that loved me, and were messed up in some ways, but actually fundamentally, thought the world of us and wouldn't have wanted to hurt us in any shape or form. The foundations of solidness there. And so the diversity, the difference that I can struggle to really comprehend is with clients, when I mean I get it but sometimes, I have to remind myself the basis on which they are building their life is so shaky, but there are a lot of other things that I kind of take for granted that just aren't there. (Val, p.21-22, 599-635)

Tina explained how working in many diverse settings has helped her to separate her own beliefs from that of her clients:

In your counselling training you learn to see the person. And you have to kind of separate your own beliefs, or your church teaching, from that. But I suppose, because I've worked in so many diverse places, that's happened on a weekly basis really, being in London, and all sorts of other places. So, it's a lot of different people, different cultures. And I love all of that, I feed off all of that. (Tina, p.45-46, 1362-1383)

4.6.1.1 Summary

It can be seen that participants have various views of diversity and have had different experiences of it in the therapy room. Some participants have changed their view over time whilst working with clients. Others already had a very set view prior to beginning counselling, and this has not been changed by counselling.

4.6.2 Subordinate theme 5.2: Differences in the therapy room

The second subordinate theme explores the different kinds of diversity that participants have encountered in the therapy room. It can be seen that they recognise the many forms of difference found there, which are very varied. Some participants found that although there may be diversity in faith, this does not necessarily make the counselling process any more difficult. One participant found that there could even be a shared experience between those of a different faith. Others found diversity in the age groups they were counselling, still others found diversity in sexuality.

Participants had experienced many types of diversity and culture. Lucy, for example, claimed to have worked with “everything”! She had worked with people of different faiths and none; people living in poverty or having disabilities; older people and those with dementia; homosexual and gender fluid; people from Eastern European backgrounds; those with mental ill-health; travellers; alcoholics; and drug addicts. (Lucy, p.4, 109-127)

Similarly, Mary has also encountered many different forms of diversity:

What haven't I found really? I think culture. I think economic. I think there's been sexuality. And I think that working with young people at the moment seems to be the one that really is kind of coming to the fore. So, you know, kids that really are describing sexuality in all sorts of ways. (Mary, p.4-5, 123-126)

Mary, however, realises that although there are some forms of diversity that are more obvious, there are differences in each and every client:

But actually, the diversity is, you know, you take it back and take it back. And it can be those really small things as well. So, I think everybody really, every individual you meet with, there's diversity there. It's just accepting that we are all different. We all come from very different places, have very different experiences. And being able to step into that person's world and

really trying to experience it. Sometimes there's responsibility for me to go away and explore. But also, to kind of allow them to tell me what their world is. (Mary, p.5, 131-145)

Mary continued to express her thoughts about the differences that can be found in everyone:

Even down to really small things like the way that people celebrate Christmas. And I think if you just take that, and the diversity of that, of what Christmas means to people - and what it doesn't mean, and the ways of celebrating and well, not celebrating, or not even acknowledging it. I think people's experience, even of that, is so diverse. (Mary, p.5-7, 147-191)

Sally has worked with many kinds of sexual diversity:

I have worked with sexual diversity. You know, heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, a young person who is transitioning. (Sally, p.8, 234-235)

Sally also explained that she has worked with all age groups:

I did have a client once who was 79 when we started work. I'll never forget her phone call because she said, "Am I too old for

counselling?" And apparently, her perception, she'd rung somebody and was told she was too old for counselling. She was lovely to work with, and I worked with her probably for a couple of years, so through her 80th birthday actually. So, again, a broad spectrum of age. (Sally, p.8, 247-254)

Tina explained that, although she had already had experience of people who are gay outside of the therapy room, her first encounter with a client who was gay proved to be something different for her:

I'd had contact with people who were gay, homosexual, but it was my first kind of sitting opposite somebody and, you know, it kind of just broke down all my prejudices that I didn't even know I had. You know, because face to face with this young man, and how he was struggling, and how in his mother's eyes it was tragic, and you know, he was bringing dreams that he was having about clearing out his mum's fridge, and washing it all out for her, and bringing it all back and things like that. That kind of made me realise that everybody is unique. (Tina, p.17, 471-491)

Anita also explained that she has worked with clients with various differences:

The majority of clients I've worked with probably have been white and probably have been, if they were to sort of specify, either of no faith or would say Church of England. I have also worked with a lot of the clients who aren't from that background. So, Muslims, Hindus. Also, not all are heterosexual, homosexuals, lesbians, a couple who have described themselves as gender fluid but the work hasn't been around that. ... Sometimes I've worked with people with visual impairments, or mobility issues, or something like that. (Anita, p.6-7, 163-200)

Paula explained that, when working in Birmingham, she had worked with clients where there were some spiritual differences. This, however, manifested in how clients were treated in the context of family:

Culturally, I was in Birmingham and there were some Muslim women [who] came briefly for counselling, again funded counselling or subsidised counselling, and there were spiritual elements that came in particularly on how they were treated within the family context. (Paula, p.13, 384-388)

Rachel thought it strange that, in the multicultural school where she works, there are few students who actually take up the offer of counselling:

We have students of different kinds of faiths and cultures and ethnic backgrounds. But really, it's so rare that they actually come to counselling. I'm amazed that we don't see more, or that they're not put forward by their Head of Year or Assistant Head of Year, even though there are students with problems. So, I don't know whether ... that would be shameful. I think we've had one pair, a brother and sister, who really they came, because of an imminent bereavement and I don't know whether they would have done otherwise. But other than that, I wouldn't say it's been completely kind of white British, there would be more people from Europe. (Rachel, p.5, 131-148)

Rachel also explained that when she worked for another organisation, she saw some clients who were older:

When I was with Mind, you know, I would see older people. ... I've seen a couple of people who have been in their 70s, 80s or 90s. (Rachel, p.6, 159-163)

Rachel also talked about the time that she saw her first lesbian client:

For the first time ever, this was a few years ago, diversity in terms of sexuality came up in that the person I was seeing was a lesbian, and that was a first for me. And I do remember, when

I got the case notes, I had to think about it from a faith point of view. I thought, "Oh, I really don't know how I feel about this." Even though, you know, previously I've known people who were gay, you know, like gay couples, you know, male and female. And although they weren't friends exactly, I was acquainted with them ... and it was okay. I know that I've tried to be accepting and not think anything bad. ... I'm much more open in my faith. Including to people of other faiths, other than Christians. I'm very, you know, I've tried to be very accepting. (Rachel, p.6-7, 172-194)

Sally gave an example of how, even though faith may be different, it can be a shared experience:

I think there can be a sharedness even with different faiths or different beliefs. I'll give you an example if I may and I obviously will keep the client details anonymous. I've worked with a client some years ago now who came through the Association of Christian Counsellors website, and the majority of people who would come to me via that route I could quite rightly assume that they identified as Christians. ... And it turned out he had a Hindu faith. And he had come to me because the Christian view of marriage and the Hindu view of marriage are very similar. And I can't tell you the shared respect of beliefs in spirituality. I

mean it, he did some really good work actually and it was lovely work, but there was there was just a real connection which I think came through the spirituality, and there was real respect of each other's beliefs and customs. (Sally, p.5-6, 55-173)

This discourse shows the respect between faiths that can exist. A person of one faith would prefer to work with someone of a different faith, rather than someone who professes to have no faith.

Sally also gave another example of working with a client of a different faith:

Similarly, I had a young Muslim person referred to me many years ago. Again, very different beliefs, but again very respectful. He was going through a bereavement, and you know it was important for me to know about some of the cultural and behavioural things around the death, what had happened. But again, I have found it a bond rather than a hindrance. (Sally, p.6, 170-183)

Working with someone of a different faith can prove to be a bond. However, Sally has also found that there are differences, even when working with a client of the same faith as her own:

I work a lot with Christians, but there is diversity within that. So, within the same faith there's a whole gamut of beliefs and values and practices, and ... that is very welcome in the room, because I think it influences the dynamics, but it's so much part of someone's identity, but if we don't work with it, then we are not working with the whole person, would be my opinion actually. So, I have found it incredibly easy to work with people whether they have a faith, that in theory is my own faith, but there's diversity in that, or it's a different faith, or indeed you know there's no faith. Actually, that's the diversity for me. (Sally, p.6-7, 191-205)

Sally also talked about how time keeping can be a difference culturally:

I've just had a couple pop into my head who I worked with a few years ago now who, their idea of time-keeping boundaries, and this is a cultural thing, was all over the place. Their understanding of counselling was slightly all over the place and, I only worked with them for a few sessions. (Sally, p.9, 267-286)

Val explained that she has worked mainly with white British women, although there was some diversity within that, which had included a range of married, unmarried, children, no children, some younger clients. (Val, p.21-22, 599-645)

4.6.2.1 Summary

This subordinate theme reveals the many kinds of diversity worked with by participants in the therapy room. They have found differences of ethnicity, sexuality, faith, and age, to name but a few. It seems that participants are able and willing to work with many clients who are different from themselves.

4.6.3 Subordinate theme 5.3: Challenges of difference

The third subordinate theme investigates which form of diversity participants have found most challenging to work with. There are different forms of diversity that are most challenging for each of the participants, for a variety of reasons. There seems to be no similarity in either what they find most challenging, or why this is more challenging for them.

