A COMPARATIVE AND THEORETICAL STUDY OF
MOMENTS OF DEEP ENCOUNTER
IN THERAPEUTIC AND PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Faculty of Humanities

2014

JAMES NEAL TEBBUTT
Manchester Institute of Education
School of Environment, Education, and Development
**CONTENTS**

Lists of Boxes, Figures and Tables ................................................................. 6
Abstract ............................................................................................................. 8
Declaration ....................................................................................................... 9
Copyright Statement ...................................................................................... 9
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................... 10
The Author ...................................................................................................... 10

**PART I: FOUNDATIONS .............................................................................. 11**

**Chapter 1: The Nature and Purpose of the Research ................................... 11**

1.1 Research origins ..................................................................................... 11
1.2 Research design ..................................................................................... 13
  1.2.1 Research approach ............................................................................. 13
  1.2.2 Research objectives .......................................................................... 18
  1.2.3 Research justifications ...................................................................... 19
1.3 Research subject .................................................................................... 22
  1.3.1 Defining moments of deep encounter .............................................. 22
  1.3.2 Distinguishing different moments .................................................... 24
  1.3.3 Distinguishing ‘transpersonal’ and ‘spiritual’ .................................... 27
1.4 Research process and thesis outline ....................................................... 31

**Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology .................. 34**

2.1 Theoretical issues and perspectives ....................................................... 34
  2.1.1 Language and hermeneutics ............................................................. 36
  2.1.2 ‘Self’ and relationality ...................................................................... 37
  2.1.3 ‘Reality’ and critical realism ............................................................ 38
2.2 Theoretical framework .......................................................................... 41
  2.2.1 An open-minded, attentive attitude ................................................ 41
  2.2.2 A critical dialogue ............................................................................ 44
  2.2.3 An emergent, overarching understanding ....................................... 45
2.3 Methodology .......................................................................................... 48
  2.3.1 Data identification and thematic analysis ....................................... 50
  2.3.2 Meta-analysis .................................................................................... 55
  2.3.3 Meta-synthesis .................................................................................. 56

**PART II: THEMATIC ANALYSIS .................................................................... 59**

**Chapter 3: Thematic Analysis – Process .................................................... 59**

3.1 The thematic codes .................................................................................. 59
Chapter 4: Thematic Findings for the Psychodynamic Approaches ................. 80

4.1 Psychoanalysis .................................................................................. 85
   4.1.1 Freud ......................................................................................... 85
   4.1.2 Post Freud ............................................................................... 88

4.2 Relational Psychodynamic approaches .............................................. 91
   4.2.1 General insights ......................................................................... 91
   4.2.2 Regression (and related themes) .................................................. 94
   4.2.3 Transitional experience ............................................................... 100
   4.2.4 Projective identification and the analytic third or field ............... 103
   4.2.5 Shared implicit relationship and an intersubjective field ............ 108
   4.2.6 Transformations in ‘O’ ................................................................. 112
   4.2.7 Psychospiritual paradigm ............................................................ 115

4.3 Analytical Psychology ....................................................................... 118
   4.3.1 Jung ......................................................................................... 118
   4.3.2 Post-Jungians .......................................................................... 123

Chapter 5: Thematic Findings for the Humanistic Approaches ................. 129

5.1.1 Person-Centred approaches ....................................................... 133
5.1.2 Existential approaches ................................................................. 147
5.1.3 Gestalt and Dialogical approaches ............................................. 152
5.1.4 Experiential approaches .............................................................. 158

Chapter 6: Thematic Findings for the Eclectic and Integrative, and the
Transpersonal, Spiritual and Pastoral Approaches .................................. 163

6.1 Eclectic and Integrative Approaches .............................................. 168
   6.1.1 General .................................................................................... 168
   6.1.2 Budgell ................................................................................... 169
   6.1.3 Clarkson .................................................................................. 173
   6.1.4 Hobson .................................................................................... 177
   6.1.5 Rowan ..................................................................................... 177

6.2 Approaches explicitly acknowledging the transpersonal or spiritual ...... 181
6.2.1 Transpersonal approaches ................................................... 181
6.2.2 Spiritual approaches ......................................................... 186
6.2.3 Pastoral approaches ......................................................... 192

PART III: META-ANALYSIS ........................................................... 197

Chapter 7: Comparison and Critique of Thematic Findings ............. 197

7.1 Indicators of existence and role ............................................ 201
  7.1.1 Patterns of occurrence and recognition ......................... 201
  7.1.2 Perspectives reported .................................................. 203
  7.1.3 Nature and role ......................................................... 204

7.2 Aspects .............................................................................. 206
  7.2.1 Present and emphasised ............................................... 206
  7.2.2 Attitudes and understandings ...................................... 207
  7.2.3 Function ................................................................. 208

7.3 Causation and facilitation .................................................. 211
  7.3.1 Factors ......................................................................... 211
  7.3.2 Aspects and boundaries ............................................. 214
  7.3.3 Engineered or facilitated ............................................ 217

7.4 Boundaries ......................................................................... 218
  7.4.1 Significance ............................................................... 218
  7.4.2 Understanding ........................................................... 218
  7.4.3 Role ........................................................................... 223

7.5 Theoretical frame .............................................................. 223
  7.5.1 Types ........................................................................... 223
  7.5.2 Effect ........................................................................... 224
  7.5.3 Particular paradigms ................................................... 226

7.6 Interpretation ....................................................................... 229
  7.6.1 Different understandings ............................................. 229
  7.6.2 Relationship .............................................................. 236
  7.6.3 Cogency ................................................................. 248

PART IV: META-SYNTHESIS .................................................... 252

Chapter 8: Critique and Synthesis of Meta-Analytic Findings ....... 252

8.1 An explanatory framework .................................................. 252
  8.1.1 Description ................................................................... 253
  8.1.2 Explanation ................................................................. 256
  8.1.3 Understanding ............................................................ 259
  8.1.4 Summary .................................................................... 265
8.2 Assessing the research ........................................................................................................ 266
8.2.1 Implications .................................................................................................................... 267
8.2.2 Achievements and limitations ......................................................................................... 273
8.2.3 Future research ............................................................................................................... 279
8.2.4 Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 281

BIBLIOGRAPHY ....................................................................................................................... 283

Thesis word count (for the main text, i.e., excluding the preliminary pages and Bibliography): **85,915**
Lists of Boxes, Figures and Tables

**Box 1.1** Summary of literature resources and gaps .......................................................... 14
**Box 1.2** Research questions .................................................................................................. 18
**Box 1.3** Summary of research justifications ........................................................................ 21
**Box 1.4** A working definition of a ‘moment of deep encounter’ ........................................ 23
**Box 1.5** Constituent elements or aspects within in a moment of deep encounter .......... 23
**Box 1.6** Terms used to describe different types of moments ................................................. 26
**Box 1.7** Use of ‘transpersonal’ and ‘spiritual’ ........................................................................ 29
**Box 2.1** Principal research paradigms (configured according to Ponterotto, 2005) ......... 39
**Box 2.2** Elements of underpinning theoretical framework .................................................. 41
**Box 2.3** Criteria for determining an emergent, overarching understanding ..................... 47
**Box 2.4** Methodological steps and stages ............................................................................. 50
**Box 2.5** Areas of data search ................................................................................................. 51
**Box 2.6** Paterson’s features of a meta-synthesis ..................................................................... 57
**Box 7.1** Meta-analytic findings regarding patterns of occurrence and recognition ....... 202
**Box 7.2** Meta-analytic findings regarding the function of different aspects ..................... 208
**Box 7.3** Illustrative understandings of transpersonal/interpersonal connection .......... 210
**Box 7.4** Meta-analytic findings regarding boundary significance ..................................... 218
**Box 7.5** Proposed principles regarding interpretive cogency ........................................... 250
**Box 8.1** Seven specific facilitative factors ............................................................................. 257
**Box 8.2** The facilitative role of different boundaries ............................................................ 258
**Box 8.3** Principal research implications .............................................................................. 271
**Box 8.4** The research’s core findings .................................................................................... 274
**Box 8.5** Principal achievements and limitations ................................................................. 278
**Box 8.6** Future research directions ....................................................................................... 281

**Figure 1.1** The permutations of different aspects involved in various experiences ..... 26
**Figure 1.2** Possible configurations regarding spiritual and non-spiritual interpretations of deep-moment phenomena .......................................................... 31
**Figure 1.3** Methodological stages of the meta-study ............................................................. 32
**Figure 4.1** Josephine Klein’s representation of ‘processes in the intersect’ ..................... 93
**Figure 7.1** Correlation of aspect-emphases and deep moments ........................................ 209
**Figure 7.2** Overlapping categories of interpretation ............................................................ 235
Figure 7.3  Particular tensions between different interpretive positions .................. 236
Figure 8.1  Elements for an explanatory framework ........................................... 253
Figure 8.2  Principal approaches indicating moments of deep encounter .............. 254
Figure 8.3  Some recurring characteristics of moments of deep encounter .......... 255
Figure 8.4  Boundary characteristics and issues .................................................. 256
Figure 8.5  Factors facilitating the occurrence of moments of deep encounter ...... 259
Figure 8.6  Facets of understanding ................................................................. 260
Figure 8.7  An illustrative mapping of different interpretations .......................... 261
Figure 8.8  A simple representation of the possible parties and dynamics involved in a moment of deep encounter ............................................................. 263
Figure 8.9  An explanatory framework for moments of deep encounter ............... 266

Table 3.1  The final thematic codes ....................................................................... 60
Table 4.1  Summary Table of principal findings from data identification and thematic analysis for Psychodynamic approaches ................................................. 81
Table 5.1  Summary Table of principal findings from data identification and thematic analysis for Humanistic approaches ......................................................... 130
Table 6.1  Summary Table of principal findings from data identification and thematic analysis for Eclectic and ‘Spiritual’ approaches ......................................... 164
Table 7.1  Summary Table of principal meta-analytic findings for the thematic codes .... .......................................................... 198
Table 7.2  Types of Earlier Life interpretations ......................................................... 232
Table 7.3  Types of Relational interpretations ........................................................ 233
Table 7.4  Types of Spiritual interpretations .......................................................... 234
Abstract

University: The University of Manchester
Candidate: James Neal Tebbutt
Degree Title: Doctor of Philosophy
Thesis Title: A Comparative and Theoretical Study of Moments of Deep Encounter in Therapeutic and Pastoral Relationships
Date: 2014

This thesis presents a comparative and theoretical meta-study of a beneficial phenomenon experienced in some therapeutic and pastoral relationships, which I describe as a ‘moment of deep encounter’. The phenomenon is distinguished and defined, the research aims and approach described, and the research’s underpinning theoretical frame explained.

The relevant data, being various deep-moment accounts and insights already existing within some pertinent areas of the literature, were analysed through a qualitative, three-stage meta-study. The development of some thematic coding, to identify and thematically analyse relevant data, is explained, and the collated thematic findings set out. These were then compared and critiqued through a meta-analysis, the findings from which were themselves meta-synthesised into an explanatory framework in order to map and relate various deep-moment experiences, perspectives, and understandings.

The study identifies the patterns of occurrence of moments of deep encounter, their constituent aspects and the factors involved in their facilitation, some pertinent boundary issues and relevant theoretical perspectives, and the nature, relationship and cogency of various competing interpretations. Methodological, theoretical, and practical contributions are set out; the study is evaluated; and future research suggested.

As far as I am aware, this research provides a larger overview and deeper analysis than any previously undertaken regarding moments of deep encounter. Moreover, such moments provide a lens into wider issues of theory and practice. The research invites a greater awareness of the beneficial effects of moments of deep encounter, greater attentiveness to their constituent aspects and characteristics, and greater openness to their interpretive possibilities, so as to enhance therapeutic and pastoral practice.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Copyright Statement

i. The author of this thesis (including any appendices and/or schedules to this thesis) owns certain copyright or related rights in it (the “Copyright”) and s/he has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative purposes.

ii. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made only in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has from time to time. This page must form part of any such copies made.

iii. The ownership of certain Copyright, patents, designs, trade marks and other intellectual property (the “Intellectual Property”) and any reproductions of copyright works in the thesis, for example graphs and tables (“Reproductions”), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions.

iv. Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialisation of this thesis, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy (see http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/Doculinfo.aspx?DocID=487), in any relevant Thesis restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, The University Library’s regulations (see http://www.manchester.ac.uk/library/aboutus/regulations) and in The University’s policy on Presentation of Theses.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor William West and Doctor Julian Edge, for their complementary perspectives and insights across many years. In supervisions we very much functioned as a ‘three’, in a critical, creative, humour-filled dialogue, from which I learnt a great deal more than may always have been evident, for which I am very grateful, and which I shall miss.

More widely, I would wish to thank the Methodist Church for a grant towards the costs of undertaking this research, and similarly the late Miss Joan Miles, my adopted ‘Aunty Joan’, whose kind legacy helped to make the research possible. Her kindness symbolises that of many, whose quiet supportive interest and enquiries have encouraged me across the years, be they relations, friends, church members, or peers. I would also thank former teachers who have left their own influence on me; and those who have listened deeply to me, or who have afforded me the privilege of listening to them, in pastoral, counselling, and informal contexts. It was this that first ignited my appreciation of ‘moments of deep encounter’. In all of this, I would thank in particular my parents, the Rev’d Brian and Mrs Christine Tebbutt, not only for their unfailing love and support, but also for first introducing me to the fields of Psychotherapy and Pastoral Care, around the kitchen table many years ago, and to the importance of kind, attentive listening, and respectful thinking and relating.