Mary talked about a client that she has struggled with, and had taken to her supervision session, only the day before. This was a female client who already had a number of children, two of whom lived with their fathers rather than herself. This client was now pregnant again and was considering an abortion:

I think, as well, there was something in me that reacted in relation to my own core beliefs about the idea that, you know, it is a baby to me, and the idea of just aborting, and it felt somewhat flippant, and there was something in me that reacted to that, and I struggled very hard in the room to bracket that,

and I think it's the first time that I've really wrestled. (Mary, p.8, 223-232)

Mary continued to explain that she has never had an issue with race, but this issue of abortion she found really difficult, and a wrestle to stand in the other person's shoes. In fact, it was the biggest issue she has so far had to face:

I kind of had to really wrestle to stand in that person's shoes, and remember their background, and kind of feel it as they were feeling it and explore it. That was the biggest, probably, the biggest issue I've had that I've struggled with in the room. (Mary, p.9, 256-259)

She explained that she had no problem with a friend who chose to have an abortion under different circumstances:

A good friend of mine who had a baby, who was pregnant and the organs were inside out, and they had to make a really difficult decision about what they would do, and they chose to abort, and I didn't feel the same way about that to this circumstance. (Mary, p.9-10, 273)

It seems it was not the fact that the client was having an abortion that was difficult for Mary, but the circumstances that it was being done under. She found it very difficult to stay empathic and present with the client:

It was a wrestle to stay present, and it was a wrestle to stay empathic, and I've done lots of thinking about it, and to kind of remain with that person - in a way that feels right and ethical.
(Mary, p.10, 282-289)

Mary believes that her faith, and core beliefs, may have something to do with her struggles with this situation:

I think there's lots of people that are Christians that probably feel the same way but for me, you know, I do think that, even if it's not a viable baby, conception has happened and there's a foetus, you know, that definitely, it's a life that God's created, so it definitely has some bearing and ... I wrestle with the idea that people are flippantly, you know, approaching that, whereas I see that as being really significant, and precious, and I suppose the idea of, you know, we were formed in our mother's womb and I really believe that, I believe that we are, you know, created beings and we have a purpose and, you know, that God has got a plan. And so to ... more kind of dismissively approach that, it just doesn't feel right with me. (Mary, p.10, 292-308)

Her beliefs that we are each created in the image of God, and formed in our mother's womb, made this a very difficult issue for Mary to work with. (Mary, p.10-11, 308-328)

Anita described how she at first found working with spiritualism difficult, but realises now that this was probably because she didn't know a great deal about it, and had some internal suspicions:

Not a difficulty now, but I think in the early days I did find spiritualism quite difficult, because actually I knew less about it. And I probably had more internal suspicions about it. I think not because I knew anything bad about it necessarily, but ... that sort of internal suspicion. (Anita, p.13, 388-391)

However, Anita carried on to explain that what she does find difficult is working with people who are in severe pain, or who have a disability or condition that might get worse, because this is a form of difference that she has not experienced herself. She finds this form of diversity difficult to comprehend:

And actually, I've realised, and this is part of a client I've worked with this year, and the thing I find hardest with is working with people who are either in severe physical pain, or in some condition that is unstable or might get worse. (Anita, p.25, 748-758)

Anita continued to explain that this makes her feel that she has nothing to offer that will actually help them. This makes her feel disempowered:

I sit here in the fortunate position of being pain-free. Mobile. Not worried, not scared about my body or when it's going to let me down. And I don't feel qualified really. I mean I don't feel qualified to work with people who are in constant pain or worried when that stuff is going to come. Or wondering if they are going to go from having some sight to no sight at all. And that's the diversity which is the one that I feel as if, "What can I offer you?" I take this to supervision and, yes, I'm offering them counselling, that is offering them a lot, but is it actually making any difference at all? In the face of that I feel really powerless. And I have to remind myself well "This is better than nothing." And they are here so they are getting something. (Anita, p.25-26, 760-782)

It can be heard in this discourse that Anita feels helpless in situations where a client is suffering from physical pain. This makes her wonder how she can help these particular clients and if she really has anything to offer them. She continued to explain that, thanks to counselling training, she finds it much easier to sit with clients who are experiencing emotional pain rather than physical pain:

Thanks to counselling training I can now sit with emotional pain, and I guess if everybody could do that then there wouldn't be counselling because it's difficult to do, and it's not easy to sit with emotional pain. But that seems to be easier than sitting with physical pain. Or somebody who's not sure what physical pain is next or things they could do this year and are not going to be able to do next year. You know, will they be in a wheelchair? Will they be completely blind? And I feel that because I have no idea what that would do to me. (Anita, p.27-28, 797-841)

Paula explains how she has worked well with clients where there has been no mention of spirituality, by being supportive, reflective and looking at options:

Well, there are people who come as people of no faith at all, and they are coming with issues that are dealt with in the emotions and in the ways of thinking that become difficult or obstructive to their lifestyle or grief and distress. Those kinds of issues which we can work with in a supportive way, they'll come and they'll talk, and they reflect and look at options, and there's never a mention of spirituality at all. (Paula, p.5, 140-146)

However, one client that she found challenging had a spiritual awareness through Reiki:

One person that comes to mind was a Reiki master, and had come into a spiritual awareness through that, and had conducted marriages of a pagan nature. So, sort of this idea of being with somebody for a year and a day, and various symbols and certain things that was very, very outside of my experience. And you know, who ironically had left his wife of many years to form an attachment to somebody that he'd worked with, which would involve her leaving her husband and three children and then forming an alliance, because he had found his soulmate. So, it was almost entirely on this spiritual connection. "I'm no longer connected to my wife of many years. I'm soul-tied to this other person, even though they were married." (Paula, p.5-6, 149-173)

Although this was challenging for Paula, she also found it interesting to work with:

The reason this person came to me was they had a crisis of identity, because the relationship that he hoped to form with this lady, she had refused. And so, he had left his wife and he was in, like, in a no-man's land of "Will she take me? Will she not?" And in free-fall, in emotional turmoil. So that was a very different spirituality, I think. (Paula, p.6-7, 175-189)

Paula has also worked with a long-term client who was a victim of spiritual abuse, which proved to be, again, very challenging, but interesting:

She was presenting with typical trauma, closing down and, you know, being quite fragmented sometimes, in the way that we were still having some very good sessions and some very bad sessions. Sessions where, you know, it just feels like we're going backwards. (Paula, p.15, 435-450)

The abuse that this client suffered took place abroad whilst she was staying in the house of a spiritual leader. It was in a very poor area where there was a lot of spiritual abuse, and sexual abuse was widespread. The client was traumatised and had also been subjected to deliverance sessions, which she claimed were spiritual rape.

There were many challenges for Paula with this client, who had been subjected to a great deal of control and manipulation spiritually, as well as emotionally and physically. Part of the challenge for Paula was that she felt she could be drawn into colluding with the client:

But I could be drawn into some colluding with her, to say, that they, particularly the church leader, was a witch and totally bad and terrible, terrible, terrible. But I can see the context of the culture where the spirit work, where sexual abuse is very every

day in those cultures, widespread child abuse, widespread prostitution ... I could never say that to my client because she's too traumatised and in pain and you know her present day life is still invaded by terrible thoughts and bodily experiences of this period in her life. (Paula, p.16-17, 485-511)

Rachel explained how working with clients experiencing poverty can be very difficult for her, due to her own circumstances:

I think for me it touches a nerve, because, you know, I'm not far off from that myself. And I have been in much more difficult circumstances in the past. So you know for me it's something I'm quite touched by. Something I'm quite sensitive to. (Rachel, p.14, 407-434)

However, Rachel tries to look at this as a positive experience, rather than focusing on the negative:

I think it's something that helps me to work with them, that awareness, rather than it being a negative thing. ... That sensitivity to it and how it works with people, you know, situations. And my own, kind of like, the stuff that I've gone through in the past. That's shaped me to be who I am. Obviously, I've survived. I'm surviving. I've gone through things.

Difficult things. So, that enables me to be sensitive I think, to what other people might be feeling, might be going through. Might want to talk about, might not want to talk about. But it helps me to work with it, because I might have been through something similar you know. (Rachel, p.15-16, 440-492)

Tina described some of the difficulties she faced whilst living and working in an area where there is a great deal of wealth, but also a heavy drug and alcohol culture:

You had quite a mix of culture there, the people that I saw, you know I remember having a client, a young client, a young mum and you know she's sort of like moaning and groaning, it's her right to go out and get drunk every weekend, and her husband doesn't like it, etcetera. And you see there's a big drinking culture. There's quite a lot of wealth. But also, there was a huge drug and alcohol problem while we were there. (Tina, p.16, 447-455)

The challenge for Tina came from her own upbringing and views on life and particularly motherhood:

I found that quite challenging because I'm thinking, "Well, you're a mother." But their idea was, you know, so I'm a mother? I'm

still me. Which was quite different to how I was kind of brought up, you're a mother first, you know, and you do all the other stuff after. So I found that quite challenging. (Tina, p.16, 456-469)

4.6.3.1 Summary

It can be seen from this subordinate theme that there are a wide range of differences that participants find difficult and challenging to work with. There are no similarities in what is found to be difficult. It seems that much depends on the life experience of the participant.

4.6.4 Subordinate theme 5.4: Frustrations in church

The fourth subordinate theme investigates the views that participants have of diversity and culture, and the church. Participants express their struggles and frustrations with various issues in the churches that they attend or have belonged to in the past.

Lucy has struggled with attitudes in the church, particularly towards homosexuality:

I struggled with people's attitude to homosexuality, and churches still haven't cracked that. Some churches still haven't cracked that. That was why I went away from God. Lack of

compassion. I found almost more compassion outside the church than inside the church. (Lucy, p.6, 186-190)

Lucy went on to explain that the church she is now in, is very inclusive in terms of disability (Lucy, p.12, 395-397); however, there is no black person in the church. She explained that this could be because the area she lives in is a very “white” area. The church has so far ratified same sex marriage but have not yet conducted a same sex marriage (Lucy, p.12, 419-420). She concluded that her church, in her opinion, is more conservative than they like to think. (Lucy, p.12, 422-423)

Mary explained how the dynamics of her particular church have gradually changed over the years:

The dynamic of the congregation has changed immensely though in terms of diversity. People from really different cultures are coming to the church. Really different cultures. (Mary, p.16, 470-474)

Mary continued to explain some of the differences that have taken place over time:

I think it’s gradually seeped in. ... When I was a girl all the women were wearing their hats to church, and it’s kind of

moved gradually away from all of that. It's moved into I still think ... that we tend to do things in a white Western way. I still think there's an emphasis on the ways of doing things. But I think the church is gradually moving towards embracing diversity. (Mary, p.16, 474-482)

Mary believes that her church is now seeking to embrace diversity:

They set up a Malayan group for the people that spoke that language but then they're also part of other groups as well. So, allowing that and then providing that. But also, not kind of keeping them in that group, if that makes sense. So, there's integration across the church. And so, I think things like that have been really good and you know, years ago I don't think that would have happened and they will do all sorts of different ways of doing things. (Mary, p.16, 483-493)

Paula expressed her view of Christianity that she believes is evident in the church:

I think Christianity can be quite black and white, you're either in or you're out. You're either going to heaven or you're going to hell. You either follow Jesus, or you don't. (Paula, p.8, 237-241)

Paula continued by explaining where she fits into her own church. This is with the elderly:

Facilitating their end-of-life faith, and their aches and pains, and difficulties, which can be overwhelming, but we journey together. We, you know, try and keep sight of God in it all, not to deny that the body's fading and the memory's fading but to say, "But we have hope." And I think that's where I fit in. ... So, I wouldn't say that I kind of speak about my spirituality in a teaching way, but I express all of the things of God in those areas, and prayer and worship, particularly with the elderly. (Paula, p.27-28, 798-819)

Tina talked about a man who was homosexual that she had met through spiritual direction. He wasn't allowed to work in the church although he was very gifted spiritually:

A gentleman who was just had such wonderful gifts. Such a beautiful young, no he wasn't young actually, but he was older than me. But he couldn't work in a church. They wouldn't let him work there. And he had such amazing gifts, and it was so heart-breaking, and you think what a waste. That made me really cross, you know and then made me sort of really think through, "That's ridiculous, how can you stop people being themselves,

just because of your belief?" I don't mean we shouldn't stop murderers from murdering. But I mean there are some things that are not - I don't think of as choice. (Tina, p.17-18, 494-512)

Tina's feelings of being angry and frustrated about the treatment of this man by the church, can be heard in this discourse. Tina also talked about another man who also was not allowed to work in the church, despite being very gifted spiritually:

And then there was another gentleman. He was a young chap, actually he was 50. And he had awful things all tattooed, and he had been from different church to church, and all of them tried to pray this evil spirit of homosexuality out of him. And we really embraced him and accepted him in the congregation. And so we would have chats when he came round for Bible study, and so it wasn't a counselling situation And, he had so much insight into the Bible. He was a real prayer warrior. And thankfully the congregation accepted him, but there was a limit, you know. They won't let you take office ... if you're known to be a practising homosexual. (Tina, p.18-19, 514-535)

Val described some of the difficulties of having different views to her husband as well as some of her church leaders. She feels she is only able to talk about this with a small group of people in the church:

We've had a number of conversations ... within our own house group, a smaller, safer space, or on the Diaconate, even that's quite a smaller group of people, where we generally say something along the lines of, "Well we have different views about this as you know. You know, we as a couple have different views about this. This is my view; this is my view. This is my view, this is [husband's] view. (Val, p.13-14, 388-403)

There is some difficulty, however, in talking about this more generally in church:

There are church members where I would not talk about it, because their view would be that they would worry about my faith. They would worry about my salvation. I don't want them to worry about my salvation, and I certainly don't want them to be exercised in trying to convert me back, you know, to convince me. (Val, p.14, 413-424)

She is, however, able to talk to others who may be questioning and wanting to explore. She gave an example of a mum she has spoken to, who was concerned about her daughter. The mum is a Christian and her daughter is in a same-sex relationship. However, the mum is more worried about the age gap between the girl and her partner. Her daughter is 16, and the partner 19. The

mum felt she could not talk to anyone else in church about this, as they would be worried about the same-sex relationship, where the mum is more concerned about the power dynamic, and whether her daughter is being taken advantage of by the older woman. They were also able to talk about where this fits with faith, and how does it fit with what the church teaches. (Val, p.14, 436-474)

4.6.4.1 Summary

This subordinate theme illustrates some of the complexities of diversity within the church. It also highlights the frustrations of participants, as they talk about issues they have encountered there.

4.6.5 Summary of the superordinate theme “Experiences of diversity and culture”

Overall, this superordinate theme investigates the experiences that participants have had of diversity and culture throughout their counselling journey.

It can be seen that participants have worked with many differences in the therapy room. For some, this may have changed their views on some issues, however, for others, their views have remained the same. There have been a wide range of difference, such as age, ethnicity, faith, disability and sexuality. Certain issues have been more challenging for each participant, which seems

to be due, in part, to the participants' own life experiences. Participants also expressed their thoughts about diversity and culture and the church.

4.7 Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter has outlined the themes that emerged from the analysis of data that were created from the interviews with participants, in response to the research question:

How do diversity and culture impact the journey of faith and spirituality of the counsellor who is a Christian?

The analysis of data produced a total of five superordinate themes:

Thoughts on motivations, Perspectives on training, Experiences in supervision, Experiences of faith and spirituality, and Experiences of diversity and culture.

In Chapter 5, the findings will be discussed in relation to literature.

Chapter 5. Discussion

The aim of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of diversity and culture on the faith and spirituality of the counsellor who is a Christian. This study was initiated to address the gap in literature that is found in this area of research. This chapter will discuss the findings of the research presented in Chapter 4 in relation to literature, in order to answer the research question:

Do issues of diversity and culture impact the journey of faith and spirituality of the counsellor who is a Christian?

The following areas were also explored in relation to the main research question:

- 1) The motivations that participants had for beginning a career in counselling.
- 2) Whether participants considered they had received adequate training in the areas of diversity and culture, and faith and spirituality.
- 3) Whether participants considered they had received adequate support in supervision in the areas of diversity and culture, and faith and spirituality.
- 4) What forms of diversity participants have worked with, and what has been most challenging.

5) Whether participants consider they have been affected personally by working with clients who are very different from themselves.

6) Whether participants consider they have been able to take care of their own faith and spirituality during their counselling journey.

7) Whether participants consider their faith and spirituality has been impacted by their counselling journey.

In the following sections, the key findings will be considered in light of the above questions, and discussed in relation to the literature. The implications of the research will be discussed, and the strengths and limitations of the study considered. The originality of the research will be identified, and recommendations for further research and practice outlined.

5.1 Summary of the main findings

The findings of this study provide insight into the experiences that counsellors who are Christian have of diversity and culture, and faith and spirituality.

The data indicate that, at the start of their counselling journey, participants believed their faith to be a vital part of their desire to become a counsellor. Some of the participants had also become dissatisfied with their previous career, and had expectations that counselling would prove to be a worthwhile

career, where they could help people in a more meaningful way than in their previous work. During training, however, they had little preparation for the diverse clients they would meet, and throughout their practice they found little support in the areas of diversity and culture, or faith and spirituality. This left some of the participants feeling in a state of limbo, where they could not talk through issues, either with their supervisor, or with their church leaders. There were challenges to their faith and spirituality, which they needed to face. However, they believe this has resulted in a broader faith, and also deepened their thoughts and beliefs about God, whilst at the same time, lessening their own religiosity and dualistic thinking. It seems they have, in fact, moved to a new stage of faith, which they may have not reached if they had not become counsellors.

5.2 Contextualising findings with literature

5.2.1 Motivations

The initial motivations for participants becoming a counsellor were explored in this study. Some of the participants revealed that it was their compassion for those they had worked with previously, that gave them the desire to be able to help others in a different way, that would be deeper and more meaningful. Most participants had become dissatisfied with their previous careers and thought that counselling would be a worthwhile career to pursue.

There is no evidence in this study to suggest that participants were motivated by their own wounds to become a counsellor, as suggested by literature (Jung, 1951, cited by Wheeler, 2007). Neither do results agree with the theory that suggests that it was the participants' suffering or neglect of their own needs in childhood that became the motivation, as suggested by Dicaccavo (2002). This means that participants, rather than entering a career in counselling for their own subconscious needs, believed that this would be a career that would enable them to contribute to help others to heal and live life to their best potential.

However, all of the participants expressed the view that their faith had been an important part of their decision to begin training as a counsellor. Mary, for example, expressed her belief that the Christian faith is all about being there for people, empathising, showing acceptance and being non-judgemental. For her, counselling is showing the love of God. Another participant, Anita, was very clear in her belief that faith had played a major role in her decision to become a counsellor. Paula also believes that her work as a counsellor is a calling from God that is at work in her life. There is very little literature in general regarding motivations for becoming a counsellor (Kim, Wampold, & Bolt, 2006), and none that could be found in the area of the importance of faith in this decision. No research was found to agree or disagree with the findings of the study in this field. The subject of motivations is a very important area for those entering into a career in counselling, particularly those from a background of faith. There is little relevance given to this in literature, which

means that those who have a faith perspective may, in fact, struggle to find the place where faith and spirituality fit into the world of counselling.

5.2.2 Perceptions of faith and spirituality in training

The data indicate that some of the participants chose to begin their training within a faith-based model of counselling, that had a Christian perspective, ethos and grounding, but which was not totally Bible-based. For various reasons, others began their training in a secular field of counselling. Some of the participants were keen to express that they preferred not to take a course that had a heavy Bible base that relates everything back to the parameters of the Bible. They believed it was important to be thought of as counsellors who were also Christian, rather than to be known as Christian counsellors who came from a religious bias. The differences and difficulties in these types of counselling is illustrated in Section 4.3.3, where Val had difficulties training a group of trainee counsellors who had very strong views of how the Bible should be used in counselling. No research was found that confirms these results.

The experiences of participants in training, regarding faith and spirituality, were investigated in this study. It is recognised in literature (e.g. Pargament, 2011; Milton, 2016; Jewell, 2004; Swinton, 2001; Barnett & Johnson, 2011) that faith, religion and spirituality will be important to many clients who come to therapy. There has also recently been an increased interest in the spiritual and supernatural (Jankowski, 2002; West, 2010). This means that if this is not

addressed a vital element that is important to the client may well be missed in therapy (Richards & Bergin, 2005).

The data suggests that participants received very little training in the area of faith and spirituality, and none regarding the impact of diversity and culture on this important area of the lives of counsellors and their clients. This concurs with literature; for example, Reeves (2018), who considers that very few generic counselling training courses address faith and spirituality in their core training. Reeves, therefore, believes that therapists are left to draw their own conclusions. The data indicate that participants felt they had not been well-prepared in this area for the journey of counselling that was ahead of them.

As already stated, the importance of faith and spirituality to the client can be seen from relevant literature. It is possible that the lack of preparation that therapists received for this could negatively influence the outcome of counselling for both client and therapist. Participants reported receiving no help in how to approach such subjects in sessions. This means that important areas of discussion and understanding may well be missed, or misinterpreted, in sessions (Richards & Bergin, 2005).