Above all, I wish to acknowledge and thank my immediate family, our daughter Eleanor, and my wife, Nicola, whose persistently patient giving of space, understanding and support through the many years of this project has enabled me to fulfil the costly, yet hugely privileged, process of undertaking a Ph.D.. Accordingly, with deep gratitude, it is to them and to Nicola in particular that I dedicate this thesis.

The Author

The author was awarded a B.A.(Hons) in Theology from the University of Cambridge in 1986 (converted under the relevant regulations to an M.A. in 1990). After relevant study and training, he qualified as a Solicitor in 1990, and practiced as such through most of the period until 1999. In 1999 he obtained a Foundation Certificate in Psychotherapy and Counselling from the School of Psychotherapy and Counselling, Regent’s College, London. After ministerial training, he became a Methodist minister in 2001, serving as such in various appointments through most of the subsequent period. In 2008 he was awarded an M.Phil. in Contextual Theology from the University of Birmingham.
PART I: FOUNDATIONS
Chapter 1: The Nature and Purpose of the Research

‘Moments of deep encounter’ is a term I developed to describe experiences within listening relationships when, with safety and trust established between the parties, the talker gains a new ‘penny-dropping’ insight into themself and their concerns, accompanied by a sense of something beyond or greater than the parties themselves. Such experiences are part of a wider group of deep-moment experiences, awareness of which appears to be growing, especially in some approaches within counselling and psychotherapy. Whilst this development formed a backdrop to my own research, my research interest arose independently, and became especially concerned with recognising and comparing the competing understandings of deep-moment experiences that can be identified. Accordingly, my thesis aims to provide an overview and framework for relating the different experiences and insights regarding such phenomena, a task which, so far as I am aware, no one has previously attempted to any significant degree. In the process, my consideration of the moments involved also provided a lens for illuminating and comparing some of the theoretical and practical distinctions and commonalities that exist between different therapeutic and pastoral approaches.

In this introductory chapter, I explain the background to my research, my research design, the precise subject of the research, and my research process and thesis structure.

1.1 Research origins

My awareness and understanding of moments of deep encounter developed from retrospective reflection about a training placement at Cruse Bereavement Care in 1999-2000. Although part of my wider ministerial training, the placement was as a student counsellor in a ‘secular’ context with a ‘secular’ approach, and clients were not made aware of my background (Tebbutt, 2000). The therapeutic encounters with various clients became central to my placement experience, which, at the deepest level, included particular moments that appeared to focus or release the positive transforming effects that could occur when the therapeutic process and relationship were working well. These moments were:

those occasions when the heart of the encounter was revealed. The client would be in touch with their feelings when, through their own process or because of my
intervention, they went deeper another notch or two. There could then be the clearest sense of mutual connection, of being present to each other, whilst also being vividly present to the client’s particular insight, memory, issue or emotion. In such indescribable but palpable moments of encounter, there was almost a mystical quality... (Tebbutt, 2000: 37-8).

This passage represents an original piece of data, authored by myself, but with a potential significance and wider relevance that I only appreciated later as I continued to notice such moments, either as a listener, or as the one being listened to, in a variety of counselling, ministerial or chaplaincy settings. This caused me to revisit the description and to enquire whether others had experienced similar moments, and whether, given their apparently beneficial effect, the moments could be cultivated to enhance pastoral or therapeutic practice.

Initially this investigation was carried out through an MPhil, which involved a preliminary survey and discussion of the pertinent literature in various therapeutic and pastoral approaches (Tebbutt, 2008). (I am using ‘therapeutic’ to cover both ‘counselling’ and ‘psychotherapy’, since any distinction proved to be largely immaterial in this research; and ‘pastoral’ to indicate a religious or spiritual aspect, notwithstanding that ‘pastoral’ can also be used in more secular contexts: see Lartey (1997: 73-8). Similarly, much of the time distinctions between ‘analyst’, ‘therapist’, ‘counsellor’, ‘listener’ etc., or between ‘patient’, ‘analysand’, ‘client’, ‘talker’ etc., were immaterial, and I have tended to use terms according to the preferred usage of the particular author or approach being examined at that point; however, where the nuances behind particular terms were relevant in the research, I acknowledged it.)

The data for the MPhil (and, as I will explain, for this research) were therefore the accounts and insights into deep-moment experiences that were published in the literature. My survey and initial analysis of this data indicated that, whilst my awareness and interest might have arisen independently, others also experienced deep moments (albeit with many variations). However, it was also clear that awareness and interpretation of deep moments could vary significantly within and between different therapeutic or pastoral approaches. Many approaches and authors showed limited or no awareness, but, interestingly, notwithstanding the spiritual character of deep moments that is sometimes reported, some (although not all) of the ‘secular’ therapeutic approaches appeared to be more aware of deep moments than the pastoral approaches.
As the MPhil progressed, it also became increasingly apparent that the different theoretical frameworks and priorities applied by various therapeutic and pastoral approaches might be influencing the differences in deep-moment awareness and interpretation. The MPhil began to identify these differences. However, it was clear that further research and reflection would be required, beyond the breadth or depth possible in my MPhil’s preliminary survey, if the differences were to be better understood. The present thesis and doctoral research provided me with the opportunity to undertake some of this further examination, analysis and theoretical reflection, and thus to build on my MPhil’s initial foundations. Consequently, I will now explain and justify the nature and focus of my doctoral research.

1.2 Research design

In explaining my research approach and its particular objectives and justifications, inevitably I present the information somewhat sequentially. However, the various elements developed alongside each other, in an “ongoing process” that involved a “‘tacking’ back and forth between different components of the design” (Maxwell, 2005: 3).