The data in this study resonates with Hunt (2018), who found that participants in her study received no training in religious issues and had suggested that more training in this area would be useful. Participants in Hunt's study also suggested that training in this area may be helpful for counsellors when

working with clients who have mental health difficulties that manifest in various ways.

In this current study, those participants who had not initially trained with a Christian organisation, chose to take more in-depth spiritual training, provided by a Christian organisation, later on in their career. This was at a point when they became aware that they needed more teaching, as Paula described it, in “something that touched her heart and spirit” (Section 4.3.1). This indicates that there is a lack of spiritual teaching, particularly in secular training, and that training regarding religious faiths and beliefs is inadequate.

5.2.3 Perceptions of diversity and culture in training

The views of participants regarding the adequacy of training they received in diversity and culture were also investigated in this study. There is a wide range of literature (e.g. Kottler, 2010; Lago, 2011; Vacc, DeVaney & Brendel, 2003; Lott, 2010; Palmer & Laungani, 2009; Casas, 2017; Falender & Shafranske, 2014) that supports the view that the understanding of the many kinds of difference encountered in multicultural counselling is of vital importance for the counsellor. McLeod (2016), Vacc, DeVaney & Brendel (2003), Kearney (2018), Sue (1996) and Baldwin (2014) have also identified that the study of differing worldviews and values is an important part of multicultural counselling. It is surprising, therefore, that this study found that participants received very little training in diversity and culture during their years of training. In fact,

participants believe they were not adequately prepared in this area for the work they would undertake.

5.2.4 Perceptions of diversity and culture, and faith and spirituality in supervision

Participants believed that through counselling, they had met a much larger cross-section of the community than they would ever have done outside of their counselling career. This concurs with the literature (e.g., Pederson, 2002; Kearney, 2016), which understands that populations are increasingly diverse, and those who seek counselling often come from very disparate backgrounds. Parritt (2016) posits that it is vital for therapists to have a safe place where they can explore and reflect on their own beliefs and attitudes. Despite this, however, the study found that diversity and culture is not a prominent theme in supervision. This concurs with literature (e.g., Sue & Sue, 2016; Pederson, 2002), that even though there is a great deal of emphasis on multicultural counselling, the counselling world continues to ignore the multicultural context of this society, and continues to act as if all counselling theories are applicable equally to everyone, regardless of differences in race, culture and ethnicity. This means that counsellors may be reluctant to bring up issues of diversity and culture in therapy or may not even be aware that there are issues that need to be discussed and addressed in supervision.

The lack of discussion regarding diversity in supervision is a serious matter. Supervision is described by the BACP Ethical Framework (2018) as “A

specialised form of mentoring provided for practitioners responsible for undertaking challenging work with people.” This study found that participants worked with many challenging issues pertaining to diversity and yet did not discuss issues of diversity and culture in supervision. Although there were a small number of participants in this study, results indicate that there may be failings to cover issues of diversity and culture within the whole profession.

Awareness of equality and diversity in counselling touches on the ethical principles of respect and justice outlined in the Ethical Framework (BACP, 2018). The framework highlights that there is a duty to demonstrate equality and respect diversity in interactions with clients. These are extremely important values for the counselling profession to uphold. Equality relates to the principle that every person should be treated fairly and equally. Inadequate discussion of issues and diversity in supervision may therefore be to the detriment of the work with the client. It may also mean that standards in the profession are not sustained, and quality is not enhanced. It is important that therapists strive to recognise the beliefs and assumptions they hold regarding difference and diversity, and how this may impact their interaction with clients. Supervision, as well as an ongoing process of personal reflection are both vital for developing and maintaining good standards of practice (Stevens, 2021).

Good supervision is also essential to how therapists sustain their work throughout their working life. Failure to discuss challenging issues of diversity and culture may take its toll on those who face the challenges of the work. It is

important that this area is investigated further to question why such issues are not brought to supervision by supervisees. Also, further investigation is needed to ascertain what seems to be failure by supervisors to raise issues of diversity and culture with their supervisees.

The study found that not only was there a lack of support in supervision for discussing issues of diversity and culture, or faith and spirituality, there are also difficulties in talking with others in church about such issues. Val, for example, described the difficulties of having views that were different to her husband, as well as some of her church leaders. This left Val feeling she was in a no-man's-land, where certain issues cannot be raised and discussed, either in supervision, or in church. As a counsellor who is a Christian, she was left to question her own sense of whether an issue could be thought of as right or wrong and had no safe place to talk this through.

Anita commented that she was aware that her faith has become more inclusive and less dualistic. However, she expressed the view that she would be wary of talking about this to other Christians, for fear that they would think she was watering down her own faith. This kind of situation, where therapists have nowhere to talk about their own views on faith or difference (Gubi, 2009), results in therapists being left to draw on their own understanding and beliefs, as stated by Reeves (2018). Results indicate that the subjects of faith and spirituality, and diversity and culture have become taboo subjects in therapy, which agrees with the study by Scott (2011).

5.2.5 Tensions and frustrations

West (2000), Butman & Kruse (2007) and Pargament, (2011) argue that every person has spiritual values that they do not leave outside of the counselling room. Although there was little evidence in the study that issues of faith and spirituality were discussed in supervision, it did emerge that issues of faith and spirituality could cause complexities and tensions within the supervisory relationship.

The study found that it does not necessarily make it any easier if supervisee and supervisor are of the same faith. For example, Val came to the conclusion that her supervisor no longer had a faith. This made her reluctant to talk, in supervision, about her own struggles of faith that she experienced whilst working through her client's issues. Lucy said that her supervisor was more damning of the church than she herself was. While Anita talked about her experience of her supervisor sharing a vision of her which she disagreed with.

Shohet & Shohet (2020) argue that supervision is a form of spiritual practice that has awareness, inquiry and relationship at the core. They believe that it is important for the supervisor not to collude with the supervisee, but to help the supervisee look at how their own beliefs might be affecting them. Jenkins (2010) stipulates the importance of boundaries that need to be agreed. It would appear, in this study, that some of the participants found that inadequate boundaries were in place in supervision, concerning these issues.

Tina's frustrations came from her struggles with church, that is in her perception, digging its heels in and refusing to move forward and allow people to find God. In her opinion, many Christians are struggling with church. Paula revealed that sometimes tension is caused between herself and others of her faith, and particularly her husband, who believe that everything should be in line with scripture. Val also discussed her struggles whilst teaching a group who had strong opinions of how they believed the Bible should be used in counselling. This highlights the difference that may arise between a Christian counsellor and a counsellor who is a Christian (FCC, 2020; ACC, 2014). There are difficulties for counsellors who are Christian to reconcile their counselling with their own beliefs, and the beliefs of their church and church leadership. However, some counsellors who are Christian may also hold very strong views on a number of issues and so it is essential that personal and professional boundaries are monitored by the therapist at all times (Plante, 2007; Hermann & Herlihy, 2006).

5.2.6 Challenges of diversity and culture

Kearney (2016), Rock (1999), Smith (2004) argue that culture and diversity permeate every aspect of the work of the counsellor, with issues covering a wide range of difference. This intensity of involvement with individuals may well be outside of their comfort zone and prove challenging for the therapist (Kottler, 2010). Results show that participants in this study had worked with many forms of diversity, such as age, disability, race, ethnicity, spirituality, language, poverty and much more. This wide range of diversity that

participants have been called on to work with, agrees with (Dallos & Draper (2010), Richardson (2010), Kearney (2018), Ballinger & Wright (2007) and Parritt (2016).

However, it can be seen in the study, that each participant described situations that had proved challenging for themselves, and for their own particular reasons. There was no one particular difference that caused a challenge for every participant. Tina, for example, had difficulties whilst working in an area where there is a heavy drug and alcohol culture. Anita described her challenges of working with interpreters in sessions. She also found it very challenging working with clients who experienced chronic pain. Rachel explained how working with clients experiencing poverty can be very difficult for her. Paula found working with a long-term client who was a victim of spiritual abuse very challenging but also interesting.

The wide variety of difference that clients experience can be seen in this study. Such a wide range of diversity may indeed cause conflict in worldview or values for the therapist themselves (Richardson, 2010). For example, Val struggled with the challenge of her client's relationship and subsequent marriage with another woman, who were both Christian. However, she believed that being able to see this struggle from her client's own point of view widened her own view on this. She could see that her client was struggling also and was prepared to give up the relationship if this was what God wanted.

In being able to see the struggle from her client's perspective and not her own, she believes an "empathic world" was opened up for herself.

5.2.7. Tensions of counselling in a socio-political context

As can be seen in this study multicultural counselling demands that the counsellor is able to navigate between their own culture and that of their client. The competent multicultural counsellor must therefore have knowledge, skills, and awareness by which they are able to empower and help their client. There is a need to approach their clients as cultural beings who exist within their own systems and contexts (Pederson, 2002). The therapeutic process does not take place in a vacuum and the everchanging mood and opinion of society has influence on both counsellor and client (Kearney, 2018).

It can also be seen that there are many tensions that counsellors need to be aware of and prepared for when counselling in what is considered a socio-political context. Culture and diversity permeate every aspect of the work of the counsellor (Kearney, 2018). The social and cultural context affects all aspects of life, such as how people greet one another, interact in their household, or make decisions. The counselling context relates to social, cultural, economic, religious, and political factors of the people and place of work or community where counselling is carried out (WHO, 2013).

Socio-political factors such as economic inequality and financial hardship, war, unemployment, and discrimination can have a profound effect on a person's

psychological health. It is important that counsellors have an understanding of many issues, for example being able to relate to the impact of early life experiences such as having lived with domestic abuse or a parent who was drug or alcohol dependant. Awareness of the devastating impact of racism on a person's mental health can allow the counsellor to validate their client's experiences and sit with their shame and sorrow. By knowing and recognising such social and political contexts the client's needs and difficulties can be addressed. Ignoring them, however, means that the client's psychological distress may be attributed to the wrong sources and not be addressed effectively (Cooper, 2019).

A deeper understanding of the influence of diverse factors is required by those who work in the counselling profession (WHO, 2013). Cultural awareness is core to the therapeutic alliance, and it is important to understand that culture is fluid and shifts continually as changing circumstances are adapted to. Social status impacts the ability to overcome problems and enjoy life. Those with inadequate income who are unable to live in a safe neighbourhood, for example, are not under the same type of stress as those who are at constant risk (McDowell, et al., 2018).

The socio-political climate is impacted by variables that include gender, race, sexual orientation, economic status, and other divisive issues. Despite this, however, counselling itself has at its core a set of cultural values by which clients are seen, heard, and potentially judged (Kearney, 2018). All models of

counselling derived from conventional psychology are implicitly based on white, middle-class values (Pederson, 2002). It is imperative, therefore, that the profession is willing to undertake self-examination in order to investigate the very foundations that have been laid down. This is necessary so that clients are seen through a worldview that celebrates diversity, and is deeply respectful of otherness, thus giving everyone an equal opportunity of benefitting from therapy.

The therapeutic relationship is impacted by the life experiences of both client and counsellor. Political issues and events that are taking place may lead either or both to feelings of anxiety, concern, or even fear. For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic counsellors were simultaneously holding the anxieties and panic of their clients as well as those of their own family, spouses, elderly parents, children, friends, communities, and neighbourhood. The pandemic has brought with it a wariness of connecting with others that has not been known in this lifetime. The world is not experienced as safe and friendly and other people may be viewed as potentially causing contamination that could lead to death. Lockdowns have increased nervousness and apprehension for many people. Solitude, isolation and lack of touch may lead to physical, mental and emotional ill-health (Music, 2022).

Events that have recently taken place, such as the shooting in May 2020 of George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man. This took place in the United States when he was killed by a police officer holding his knee on Mr Floyds neck as

he gasped for breath. Protests arose against police brutality in many parts of the world and thousands of people took to the streets in response to this event. Opposition to racism and police brutality has seen people unite around “Black Lives Matter” which has become a movement that desire to address unequal treatment and oppression that goes back to the era of slavery (BBC, 2021). Events such as these may lead to a change of need in the client’s counselling, as they experience feelings of fear, danger, injustice, anger, or risk.

For those counsellors who are Christian or of another faith, there may be questions directed at them because of these events by their clients of where God is when such things happen. This causes tension for the counsellor who may wonder if it is their role to sustain and support the faith of their client when they themselves are struggling with their own faith. There may be emotions from both client and counsellor who are questioning where their faith now lies. However, the client is able to ask this, while the counsellor may be dealing with the issue by themselves, unable to talk to church leaders, and unwilling to talk to supervisors as shown in this study.

Cooper (2019) believes that counsellors care deeply for their clients and as professionals are not detached and indifferent. A non-judgemental acceptance offered to all clients is an essential part of their work. It is important therefore that training for counsellors works towards a goal of cultural competency, and addresses tensions that may arise for those setting out on their counselling journey. It is vital that those who come from a faith worldview and perspective,

are prepared for the challenges and changes that may take place as they embrace a path of freeing their clients to actualise their potential to its fullest extent.

Some participants in this study faced tensions as they worked with clients who had very different worldviews. As counsellors who are also Christian, they experienced difference in the teaching they had received in church and the worldview their clients presented with. The tension of holding one worldview while their client held another brought challenges in church for them which resulted, for some, in moving to another church where the teaching was more liberal and encompassing of difference or for others, becoming less involved and engaged in the life of their church.

Cooper (2019) suggests that practicing therapy is not just about doing a job, but contributing to a society that is kind, caring and responsive to those around them. It helps to create a more thriving, compassionate, and satisfying society that challenges oppression, and celebrates diversity. Cooper asks whether, by understanding that their clients' difficulties are related to their socio-political contexts, steps can be taken outside of the counselling room, to improve things for them by campaigning against discrimination, poverty, or environmental concerns. Maybe there is potential for counsellors who are Christian to be an influence for change in their churches, thus enabling a more inclusive ethos within the church.

5.2.8 Challenges of faith and spirituality

In this current study, participants explored how their spiritual views and practices may have changed over the course of their counselling journey.

Changes in involvement in church were noted by some of the participants. Anita and Val, for example, have become much less involved in church life, although their faith is still fundamental to their counselling. Similarly, Sally is experiencing struggles with church, finding Sunday morning artificiality difficult to cope with, after deep relationships with her counselling clients. Lucy has come to see that, rather than church, counselling has become the “living embodiment of her faith”.

These changes that participants have experienced relate to literature, for example, Fowler’s (1981) Six stages of Faith. It is Fowler’s suggestion that, at Stage 3 people rely on some institution such as a church to give them stability. Individuals do not move out of this stage until they begin to question and take responsibility for their own faith. They then question their former faith. Although this sounds as if they are backsliding in their faith, according to Fowler, they are actually moving forward. It seems that some of the participants may be in this stage of their spiritual journey, in that they are questioning their former involvement in church life.

However, participants have also noted some spiritual reappraisal in their lives that does not come from their counselling journey. For Sally, this is due to the

recent death of her mother, and for Paula after suffering from cancer. Both are aware that their views of God have changed, but understand that, although this is not necessarily due to counselling alone, their counselling career has contributed to the change they have experienced.

It cannot be known what would have happened in the lives of participants if they had not been counsellors. However, the majority of participants believe that, through counselling, they have met more diverse individuals than they otherwise would have done. This, they believe, has contributed in some way to their changes in faith. Paula, for example, believes that her counselling career has broadened her faith and helped to take away some of her religiosity. She has come to understand that someone else may be on a faith journey that does not look the same as her own. This has helped her to see beyond religiosity and get to the heart of why individuals want a connection with God. As a result of this she is more able to accept people without feeling she has to worry about their spirituality. She feels this makes her faith much more human.

In a similar way, through counselling, Anita has met people at a deep level, who have a really strong faith base that isn't the same as her own. This, she believes, has changed her own faith, which has become more inclusive, wider and less dualistic. In Fowler's (1981) Stages of Faith, movement from Stage 4 to Stage 5 means that individuals are more accepting of the paradoxes of life and faith, and more open and tolerant of other people's religious and cultural points of view.

Andrew (2011) believes that most counsellors are at this stage in their faith, where they are able to think for themselves, and not just accept what they have previously been taught. Findings agree with this. Val, for example, was able to take responsibility for her own faith when she worked through scripture to explore and find meaning whilst working with a client's struggles. Similarly, Mary had studied around the area of homosexuality for herself whilst attending university. According to Andrew (2011), this stage of faith can lead to a broader frame of reference for what is believed, as well as a new stage of faith.

The capacity for non-dualistic thinking is a stage of the second half of life, according to Rohr (2012). Results indicate that some of the participants have moved into, or are moving towards, this stage of their faith. This is a stage, Rohr believes, that not everyone moves into. It seems that there is a possibility that counselling has helped participants to move in this direction.

5.2.9 Paradoxes

Some of the participants revealed that they are now able to accept the paradoxes in life and faith. This fits with Fowler (1981), Rohr (2012) and Andrew (2011), that those in this stage of spiritual maturity are able to sense that the truth is much bigger than either/or thinking. They are able to hold the tension of opposites, and to accept that both can be true. Although Fowler believes that few people reach this stage, it seems that participants have arrived at, or are on their way to, this point in their spiritual life. They are much

more open and tolerant of other points of religious and cultural points of view, and are able to accept the paradoxes that arise in life and faith.

Lucy, for example, expressed her view that God is a mystery, that she believes is all-knowing and all-seeing. However, she also has respect for other faiths, which she is closely involved with. She does not believe that if you were born in a certain part of the world, that means that God doesn't know you, or you don't know God, but that he reaches us in different ways at different times.

Similarly, Val believes that God may be bigger than Christianity alone, and there may be a point where everyone is in heaven. She said that she could easily come to believe that there is more than one way to God. If people were faithful to their faith, whatever that is, God would recognise that. However, Christianity is what has made it real for her.

Some of the participants have experienced a shared respect of beliefs in spirituality. Sally gave an example of when she worked with a client who came to her because she is Christian. This was because he believed she would have a similar view of marriage, although he himself was of Hindu faith. She also worked with another client of a different faith, a young Muslim person who was going through a bereavement. They were able to share a bond even though they were of different religions.

However, participants also revealed that they would be very careful who they spoke to about these things. They would not, for example, discuss this with their church leaders. For some of the participants, their doing this research was the first time they had talked with anyone about their personal views and beliefs on this subject. They were happy to have had the opportunity to reflect on their counselling and spiritual journeys, and to be able to talk about their experiences.

5.2.10 Spiritual self-care and well-being

Sussman (2007), Gilroy et al. (2002) and Kottler (2010) understand that therapist vulnerability is an area of concern that is under-researched, and many counsellors are inadequately prepared for the demands of practice, and becoming subject to fatigue and burnout.

This study, however, revealed that participants were very aware of the need to take care of themselves, particularly with regard to their faith and spirituality. They believed they had been able to do what they needed to do in order to take care of themselves, even though at times this may have been difficult. This agrees with the study by Barton (2019) where experienced therapists, who had come from knowing nothing about self-care when they started out in the profession, believed they had moved to a place of being able to adequately care for their own emotional, mental and spiritual well-being.

Previous research (e.g. Eleftheriadou, 2015; Kim, Wampold, & Bolt, 2006) found that little time is given in training to understanding the impact of racial and cultural issues on the lives of the trainees. Neither do they provide adequate assessment regarding suitability and motives of those entering the profession. Theriault & Gazzola (2006), Christopher & Maris (2010) and Siegel (2010) also agree that few training programmes deal adequately with the concept of therapist self-care, especially their spiritual self-care, despite its importance. Even though the data agreed with this, and participants felt unprepared for their counselling journey, participants believe they were able to cope with the demands of multicultural counselling, and take adequate care of themselves, and their own faith and spirituality.

5.2.11 Summary of findings

What can be seen from this study, is that participants had entered into a career in counselling, having a clear view of the importance of their faith, and how this, along with counselling, could help other people. However, once they were in training, they received very little instruction or support in this area and felt they had been very unprepared for the work they were about to undertake, with regard to faith and spirituality, and/or diversity and culture.