1.2.1 Research approach

Since the area of inquiry and “object under study is the determining factor for choosing a method and not the other way round” (Flick, 2009: 15), it was important to identify my research focus before selecting my research approach. Given that the closing of ‘gaps’ in scholarly literature often provides a strong rationale for pursuing particular research (Creswell, 2007: 102), I reconsidered the literature reviewed in my MPhil, which indeed revealed some broad gaps, as summarised below. However, the rich data resources already available in the literature also struck me, so I acknowledge these first.

a) Even if relatively few in number, some relevant empirical studies regarding various deep moments already existed, (Mahrer et.al., 1986; Budgell, 1995; Stern et.al. 1998a; Geller & Greenberg, 2002; McMillan & McLeod, 2006; Wiggins, Elliott, & Cooper, 2012; etc.). However, more than these studies, within the literature there were many passing references to various deep-moment type experiences (many of which contained empirical elements), or to insights regarding these experiences, which provided a pool of already existing, but largely unexplored, data.
b) The literature revealed limited awareness of this data, and indeed little expressed awareness of deep moments themselves. Moreover, even where there was awareness of deep-moment phenomena, there was limited perception that they might be interpreted in different ways; when given, interpretations tended to reflect the precepts of the approach or author involved, and rarely revealed any awareness that other interpretations might be possible. This general lack of awareness meant that there were also other gaps in the literature.

c) There was a lack of dialogue between different approaches and authors about the validity or otherwise of different interpretations, which also meant the absence of any significant collation and analysis of the competing insights and interpretations (Rowan offers a minor exception, which I address shortly).

d) Similarly, there was only limited consideration or discussion about how the different possible aspects that constitute a moment of deep encounter (which I identify later) might be understood, or conceptualised, as functioning, influencing, and interacting within a moment of deep encounter.

I summarise these resources and gaps in Box 1.1 (they become more evident as the thesis proceeds).

**Box 1.1  Summary of literature resources and gaps**

- a) As an untapped resource, wide data existed regarding the experience and understanding of deep moments, including some specific studies; but also
- b) limited awareness and appreciation of deep moments, or their different possible interpretations; and consequently
- c) limited dialogue, collation, and analysis regarding competing insights; and
- d) limited attempts to understand or conceptualise the interaction of the possible aspects contributing to moments of deep encounter.

John Rowan offers a minor exception to some of the gaps identified above, although initially he seemed to be largely unaware of deep moments (Rowan, 1993). However, later he acknowledged Rosemary Budgell’s concept of ‘linking’ (which I discuss in Chapter
6), connecting it to various other types of deep moment (Rowan & Jacobs, 2002: 82-4); before subsequently setting out what is the fullest consideration of deep moments that I have so far found (Rowan, 2005: 162-73). Nonetheless, the range of approaches, data, and issues discussed by Rowan is much less extensive, and at much less depth, than has been undertaken, I suggest, in this research. Consequently, whilst Rowan displays greater awareness than anyone else, the need for a broader and more detailed analysis and discussion was still evident.

To achieve that discussion and analysis, various types of research might have been useful. For example, quantitative research might have illuminated the frequency of deep moment experiences (or of their contributing aspects), and the contexts and conditions in which they occur. However, given that qualitative research is arguably more sensitive at discerning nuances of meaning and influence within human experience (Denzin & Lincoln eds., 2005; McLeod, 2011; Swinton & Mowat, 2006), a qualitative approach appeared more appropriate for my research topic (and more in keeping with my own experience and concerns, which I acknowledge further in Chapter 2).

Qualitative research often involves various types of face-to-face research. One standard option might have been to interview a sample of talkers or listeners from various therapeutic or pastoral contexts regarding their possible deep-moment experiences. Particular methodologies could have been adopted or adapted to pursue this. For example, much therapeutic research has concentrated on issues of process and outcome, including regarding significant therapeutic events (McLeod, 2003b: 154-8; see for example Rice and Greenberg’s (1984) investigation of ‘client change mechanisms’); although, latterly, a wider range of qualitative methodologies have come to the fore (see for example Creswell’s (2007) discussion of methodological choice). Either research style might have worked well with my topic: compare for example Mahrer’s (et.al., 1986) earlier type research into ‘good and very good moments’, with Budgell’s (1995) later style phenomenological study into moments of ‘linking’.

With either style, the ‘spiritual’ aspect, sometimes attributed to moments of deep encounter, would have been difficult to investigate, as recognised by West (2000: 98, 120), for example. However, West (1998b; etc.) also endorses Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic method as being suitable for researching spiritual matters (a method which
would also have emphasised my own reactions to the experience and study of deep moments); although Atkinson (1990: 226) and Swinton (2001: 99f.) recommend a phenomenological approach (with descriptive, interpretive, and narrative varieties being possible (Langdridge, 2007)); whilst Braud and Anderson (1998) propose various other ‘transpersonal research methods’.

Thus I was alert to various possible methodologies for undertaking face-to-face research. Yet I had concerns about pursuing this type of research, some principal tasks of which would have been to collect and analyse new data. This would have limited the time and space available for identifying and analysing the issues already present in the existing data (which may have been largely confined to undertaking a preliminary literature review, and with less opportunity to design the research around the existing range of issues). Furthermore, the range of issues and interpretive perspectives that would have arisen from a manageable number of interviews might not have been as extensive as those already present in the wider existing data. Consequently, I was concerned that pursuing face-to-face research might restrict the opportunities for utilising and focusing on the existing resources and gaps, and at this point might not be the best way of advancing an overall understanding of the topic. This is not to suggest that an interview-type study would not have been useful, or might not be useful at a later stage, when the design of such a study might benefit from having first examined thoroughly the existing data and issues. Yet at this stage, the data available within the literature (including data already gathered formally or informally face-to-face), and the possibility of using a different research approach, meant that, instead of pursuing face-to-face research, I chose to concentrate on the existing data and issues, and to do so through a meta-study.

Meta-studies are a qualitative form of research developed in health care, but aspects of which have been used in psychotherapy (Timulak, 2007, 2009). ‘Meta-study’ is a more comprehensive concept than variants such as ‘systematic review’, ‘meta-analysis’, or ‘meta-synthesis’, all of which may be encompassed within a meta-study, as part of the analysis and organisation of – usually – existing bodies of qualitative research (Paterson et.al., 2001). However, there appeared to be no reason why the principle of a “rigorous secondary analysis of primary qualitative findings” (Timulak, 2007: 305) should not also be applied to the deep-moment analyses already existing in the handful of explicit deep-moment studies, and more informally in the wider accounts and insights present in the
literature, since, both in effect represented primary findings concerning a type of human
experience that were now ripe for a secondary analysis. A meta-study could provide
analysis, comparison, theoretical consideration, overview, and, where possible, synthesis,
of the existing data:

    meta-study can consolidate a body of widely scattered literature into a usable and
    coherent whole [and] can begin to explain some paradoxes and contradictions
    (Paterson et.al., 2001: 14-15).

Meta-studies may be less common than face-to-face research, but McLeod (1999a: 105;
2011: 5, 286-7) argues that sometimes it is better to exploit existing data rather than to
gather new data, and that the ever accumulating number of analyses need themselves to
be compared, analysed and interpreted, in order to integrate different findings and to
build an overall picture of a specific topic (see also: Sandelowski et.al., 1997; McCormick
et.al., 2003). Additionally, my own temperament and background (see Chapter 2)
influenced my preference for a meta-study. Instinctively I wanted to analyse the as yet
insufficiently examined insights available within the literature, so as to weigh up the
different understandings and identify more or less helpful ways of thinking about
moments of deep encounter. (Qualitative research respects such personal motivations,
recognising that researcher involvement and influence is not only inevitable, but also a
potential tool, rather than hindrance, for the research, provided it is reflexively and
appropriately handled (Sanders & Wilkins, 2010: 123-4, 263-4; Willig, 2009: 13, 18).)