As they continued in their career, participants found little support in these areas from supervision, and also could not talk about these with leaders in their own churches. This, in effect, made these subjects taboo in therapy and closed down communication around the subjects.

Participants faced challenges to their faith throughout their counselling journey. There is no particular challenge that is common to all participants. Instead, there is a variety of challenging diversity.

As participants continued in their career, they found that their faith and spirituality had changed. It cannot be known if this was due to counselling alone, or what would have happened if participants had not become counsellors. However, participants believe that the effects of their career in counselling had impacted their faith in some way and had brought about change.

It can be seen that changes in their faith have allowed participants to become more accepting of individuals of other faiths and other cultures, and has, in fact, taken them to a new place or stage in their faith. However, this has not been an easy transition. They have had differences of opinion with leaders of their own churches, and they have been unable to talk to other counsellors or supervisors about the transition they were going through. However, it seems that they have arrived at, or are on the way to, a stage of spiritual maturity that they may not have reached if they had not been counsellors. This can cause some difficulty with others who may perceive they are losing their faith. However, participants believe they have been able to take care of their faith, and although there have been times of struggle, they are still strong in their core beliefs and believe their faith is now much deeper and more meaningful.

5.3 Implications and recommendations

Further research is needed to build on the findings of this study. However, the findings indicate that there are implications and recommendations for areas of research, training, supervision and practice.

5.3.1 Implications and recommendations for research

The data suggest that there are several areas where further research investigation might be undertaken.

1) Further research, for example, might investigate more fully the motivations of therapists for becoming therapists, in order to bring out a better understanding of the reasons that they take up this particular profession. This would enable a better understanding of the suitability of applicants for training programmes, as well as being able to provide the necessary support of trainees. Also, for those starting out in this career to have a better understanding of themselves. Research might be carried out from various faith perspectives and/or from the view of those who profess to have no faith. This study challenges the view that counsellors enter the profession because they are wounded healers, or that their childhood needs had not been met. Therefore, further research would add to the knowledge base in this area.

2) There is a scarcity of research that investigates the importance of faith and spirituality, both in the life of the counsellor and the client. Further research

would add strength to the argument that this is an area that is an essential part of the counselling process that may often be missed.

3) Although there is a great deal of literature in the area of multicultural counselling, there is an absence of literature that explores this from the point of view of how the therapist is affected. Further research is needed to build on the findings of this study.

4) The data agree with current literature (Theriault & Gazzola, 2006; Christopher & Maris, 2010; Siegel, 2010) regarding gaps in research with regard to self-care. Further research in this area would build on studies in therapist self-care, and in particular from an emotional, mental and spiritual well-being perspective (Barton, 2019).

5.3.2 Implications and recommendations for training

1) Gaps in training were highlighted in this study. For example, participants received very little training and preparation in the areas of faith and spirituality, which agrees with findings by Scott (2011) and Hunt (2018). There is a need for trainers and training institutions to reflect on this, and address the lack in this area, if counselling is to meet the needs of the whole person. Given the importance of faith and spirituality in the lives of both client and therapist, more training in this area would help to better prepare the trainee for the diversity of clients they will meet in their work. This will help them to understand how to address and recognise issues of faith and spirituality, and to be less fearful of

raising this with their clients. It would also help to bring into the open their own views and beliefs, so that this is no longer a taboo subject in practice and supervision. Training in this area would also be helpful in preparing trainees for changes they may notice in their own faith and spirituality during their counselling journey.

2) The data have shown that there is also a gap in training regarding diversity and culture in general, and particularly in the area of impact of this on the therapist (Eleftheriadou, 2015; Kim, Wampold, & Bolt, 2006). It is important that this is addressed by trainers and training institutions.

A recommendation is that training is given early in counselling courses in the areas of diversity and culture. This could be done by bringing in individuals to talk about their particular difference, such as disability, ethnicity, social status, abuse, etcetera, and relating how they have experienced this, and what would help them in therapy. Also, trainees on the course could talk about their own differences and experiences of diversity.

3) The data concur with current literature (e.g. Theriault & Gazzola, 2006; Christopher & Maris, 2010; Siegel, 2010) that there are significant gaps in training with regard to self-care in general. There is a need for this to be addressed by trainers and training institutions.

4) There is very little training given in the area of motivations for becoming a therapist. Another recommendation for training, therefore, is that at the start of counselling courses there could be a series of workshops put in place to address the area of motivations. This could help provide a forum to deconstruct previously held expectations and assumptions of why individuals are on the course. It could also provide space for trainees to begin to discuss their motivations, and to be able to talk about their reasons for wanting to become a counsellor. This would help to clarify the intentions and suitability of those starting out in a career in counselling.

5.3.3 Implications and recommendations for supervision

The data highlight the lack of support in supervision regarding faith and spirituality, as well as diversity and culture, despite relevant literature (Kottler, 2010; Lago, 2011; Vacc, DeVaney & Brendel, 2003; Lott, 2010; Palmer & Laungani, 2009; Casas, 2017; Falender & Shafranske, 2014) indicating the relevance of these. It is important that this is addressed by supervisors, and managers of practices, so that there is an awareness that this could be raised in supervision, and supervisees enabled to talk about it.

Training is necessary for supervisors to understand the changes that their supervisees may be going through as far as faith and spirituality is concerned. Also, how diversity and culture may be affecting their supervisees. An

awareness of what this means to them, and how they may be encouraged to discuss this, is needed.

Training for supervisors in the importance of these areas is much needed. A series of workshops, or Continuing Professional Development (CPD), would enable awareness in this important area.

5.3.4 Implications and recommendations for practice

Counsellors, already in practice, would benefit from CPD that would bring awareness around the issues of faith and spirituality, as well as diversity and culture. Awareness of this would help them to gain a better understanding of clients' issues and enable openness in the therapy room around these areas, rather than these being taboo subjects.

5.4 Strengths and limitations of the study

A limitation of the research is that all of the participants were experienced counsellors, with ages ranging from 40 to 60 plus. They were all female and white British. However, this is reflective of the lack of ethnic diversity, and of the male/female imbalance in the profession and was not intentional or restricted in any way.

It can be argued, however, that the use of small sample sizes is a restriction to the study (Smith et al., 2009). Each interview was therefore carefully analysed in detail, in order to ensure the participants' experiences were captured, and

their voice heard. This also enabled a good level of interpretative engagement with the text (Smith, 2011; Smith et al., 2009).

Although only a small sampling pool was used, all participants were self-selected, and had an active interest in the research topic. All of the participants were qualified counsellors, who are also Christian. It is therefore probable that each would have their own views and expectations regarding both counselling and Christianity, which could be a limitation of the study.

The process and outcomes of the inquiry are also informed by the researcher's own experiences and interpretation. This means that researcher bias could occur in the interpretation of the participants' narratives (Etherington, 2004).

This research was a study conducted where all of the participants are Christian, and it could be argued that the focus is a narrow one. However, this was intentional by design, as the researcher was placed to understand the perspectives of those with the same faith. Further study could be undertaken by those of other faiths or none.

The use of IPA to explore participants' experiences of diversity and culture, and faith and spirituality, is a strength of the study. IPA aims to facilitate an enriched investigation about the lived experience of individuals, and allows in-depth exploration of their experiences (Smith, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). IPA is based on the belief that the experiences of a few participants examined at greater

levels of depth, is more valuable than simply describing the experiences of many individuals (Reid et al., 2005). As IPA requires the involvement of a small sample size (Smith, 2011; Smith et al., 2009), eight participants were selected for this study. The use of a small sample allowed the researcher to explore the nature of the phenomenon under study. This meant that the ability to obtain rich knowledge and produce a contextualised understanding of participants' experiences was gained (Smith, 2018).

5.5 Original contribution to the field

The study adds to the knowledge and understanding of how counsellors themselves may be affected by their work in the following ways:

- It explores the impact that working with diversity has on a counsellor's faith. This has never been researched before.
- It examines how counsellors who have a faith, take care of their faith when working with clients who have a different faith to their own. This has never been researched before.
- It explores how faith motivates some counsellors to become counsellors. This has never been researched before.

- It examines how therapists are able to care for their own faith when working with diversity. This has never been researched before.

In these ways and through the methodology used, the research makes an original contribution to literature.

Chapter 6. Summary and conclusion

This study's distinctive contribution lies in the fact that, although there is a great deal of research and literature concerning the importance of diversity and culture in therapy, there is a lack of research into the impact this may have on the therapist themselves. There has also been a lack of research into the importance of faith and spirituality within the counselling process, and particularly how this may change for the therapist through their counselling journey.

6.1 Aims of the study

The primary purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the research question:

Do issues of diversity and culture impact the journey of faith and spirituality of the counsellor who is a Christian?

Also, to fulfil the aims of the study:

- To explore the thoughts and feelings that participants have regarding how their faith and spirituality has been affected by diversity and culture throughout their counselling career.

- To discover the impact that diversity and culture has had on the participant themselves and their journey of faith and spirituality.
- To explore if, and how, participants ensured their own spiritual well-being throughout their counselling journey.

6.2 Summary of the study

Counselling extends an invitation to others to talk about their own unique experiences, and offers a space in which the individual can be heard and understood. One of the fundamental challenges for the multicultural therapist is to build a bridge across the contrasting worlds of their client, and themselves (McLeod, 2018).

As discussed in Chapter 2 of this project, multicultural counselling is extremely challenging for the therapist. Counsellors are required to achieve cultural empathy, as well as an openness in addressing cultural issues, and exploring the challenges that this may present (Lago, 2011). Great care is needed by the counsellor to withhold their own views, and to have the ability to suspend their own judgement on these issues. Despite this, little research is found that focuses on the impact that doing this may have on the therapist.

This research project explored how participants have been impacted by the diverse clients they have worked with, and how they have been able to take care of their own faith and spirituality, whilst also working ethically and multiculturally. The study focused specifically on counsellors who are Christian,

although it could also be researched in the same way by those who have a different faith, or none.

This study used a qualitative research methodology to explore the experiences that counsellors have of diversity and culture, and faith and spirituality, through their counselling journey.