Although ‘meta-analyses’ (in particular) often take statistical and quantitative forms (e.g.
Kazdan, 1994: 31-3), meta-studies and their variants can take distinctively qualitative
forms (Khan et.al., 2007), as here. Additionally, my meta-study embodied an
interdisciplinary and comparative character: I located and investigated the accounts and
insights comprising the relevant data in various therapeutic and pastoral approaches and
disciplines, and then brought the more pertinent ones into comparison and dialogue with
each other. Furthermore, my meta-study involved a theoretical emphasis (and not just
because I avoided face-to-face research): I conceptualised the nature of deep moments;
considered various theoretical perspectives that might be applied to their study; was alert
to the theoretical frameworks underpinning the various accounts and insights and
relationships between them; and was open to new theory emerging where appropriate.
Thus, as proposed by Paterson (et.al., 2001: 2-3), my meta-study facilitated a critical
interpretation of the contributions of various disciplines, and a refinement and development of the theory concerning deep moments.

To summarise this section, my concern to understand the characteristics and meaning of moments of deep encounter called for a qualitative study, whilst the resources and gaps within the literature suggested that, at this stage, rather than more face-to-face research, a comparative and theoretical meta-study should be the priority.

1.2.2 Research objectives

Whilst utilising the resources and addressing the gaps within the literature embodied some general research aims, beyond this I needed to identify some more acute research objectives, not least since a meta-study needs a suitable goal and focus in order to refine its purpose and direction (Paterson et.al., 2001: 24). Consequently, I formulated three research questions, which are set out and explained below.

**Box 1.2 Research questions**

| (1) How are moments of deep encounter understood, or might they be understood? |
| (2) Can an explanatory framework be devised to relate different accounts and understandings of moments of deep encounter? |
| (3) What might be the methodological, theoretical, and practical implications arising from addressing the first two questions? |

Question (1) naturally arises in any consideration of moments of deep encounter, and it underpinned my research as a whole. In effect I put the question to each author and approach examined, and considered the actual or likely answer in each case. Through the research I kept in view the different possible answers and weighed them against each other. Thus, rather than assuming that there might or should be a single answer to the question, I endeavoured to maintain an open stance, as explained in Chapter 2.

Question (2) accepted the premise that various accounts and understandings exist, and therefore sought to explain how they might relate to each other. In particular, the intention was to identify the principle interpretations, and the contrasting and complementary components within them, in order, so far as possible, to map their nature and interrelationships into an overall framework that would explain something of the
differences and the relationship of the different interpretative positions to each other. This second question therefore had the principal role in shaping my methodological structure and in directing my research as a whole (hence it is emphasised in Box 1.5).

Question (3) recognised that any attempt to understand moments of deep encounter, or to relate their different understandings together, might provide insights and implications. These might be:

a) **methodological**, arising from the development of a meta-study that engaged contradictory voices in dialogue and attempted to provide an overall framework;

b) **theoretical**, regarding a better understanding of moments of deep encounter and the possible ways of interpreting them;

c) **practical**, if different positions or practices appear to affect the occurrence and experience of deep moments.

My third question was therefore designed to ensure alertness to, and space for, the possibility of various learning outcomes.

Consequently, two subsidiary questions flanked my central question, each being integral to the others. The first question looked inwards at the phenomena being studied; the third outwards at possible implications for methodology, theory and practice; the second looked both inwards, at moments of deep encounter, and outwards, at the contexts and frames in which these experiences were occurring, or not. In short, my research objectives were to understand moments of deep encounter more fully; to discern and develop a framework for explaining and relating some of the main understandings concerning them; and to take note of any implications arising.

### 1.2.3 Research justifications

It is customary in qualitative inquiry to provide a rationale for undertaking particular research (Creswell, 2007: 102), so I will summarise my reasons for a) researching moments of deep encounter, b) through a comparative and theoretical meta-study with its particular objectives.

a) ‘Moments of deep encounter’ are worth researching for: (1) their generally beneficial effects that deserve further understanding and awareness; (2) their lens-like function, in
that studying them also illuminates wider theory and practice (the ‘inward’ and ‘outward’ aspects that I have alluded to); and (3) the increasing contemporary interest in deep moments (see Chapters 4 to 6), albeit with limited appreciation of their different possible interpretations, also make them ripe for study.

(4) A further factor is the contemporary resonance provided by the ‘spiritual’ aspect sometimes referred to in moments of deep encounter. Notwithstanding the decline of conventional religion (at least in much of the British context), there has been a “resurrection of the sacred” (Smart, 1993: 89), or at least a continued interest in spiritual experience (Hay & Morisy 1978; Hay 1979, 1990, 2002; Davie, 1994; Woodhead & Heelas, 2000; Lynch, 2002a; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Heelas, 2008). Recent publications, even if as only a small part of the overall output of therapeutic literature, also reflect this spiritual interest (Randour, 1993; Richards & Bergin, 1997; Stein, 1999; West, 2000, 2004, 2011c; Griffith & Griffith, 2002; Schreurs, 2002; Klein, 2003; Sayers, 2003; Schermer, 2003; Field et.al., 2005; Black ed., 2006; Lines, 2006; Moore & Purton, 2006; Pargament, 2007; Clark, 2012). Whilst the overall situation is complex (Davie, Heelas & Woodhead, 2003), suggesting that simplistic cause and effect presumptions should be avoided, it could be that the transpersonal or spiritual aspect of moments of deep encounter, or a growing awareness of that aspect, reflects or to some extent results from these wider trends. I will not be concentrating on this issue, but it does suggest that deep-moment research has a contemporary resonance. Moreover, since, as will be seen, I have attempted to offer a ‘rational’ treatment that allows the possibility of both ‘pathological’ and ‘non-pathological’ explanations regarding the ‘spiritual’ aspect of moments of deep encounter, in a small way hopefully my research also has a contemporary pertinence, given the more fundamentalist views that can sometimes be expressed, both for and against spirituality.

b) As for justifying the decision to undertake my research through a comparative and theoretical meta-study with its particular objectives, as already explained: (1) I eschewed an interview-type study to utilise the largely unexplored data resources already available in the literature; and (2) the gaps in the literature invited analysis and comparison of the existing insights and experiences through a meta-study, rather than pursuing a face-to-face study that, at this stage, might have been less able to address the already existing issues.
(3) A meta-study approach also reflected some contemporary research interests, in terms firstly of wider calls for meta- or similar studies (Dixon-Woods et.al., 2007); and, secondly, in its interdisciplinary and dialogical character, which is in keeping with much contemporary research and practice, including that of counselling and pastoral theology (Kincheloe, 2001; Paré & Larner, 2004; McLeod, 2003a: 13-4; Pattison & Woodward, 2000: 46-8).

(4) Two intellectual challenges inherent within my meta-study and attempt to develop an explanatory framework provided a further justification. Dunleavy (2003: 18-26) warns that research which only seeks to fill literature gaps can be vulnerable to those gaps being closed before one’s research is completed, whereas, when research is based on addressing an intellectual challenge, even if the challenge is tackled by others, it will usually be open to multiple attempts. My research focus contained two particular intellectual challenges that deserved attention. First, the challenge of relating, or if possible even integrating, different explanations of deep moments. This meant bringing various therapeutic and pastoral perspectives into dialogue, in order to recognise or reconcile the connections or conflicts between them, yet doing so without suppressing the individual voices involved. This was challenging, yet potentially illuminating of deep moments, and of the perspectives and frameworks behind them. A second challenge concerned how best to conceptualise the interaction of the intra-, inter- and trans-personal elements (see later) within moments of deep encounter, with implications for conceptualising such elements within helping relationships more widely. (Both these challenges again reflected ‘inward’ and ‘outward’ directions to the research.)

Box 1.3 summarises these justifications, although their cogency ultimately depended on the outworking of the research process, as described in this thesis.

**Box 1.3 Summary of research justifications**

- a) Justifications for studying moments of deep encounter:
  - (1) beneficial effect;
  - (2) lens-like function;
  - (3) increasing interest in deep moments;
  - (4) pertinence for contemporary interest in ‘spirituality’.
b) Justifications for research approach (the undertaking of a comparative and theoretical meta-study to understand moments of deep encounter; to devise an explanatory framework regarding the different understandings; and to note the implications arising):

1. unexplored data resources in literature;
2. literature gaps;
3. contemporary research interest in meta-studies, and in interdisciplinary and dialogical studies;
4. intellectual challenges of relating the different understandings, and conceptualising the interaction of the contributing elements.

1.3 Research subject

During the research, it became apparent that there were a range of deep-moment experiences, obliging me to clarify and sharpen the precise subject of my research, and to identify some distinctions and definitions to help set the parameters and focus for the research. Instead of reporting the principles and conceptualisations that emerged in a later ‘findings’ section, I need to explain them at the outset so as to be clear about the exact subject of my research, and so that all that follows may be expressed more clearly and acutely.

1.3.1 Defining moments of deep encounter

I designed the working definition in Box 1.4 to help clarify, conceptualise and discuss the type of experience being studied (similarly, Creswell (2007: 104) advocates defining the central phenomenon being researched at the outset). The definition derives from close analysis of the extract from my placement report that I cited at the beginning of this chapter (see Chapter 3 for the analysis), and from the process of recursively investigating, defining, and understanding deep-moment phenomena in the literature. I have still characterised it as a ‘working definition’ because, even after it crystallised, I have not presumed that it is the only, or best, definition. However, it has proved ‘workable’, through the course of the research.
A ‘moment of deep encounter’ is a beneficial experience:

(1) within a listening, helping relationship when, with safety and trust established between the parties,

(2) the talker gains a new ‘penny-dropping’ insight into themself and/or their concerns,

(3) accompanied by a sense of something greater than or beyond the parties themselves.

Describing the experience as a ‘moment’ indicates that it will usually only last for a short episode (although reflecting and working through it might take longer), yet as variously described in the literature its effect may be long lasting and profound, and will usually be beneficial (which is not always the same as ‘pleasant’). Three particular elements are then set out, reflecting the three aspects or characteristics that I have experienced, and which others have sometimes reported, as being present in this type of experience, and which can be referred to as in Box 1.5.

(1) An ‘interpersonal’ or relational aspect that operates between the parties;

(2) An ‘intrapersonal’ or intra-psychic aspect within each of the parties (both parties will have their own inner processes, but the main focus will be on those occurring within the talker); and, for the talker (although sometimes also the listener), a new and sometimes profound insight; and

(3) A ‘transpersonal’ aspect that conveys a sense of something beyond or greater than the parties, which one or both parties will experience or allude to as being an additional aspect to the experience.

Therefore, for an experience to qualify as a ‘moment of deep encounter’, all three aspects, and a beneficial effect, need to be present. However, two observations immediately follow: not every deep moment indicates all three aspects (discussed in subsection 1.3.2); and each aspect can be interpreted very differently, especially the ‘transpersonal’ aspect (discussed in subsection 1.3.3).
1.3.2 Distinguishing different moments

Within the literature, some accounts include explicit or implicit reference to all three aspects, but others do not, resulting in various permutations.

I have concentrated on moments occurring in a particular context: the therapeutic or pastoral listening relationship, within a dyad or group. Consequently, I have only studied the moments that involve an interpersonal aspect. Accordingly, an interpersonal aspect is the first element in the working definition, and in the research has been a precondition for a particular moment to qualify as a ‘moment of deep encounter’.

More generally, the literature suggested that an intrapersonal aspect was the one aspect consistently present in all types of profound moment. Expressly or implicitly, a process or effect within one or more parties could usually be discerned, or might otherwise safely be assumed. In contrast, inter- and/or trans-personal aspects were not always present. For example, sometimes only an intrapersonal aspect might be present, as in a deeply reflective personal moment; or, sometimes a transpersonal aspect might also be indicated, for example when an individual has a ‘mystical’ or ‘peak’ experience when they are alone (or when the presence of other people is irrelevant). However, I did not include these personal or peak experiences in my research, and instead only considered experiences involving at least intra- and inter-personal aspects.

A transpersonal aspect could be harder to identify, and was less frequently indicated. Carl Rogers, founder of the Client or Person-Centred approach, illustrates this. Earlier in his career, Rogers referred variously to:

“‘moments of movement’ – moments when it appears that change actually occurs”, moments of “full experiencing”, and “flowing peak moments of therapy”; and to “effective moments” and “really helpful...rare moments” which both resemble an “I-Thou relationship” (Rogers, 1961/1967a: 130, 149-151, 158; Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990b: 47-8, 72-4).

Each time an intrapersonal aspect (the indications of client change) and an interpersonal aspect (the therapeutic relationship) could be identified or inferred, but there were no evident transpersonal aspects, save possibly for the references to Buber’s (1923/1958) ‘I-Thou relationship’. Moreover, Rogers preferred humanistic to religious understandings (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990b: 72; Cohen, 1997; Thorne, 1992: 20-3). Hence it would be unsafe to conclude that all three aspects were definitely present (so as to satisfy
my working definition of a moment of deep encounter); or, if all three aspects were sometimes present, a ‘spiritual’ understanding of the transpersonal aspect could not be assumed (a distinction to which I return).