In incorporating Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyse eight narratives, five superordinate themes were identified. These were, *Thoughts on Motivations, Perspectives on training, Experiences in supervision, Experiences of faith and spirituality, and Experiences of diversity and culture.*

It can be seen from this study, that initially participants had entered into a career in counselling, with a clear view of the importance of their faith as a motivation, along with a desire to help others in a deep and meaningful way. This challenges the literature (e.g. Jung, 1951, cited by Wheeler, 2007; Dicaccavo, 2002), which suggests that therapists are wounded healers, or that their childhood needs had not been met.

Once in training, participants received very little instruction or support in the area of faith and spirituality, diversity and culture, or self-care in these areas. This agrees with current literature (e.g. Reeves, 2018; Hunt, 2018; Richards, & Bergin, 2005; Eleftheriadou, 2015; Kim, Wampold, & Bolt, 2006). Participants

believe they had been very unprepared for the work they were about to undertake in these areas.

As they continued in their career, participants found little support in the areas of faith and spirituality, and diversity and culture, from supervision (Sue & Sue, 2016; Pederson, 2002). They also found they could not talk with leaders in their own churches about these issues. This made them feel they were in limbo and had nowhere to go with their thoughts on these subjects. Some of the participants worked through their own studies in the Bible, to answer the questions they had difficulties with.

Challenges to their faith were faced by participants, throughout their counselling journey. However, there was no form of diversity found that was particularly difficult for all of the participants. They each had struggles for different reasons with different forms of diversity.

As participants continued in their career, they found that their faith and spirituality was changing. It cannot be known if this was due to counselling alone, or what would have happened if participants had not become counsellors. However, participants believe that their career in counselling had affected their faith in some way, and had brought about change.

Changes in their faith allowed participants to become more accepting of individuals of other faiths and cultures, and has taken them to a new place or

stage in their faith. However, this has not been an easy transition. They have had differences of opinion with leaders of their own churches, and they have been unable to talk to other counsellors or supervisors about the transition they were going through. However, it seems that they have arrived at, or are on the way to, a stage of spiritual maturity (Fowler, 1981; Rohr, 2012; Andrew, 2011; Jamieson, 2002), that they may not have reached if they had not become counsellors. This has caused some difficulty in that others may perceive they are losing their faith. However, participants believe they have been able to take care of their faith, and despite times of struggle, they are still strong in their core beliefs, and believe their faith is now much deeper.

6.3 Statement of original contribution to the field

The study adds to the knowledge and understanding of how counsellors themselves may be affected by their work in the following ways:

- It explores the impact that working with diversity has on a counsellor's faith. This has never been researched before.
- It examines how counsellors who have a faith, take care of their faith when working with clients who have a different faith to their own. This has never been researched before.
- It explores how faith motivates some counsellors to become counsellors. This has never been researched before.

- It examines how therapists are able to care for their own faith when working with diversity. This has never been researched before.

In these ways and through the methodology used, the research makes an original contribution to literature.

6.4 Implications and recommendations

An important contribution to gaps in literature, regarding faith and spirituality, and diversity and culture, have been made through this study, although further research is needed to the purpose of the study.

The data suggest that there is room for further investigation into relevant areas of faith and spirituality, and diversity and culture. This would increase understanding in these areas for all of those involved in counselling and psychotherapy. There are also recommendations from this study that would benefit those who work in these areas.

There are few studies that explore motivations for therapists becoming therapists in detail (Kim, Wampold, & Bolt, 2006). Also, no existing research has been found that investigates motivations for becoming a therapist from the perspective of faith. It is recommended that further research is undertaken in this area.

Faith is an important part in the lives of individuals (Pargement, 2011; Milton, 2016; Jewell, 2004; Swinton, 2001; Barnett & Johnson, 2011). It could be argued, therefore, that adequate consideration should be given in this area, for those who are counsellors, as well as their clients, so that nothing is missed in the counselling room. It is therefore vital that this is considered and given prominence to in training and supervision, for the safety of both client and therapist, as well as the effectiveness of therapy.

Although there is a great deal of literature that considers the importance of multicultural counselling (Kottler, 2010; Lago, 2011; Vacc, DeVaney & Brendel, 2003; Lott, 2010; Palmer & Laungani, 2009; Casas et al., 2017; Falender & Shafranske, 2014), no research has been found concerning the impact this may have on the counsellor themselves. There has also been no research found on this subject from a faith and spirituality perspective. Recommendations are that further research is undertaken in this area.

There is little research found that investigates the importance of faith and spirituality in the counselling process, either from the view of the counsellor or the client. Further research is recommended in this area.

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Appendices

Appendix i. Recruitment poster

A Bridge Too Far?

Are you a **counsellor** who is also a **Christian**?

Was your main counselling training delivered primarily by a provider that was not a Christian provider?

How have issues of diversity and culture impacted on your faith and spirituality during your counselling career?

When you are counselling those who are very different to yourself, how do you ensure that your own faith and spirituality stays strong?

Would you be willing to take part in an anonymous interview of no more than one hour, in order to explore these issues?

*My research will explore the impact of **diversity** and **culture** on the **faith** and **spirituality** of the counsellor who is a Christian.*

Professional Doctorate Research by Heather Barton

Professional Doctorate study in Counselling and Psychotherapy at Chester University.

Please contact Heather Barton for further information.

No commitment assumed after initial contact

07917525344 || 1719337@chester.ac.uk

Appendix ii. Participant information sheet



University of
Chester

Participant Information Sheet

An exploration of the impact of diversity and culture on the journey of faith and spirituality of the counsellor who is a Christian.

Dear

Thank you for indicating that you are interested in taking part in this research. This Information Sheet will hopefully explain what is involved, but if you need further clarification, then please do not hesitate to contact me using the contact details below.

What is the purpose of the study?

This research is part of a Professional Doctorate in Counselling and Psychotherapy Studies / Psychological Trauma that I am undertaking at the University of Chester. I am interested in finding out about the experiences that counsellors, who are also Christians, have of working with clients who are very different from themselves, and how this has impacted their own faith and spirituality.

I would be interested in exploring your view on, and experience of, this.

What will happen to me if I take part?

To enable this, if you decide to take part, I will arrange a time to interview you face-to-face at your convenience, or to have a SKYPE/FaceTime interview with you if that is more convenient. Your written consent will be obtained through the enclosed consent form (which you can post or scan and email to me if the interview is conducted through SKYPE/FaceTime). The interview will be digitally recorded and last no more than an hour.

The interview will be semi-structured and be focused around the following questions:

1. What was your motivation for training to become a counsellor?

Was your faith involved in this decision?

Did your motivation change over time?

Were your expectations realised or did something different happen?

How was your faith and/or spirituality affected by this?

2. Tell me about your training as a counsellor?

Was your main training primarily from a non-Christian provider?

How did this fit with your beliefs as a Christian?

How was your faith, spirituality and/or religion handled in this training?

How did your training affect your faith?

3. What forms of difference or diversity/culture have you found when working with clients?

How easy has this been to work with?

What has been the most difficult?

4. How has working with clients who are very different from you affected you personally?

Can you give me any examples?

5. How is diversity and/or culture and faith and/or spirituality explored in supervision?

Is your supervisor knowledgeable about diversity and culture?

Is your supervisor open to discussion about faith and spirituality?

6. Do you consider that your training prepared you adequately for the journey you have been on?

What else could have been done?

How would you prepare a trainee counsellor who is a Christian for their journey to come?

7. How have you been able to take care of your faith and spirituality throughout your faith journey?

What are the obstacles to caring for your own faith and spirituality?

What else could you have done?

8. How has your faith and spirituality been impacted by your counselling journey?

Once the interview is complete, the digital recording will be transcribed. Your transcript will be allocated a pseudonym or code to protect your anonymity, and any identifying features in the data will be deleted. The transcript will be emailed to you to check for accuracy and to give you an opportunity to amend or change any of the data. Your final written consent will be obtained, allowing me to begin the process of analysis of the data.

Your right to withdraw without prejudice

You have every right to withdraw from the research at any time, without prejudice, up until the point that the thesis has begun to be written up. I will let you know when that is. Once the writing-up has begun, it will be impossible to remove your data as it will be aggregated, making your data more difficult to identify.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

If, for any reason, personal issues are stirred for you, I am an experienced therapist, so I will do my best to support you in the time we are together. I am also able to furnish you with a list of therapists in your locality whom you may be able to access.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The experience will give you time to reflect on your work, and to share your thoughts. This may contribute to something greater at research and policy level.

What if something goes wrong?

I will do everything within my ability to ensure your safety and confidentiality. However, if you are not happy with any aspect of the research process, please raise it with me. If you are still not happy, you may raise it with my Research Supervisor, Professor Peter Gubi at the University of Chester:

<http://www.chester.ac.uk/sps/staff/rev-pr-pm-gubi>

If you are still unhappy with things, you may then raise it with the Dean of Faculty, Professor David Balsamo:
Email: d.balsamo@chester.ac.uk

In the unlikely event that a participant is harmed by taking part in the research, there are no special compensation arrangements.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential, and how will my data be stored?

The fact that you are taking part in the research, and everything that you share, will remain confidential. In the unlikely event that Child Protection issues are raised, I may have to alert Social Services or Police, but otherwise, what you share will form part of the data which will be anonymised by use of a pseudonym or code. The data will be stored securely in locked premises, and kept encrypted on a password protected computer. Only I, and my Research Supervisor, will have access to the data. The data will be destroyed (shredded or electronically deleted) after five years, in keeping with the Data Protection Act.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The completed research will be stored (bound and electronic) at the University of Chester. The research will be disseminated in future publications and at conferences.

The thesis will reside on Chester Repository, and be accessible to be read by the wider public.

Payment/Reimbursement

Please note that no payment or reimbursement can be made to participants for their part in this study.

Whom may I contact for further information?

I, the researcher, am: Heather Barton

My contact details are: 1719337@chester.ac.uk

Thank you for your interest in this research.

Appendix iii.
Participant consent form

Consent Form

**An exploration of the impact of diversity and culture on the journey of faith
and spirituality of the counsellor who is a Christian.**

Name of Researcher: Heather Barton

Please initial box

1. I have read and understood the participant information sheet and have had the chance to ask questions.

2. I agree to the research conversation being audio recorded.

3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time before the thesis has begun to be written-up, without giving any reason.