However, later in Rogers’ career a passage more clearly indicates all three aspects:-

When I am at my best, as a group facilitator or a therapist, I discover another characteristic. I find that when I am closest to my inner, intuitive self, when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me, when perhaps I am in a slightly altered state of consciousness in the relationship, then whatever I do seems to be full of healing. Then simply my presence is releasing and helpful. There is nothing I can do to force this experience, but when I can relax and be close to the transcendental core of me, then I may behave in strange and impulsive ways in the relationship, ways which I cannot justify rationally, which have nothing to do with my thought processes. But these strange behaviours turn out to be right, in some odd way. At those moments it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other. Our relationship transcends itself and becomes a part of something larger. Profound growth and healing and energy are present. (Rogers, 1990c: 137 [this is drawn from a 1986 source, although Rogers, 1980: 129-30 contains a similar passage]; the italics are Rogers’, but the underlining is my own.)

The references to both parties’ interior experience indicate an intrapersonal aspect; the therapeutic relationship constitutes an interpersonal aspect; and the words underlined suggest more clearly a transpersonal aspect, a conclusion endorsed by Rogers’ (1990c: 137-8) reporting that others describe such experiences as “spiritual”, and that:

I realize that this account partakes of the mystical. Our experiences, it is clear, involve the transcendent, the indescribable, the spiritual. I am compelled to believe that I, like many others, have underestimated the importance of this mystical, spiritual dimension.

The indication of all three aspects meets the working definition’s requirements, notwithstanding that differences exist between Rogers’ account (including his reference to behaving “in strange and impulsive ways”) and my placement description. (This illustrates the wide variations existing within the literature, making it better to refer to deep-moment ‘experiences’ or ‘phenomena’, rather than presuming a single ‘experience’ or ‘phenomenon’.)

Thus all three aspects may be indicated, but not always. To identify and accurately refer to the different types of experience, I devised some distinguishing and overlapping terms, set out in Box 1.6.
**Box 1.6**  
*Terms used to describe different types of moments*

I use:

- ‘**profound moment**’ to signify that an intrapersonal aspect, or a combination of intrapersonal plus interpersonal and/or transpersonal aspects, may be involved (i.e. the broadest term, used to cover all possible permutations);

- ‘**peak experience**’ to signify that intra- and trans-personal aspects are present (a permutation that I am not investigating in this research);

- ‘**deep moment**’ to signify that intra- and inter-personal aspects are present, and sometimes also a transpersonal aspect (thus covering two possible permutations);

- ‘**moment of deep encounter**’ to signify that inter-, intra- and transpersonal aspects are all indicated (the subject of this research).

The possible permutations are also set out in Figure 1.1. In each case, the larger grouping encompasses the smaller, and the aspects within the smaller grouping(s).

**Figure 1.1**  
*The permutations of different aspects involved in various experiences*
I have endeavoured to be precise in my use of these terms throughout the thesis. Given the overall focus on ‘moments of deep encounter’, I have rarely needed to refer to ‘profound moments’ or to ‘peak experiences’, but include the terms because occasionally I have needed to refer to all the possible experiences, or, in passing, to an individual peak or mystical experience. Significantly, I have included ‘moments of deep encounter’ within ‘deep moments’, rather than conceptualising them as distinct groups. This reflected my impression from the literature that a more numerous group of experiences encompassed the smaller group in which a transpersonal aspect was more evident, yet it also allowed me to use one term, ‘deep moments’, to cover situations where it was unclear whether or not a transpersonal aspect was present. Similarly, reference to ‘deep moments’ could cover insights applying to intra-/inter-personal and to intra-/inter-/trans-personal experiences, whilst reference to ‘moments of deep encounter’ was sufficient for distinguishing between them by making clear that all three aspects were indicated.

Identifying the different experiences enabled me to isolate and highlight the type of experience that I have focused on. Although probably less numerous, I concentrated on ‘moments of deep encounter’ for two reasons. Firstly, it reflected my original three-aspect experience that prompted the research. Secondly, the indication or absence of a transpersonal aspect seemed partly to reflect the participants’, and particularly the reporting author’s, overriding theoretical orientation. As such, I realised that focusing on the absence or presence of a transpersonal aspect might especially illuminate the nature of the competing interpretations concerning deep moments. Consequently, I retained all three elements in the working definition to keep all three possible aspects in view, and thus to be clear about the central phenomenon under study (again, as advocated by Creswell (2007: 104)).

Nevertheless, I still also considered data from the wider ‘deep moment’ group. This was so as to include both ‘negative’ data (data without an indicated transpersonal aspect) and ‘positive’ data (data that indicated a transpersonal aspect), on the basis that examining both would illuminate the issue of a transpersonal aspect, and therefore also my overall understanding of moments of deep encounter.

1.3.3 Distinguishing ‘transpersonal’ and ‘spiritual’

Each aspect, and any constructs or dimensions associated with them (such as the ‘psyche’, ‘therapeutic relationship’, or ‘divine’) could be variously understood, not least
the transpersonal. Some refer to a transpersonal aspect in spiritual or mystical terms (including as referring to a divine, whether as a deity or not: James (1902: 34) defines ‘divine’ to include either possibility). However, others consider this to be unnecessary or even objectionable. In a further nuance, an author might refer to what others might construe to be a transpersonal aspect, but which the author explains in a non-spiritual way, and as capable of being explained solely in terms of the intra- and/or inter-personal aspects. Mearns, like Rogers from the Person-Centred tradition, illustrates this.

Mearns’ (1996) concept of “relational depth” involves:

“moments of relational depth”; “in-depth relational encounters”; “relationally deep encounters”; and “moments of intense contact” (Mearns & Cooper, 2005: xxii, xiv, 48, 52; see also Mearns, 1996; Cooper, 2005, 2008a).

These experiences include:

an energetic sense of being alive and “feeling right” [an intrapersonal aspect]; a wordless sense of closeness [an interpersonal aspect]; and a being “in touch with something unexpected and enigmatic” or “outside-of-oneself”, an experience of “altered consciousness”, and a sense of “awe and wonder” “beyond language” [implying a transpersonal aspect] (Mearns & Cooper, 2005; xi, 40-41, 47-48).