4. I agree to take part in this study.

5. I understand that the data will be written up as part of a thesis and may be included in research presentations and publications, but that I will not be identifiable.

6. I understand that a transcription service may be used in this study.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix iv. Ethics approval letter



University of
Chester

Department of Social
and Political Science

sps@chester.ac.uk
Direct Line 01244 512040

28.03.2019

6 Dunlin Close,
Kingswinford,
West Midlands
DY6 8XP

Dear Heather Barton (1719337),

RE: ETHICS APPLICATION

The Department of Social and Political Science Ethics Committee has considered your application for ethical approval for your research for the following study:

An exploration of the impact of diversity and culture on the journey of faith and spirituality of the counsellor who is a Christian

We are pleased to inform you that the committee **has granted approval for you to proceed** with your research.

We wish you all the best in conducting this study.

Yours sincerely

Dr Paul Taylor
Chair of Ethics Committee
Head of Department

cc. 1719337@chester.ac.uk
Prof Peter Gubi (Supervisor)

1

1 Participant 3

2 Interviewer: That should be okay. Right, okay then. So we're going to start about
3 your motivation for training to become a counsellor. Can you tell me a little bit about
4 your motivation, why you wanted to become a counsellor?

5 Interviewee: Well I, looking, you see things different looking back that you maybe
6 didn't see at the time but I was a Samaritan in my early 20s and then I did a short
7 certificate in counselling when I first came to the West Midlands in 1994.

8 Interviewer: Right.

9 Interviewee: When I was 30. But it wasn't until I got 10 years past that I just felt as if
10 I got- that I wasn't getting really- sufficient job satisfaction in the job I was in.

11 Interviewer: Yeah.

12 Interviewee: and I had a bit like an epiphany and I thought actually maybe it's time
13 to explore-

14 Interviewer: Yeah.

15 Interviewee: - counselling.

16 Interviewer: Okay.

17 Interviewee: Um-

18 Interviewer: Yeah.

19 Interviewee: So it was a feeling that-that I wasn't using myself to my full capacity.

20 Interviewer: Right.

21 Interviewee: And that was something that seemed to be there but it had never kind
22 of been taken as far as it could have been

23 Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. Was your faith involved in this decision, do you think?

24 Interviewee: Definitely, because even though I've been gone to church as a child, I
25 didn't become a Christian until an adult.

26 Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

27 Interviewee: Um, at around 34. So there was- there was a feeling that if this was
28 something God wanted from my life. Then he would be part of the process to
29 establish whether that was yes or not.

30 Interviewer: Yeah.

31 Interviewee: And then whatever I did with my life, it was- doesn't mean that I felt that
32 he was with what he was telling me what to do

2 Participant 3

3

*previous
interest in
counselling
-
short
course
insufficient
job satisfaction*

*Now is the
right time!*

*Not been using
self to full
capacity.*

*always been
there but
not taken
up.*

*Faith -
definitely
involved
if
god wanted
my life he
would make
sure it
came
about*

1

Appendix vi. Example of development of thesis

Motivation

P1

I was a nurse, a children's nurse and social worker, so, most of my adult life has been involved in caring for people at times of crisis in their life in some form or other.

5-7

In the mid-80s the nature of the work I did changed in that instead of doing direct work with people I went into management, and so I found that increasingly, while I was managing people who handling people in crisis, the reality was that I wasn't doing it. The more senior I became, the further I went from it, so I tended not to see people unless they had really, really, really bad complaints

7-13

I was involved in a Church where I'd been involved with people who had problems, and I had a sense of it's all right-- Not it's all right for them, but, actually they've got somewhere to go. They've got a network of people who care actually there's all of these people out there that don't have that.

17-23

So became interested in the development of a Christian counselling service in the area. So, in the early '90s I became involved almost looking at that a bit more ecumenically, and then in 1995 that was almost affirmed, and we began looking very seriously at the creation of a counselling service in H.

25-29

Motivation

Participant 2

I think there were a few motivations really. One of them was definitely the kids that I was working with in school. I've always worked in schools right from when I finished uni because I went to be a teacher. So, I kind of went in and taught middle schools. And right from the off my, I suppose one of my strengths was working pastorally with the kids. So, I was teaching but actually the bit that I really enjoyed was being with the kids, talking through any problems they might have. It was seeing the kids that were at the back of the class that looked a bit despondent and kind of hooking in with them. That was the stuff that I felt drawn to.

3-22

I was actually at a special school at one point. And two of the kids, one of them had both her parents wiped out in a car accident at the time. And another boy had his mum die. And the support that was offered was really kind of patchy and limited. And I just found myself thinking, do you know what? I wanna be able to better, help people and young people. So that was the kick really to start the training.

24-33

Not enjoying previous role/enjoyed caring pastorally/compassion for children/passion for helping/seeing inadequacies in education system/wanting to be able to help in a better way

P3

Well I, looking, you see things different looking back that you maybe didn't see at the time but I was a Samaritan in my early 20s and then I did a short certificate in counselling when I first came to the West Midlands in 1994 when I was 30. But it wasn't until I got 10 years past that I just felt as if I got- that I wasn't getting really- sufficient job satisfaction in the job I was in and I had a

bit like an epiphany and I thought actually maybe it's time to explore counselling. So it was a feeling that-that I wasn't using myself to my full capacity And that was something that seemed to be there but it had never kind of been taken as far as it could have been

5-22

P4

I was in teaching. I'd returned to teaching after an 18-year break, being a mom. So when I went back to teaching the youngest was eight, and the eldest was 18. And I did that for seven years, during that time I wasn't particularly happy. I did it for the money rather than the joy. And on three separate occasions or different people both in my work and also my church said, "Oh, you'd be a really good counsellor." And, um, yeah, I just thought about it for a while. And that's probably over the course of the year or 18 months. And there was an incident at school which meant that I was off and unwell, on garden leave and on full pay. the incident was where I was injured, and so I didn't-- I went back to school and then I didn't go back to school, with, sort of, stress and all that kind of thing. Um, so, I thought, well that's the end of my teaching career. I'd had enough by then. So, I'd done it for seven years as a returner, and I thought, "Right, that's it." And because I had the free time and the money, it gave me the opportunity to take a counselling course. So, like a taster course, to see if I liked it. So, I did a 10-week course in the local college in Basingstoke. And then, as a result of doing that and enjoying it and actually understanding a bit more what a counsellor was-then I did a certificate err course there. So the motivation was-- partly it had been recognised from outside, that I wasn't great with a classroom of children, but I understood people. I got people - both the staff and the kids.

5-36

u

P5

It's really because I'd had counselling myself at certain points. So I can't think when I started. I think my first course, uh, the beginning of my counselling skills was 2002. It was very intense. It was psychodynamic and that was four whole days. But prior to that I'd have several blocks of counselling with relationship counselling. You know, my marriage was breaking down. And then I didn't want another relationship to break down as well. So I think I could see how having counselling, being able to talk to somebody independent, helps. To say things I wouldn't say to my family, because I didn't want to worry or upset them. So, yeah. I could see that I-- Well, it was useful. And I think I could see myself doing it. I found that people could talk to me a lot, about all sorts of things and, you know, if they had problems. And so, it-- Yeah. I just felt this- this is something I could do, I think. And by 2002, I'd graduated. I did, uh, my degree as a mature student was psychology and fine art. And as part of that in my degree, one of the main modules I did was counselling. It wasn't counselling necessarily as we know it. It was like psychological angle of counselling. So that kind of- wet my appetite I mean and along with that I did my dissertation on body image.

3-28

P6

I would say that the seedlings of my training to become a counsellor started very early on in my life in that at a quite young age, um, I became a carer- when my sister was born. So there's nine years between us. And on looking back, I think my mother suffered from post-natal depression though that was never diagnosed and I think the seedlings started right back when I was really quite young and I'd also the tendency to um, to help others or want to help others and believe that that's what Christ calls us to do. And then, um, in 1985, I lost my niece, my 18 year old niece, in a hit and run accident act, whatever you might call it. They never found out who did it sadly and- and she died just before Christmas in 1985. And I think I understood bereavement,

started to understand the bewilderment of bereavement. And it came through that, really. I thought "I want to help others." I really wanted to help bereaved people so I did bereavement listening with ... and all of that. And then in the late '90s I did Introduction to Skills and an Introduction to Theory course. Um, and got to the end of two years and knew I wasn't ready to go on to the next level. I went through a time of illness. Um, about 2002, I basically collapsed into illness. At the time I was working at- as an administrator in a counselling agency very interestingly. and it was as I came through towards the end of two years of being very ill, house-bound, all the rest of it, that I heard God say to me very clearly, "Now is the time for you go back-" "-to your training." It's one of the few times in life I've really heard God speaking very very clearly. and I think I- I actually used the counselling training um, as part of my convalescence.

3-51

P7

I had err counselling myself for six weeks when a lot of things piled in on me and after doing that my counsellor said, "Have you thought about being a counsellor?" I think she had probably picked something up. And so yeah. So that's really why. Not because she said so, but because Years and years and years ago, my kids were little. I used to- I started reading Jung and things to do with counselling but could never do a course. In those days it was different.

3-27

P8

So I was involved in pastoral care in church and I got a particular couple that were having trouble and so they had difficulty within their relationship but also just generally coping with life. And I was trying to support them and get involved and it got a bit messy and a bit complicated. And I just thought ... that was a bit – I didn't really know what I was doing. And I actually was quite young, so I was still in my 20s. And so were this couple, I mean they were

6,

perhaps a little bit older, but we were kind of- it was kind of a peer thing and I just thought, you know what? Actually, I could do with some-I could do with some more training. I could do with something to help me. This could've been really very messy - very difficult. And actually I got away with it. I think I probably made some fundamental errors. I mean, it was a pastoral setting, it wasn't a counselling setting, so it wasn't- it wasn't boundaried, you know, and it got difficult. I think I was always somebody that people tended to talk to and so, it was in, I was probably a rescuer for even in a teenage setting. I would try, you know, I was the one that could kind of try and soothe the water and sort everything out and be a bit of a-- I-I was a little bit of an odd ball I didn't necessarily fit in. And was used as a bit of an agony aunt by-by my peers. And, um, so I yeah probably did that kind of role quite a bit. So it was a natural sort of role.

3-45