However, Mearns explains the ‘transpersonal’ aspect in terms of the interpersonal aspect: “relational depth is...fundamentally dyadic” (Mearns & Cooper, 2005: 113). As an atheist, Mearns argues that both Rogers’ ‘presence’, and a meeting at ‘relational depth’, can be explained non-spiritually, and in terms requiring only two categories:

It is tempting to attach ‘spiritual’ terms...for they seem to be beyond normal human experience. In fact, they represent an intensifying of human experience, which is only remarkable because we rarely invite each other to meet at this depth of relating. (Mearns, in Mearns & Thorne, 2000: 56; see also: Mearns, 1994: 7; 2010: 83-4.)

This raised the issue as to whether a ‘transpersonal’ aspect should be named as such if there were strong indications of such an aspect, notwithstanding that the author may have ignored or dismissed such a characterisation. I have held that it should, if the language used, or other similarities to data in which a transpersonal aspect is acknowledged, suggested that it would be reasonable to describe the aspect as ‘transpersonal’ (indeed, even Mearns acknowledged that at times “we might well use ‘spiritual’ language” (Mearns & Thorne, 2000: 57)). This enabled every data unit
displaying an apparent transpersonal aspect to be compared to each other, and then contrasted with data lacking an apparent transpersonal aspect. This was not to presume the ‘rightness’ or otherwise of such a categorisation, nor to suggest that Mearns, or others like him, were somehow ‘wrong’; rather, it seemed to be the best way of classifying and relating data with similar characteristics.

Thus to name an aspect as ‘transpersonal’ was not to presume that the author themself would necessarily label it as transpersonal. Nor was it to presume that a transpersonal aspect should be understood in spiritual terms (indeed, in every case so far as possible the author’s own understanding was identified). Thus I have already noted how Rogers ‘presence’ involved what could be described as a transpersonal aspect, which Rogers referred to in spiritual terms; whereas Mearns refers to what could be described as a transpersonal aspect, but he explained it non-spiritually, in terms of it being a more intense expression of the interpersonal aspect. To distinguish these differences, I have used the terms in Box 1.7 in specific ways throughout the thesis:

**Box 1.7 Use of ‘transpersonal’ and ‘spiritual’**

I use:

- ‘**transpersonal**’ to refer to a sense of, or the conceptual possibility of, transcending the personal and interpersonal (however understood); and

- ‘**spiritual**’ to refer to sympathy with, or the conceptual possibility of, a mystical quality or divine presence (however understood).

The terms refer to certain possibilities, without implying a definite belief or disbelief in them, or a particular understanding of them. I use ‘spiritual’ in a broadly conventional sense (although ‘spirituality’ is a “slippery concept” without “common definition”: Swinton (2001: 12)); and ‘transpersonal’ as a term wider than ‘spiritual’ or ‘religious’ (Daniels, 2005: 11), that reflects the first part of the dictionary definition:

transpersonal – transcending the personal, transindividual; spec. designating a form of psychology or psychotherapy which seeks to explore transcendental experiences and states of consciousness that go beyond normal personal identity and desires (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 2007: 3320).
The more specific second part refers to ‘Transpersonal’ psychology or psychotherapy (for which I use a capital ‘T’), which offers some, but not the only, possible explanations of ‘the transpersonal’. Yet since “we are dealing with a field of experience where there is not a single conception that can be sharply drawn” (James, 1902: 39), meaning that alternative terms are also problematic, I decided to use ‘transpersonal’ in its general sense to refer to the third aspect of moments of deep encounter. I justify this because: the dictionary’s order of meanings implies the general should have priority over the specific; using the general meaning allows for a variety of interpretations; and others have also used ‘transpersonal’ in a general sense alongside ‘intrapersonal’ and ‘interpersonal’ (Swinton, 2001: 20). Hence, save when explicitly referring to the ‘Transpersonal’ approaches, I have used ‘transpersonal’ in a neutral way, to cover both spiritual and non-spiritual interpretations of the third aspect of moments of deep encounter.

I have been discussing the ‘transpersonal’ aspect, but the intra- and inter-personal can also be understood spiritually or non-spiritually (reflecting Swinton’s (2001: 20) emphasis that spirituality is an inter- and intra- as well as trans-personal experience). Thus, both ‘immanent’ (focusing on the intra- and inter-personal) and ‘transcendent’ (focusing on the transpersonal) spiritual interpretations were apparent, as will be noted. Consequently, various possible configurations again became apparent through the analysis. I set these out in Figure 1.2, to indicate some of the possibilities that will follow (I discuss ‘dyadic’ and ‘triadic’ later in section 7.6.2(3)a)). To emphasise again, it was the indication of all three aspects, including a transpersonal, rather than a spiritual interpretation, that qualified an experience as a ‘moment of deep encounter’.
Figure 1.2  Possible configurations regarding spiritual and non-spiritual interpretations of deep-moment phenomena

1.4 Research process and thesis outline

Thus I have explained and clarified the origins, design, and subject of my research. Finally, to introduce the research process, I will outline the contents and purpose of my thesis chapters. In one particular respect they are not conventional, for I have not included a separate or formal ‘literature review’. Since my research data comprised the relevant accounts and insights contained in the literature that, beyond being reviewed, were analysed thematically and meta-analytically, any separate literature review would have been an unnecessary duplication.

My first two chapters comprise Part I, the foundations for the research. In Chapter 2, I acknowledge first some of the factors that affected my consideration of moments of deep
encounter. The question of ‘how to think about’ deep moments was central to the research, and addressing some pertinent issues helped me to think about and navigate them with greater clarity. From this consideration, there emerged three elements for my theoretical framework, which then helped to shape both my methodology, and the eventual explanatory framework. The three stages of my methodology involved identifying and analysing data through a ‘thematic analysis’; comparing and critiquing the thematic analyses through a ‘meta-analysis’; and formulating an explanatory framework through a ‘meta-synthesis’. Each stage built on its predecessor, as in Figure 1.3.

**Figure 1.3 Methodological stages of the meta-study**

Part II covers the thematic analysis, which was assisted by six clusters of thematic codes, relating to some of the key theoretical and practical issues concerning deep moments. In Chapter 3 I explain the genesis of these codes, and illustrate their application by using sample findings, in order to explain the processes that led to the thematic findings. I present these findings in three subsequent chapters (using summary tables to marshal the more significant data and findings), being findings in Chapter 4 for various Psychodynamic approaches; in Chapter 5 for various Humanistic approaches; and in Chapter 6 for various Eclectic and Integrative approaches, and various Transpersonal, Spiritual, and Pastoral approaches. In these chapters (and throughout the thesis), it was not a question of ‘presenting’ findings before subsequently ‘discussing’ them; as with much qualitative research, the two went hand in hand:
a meaningful presentation of the analysis of data can only really take place within the context of a discussion of the insights generated by the analysis (Willig, 2008: 103).

**Part III** and **Chapter 7** constitute the **meta-analysis**, involving comparing and contrasting the thematically analysed data to reveal various deep-moment patterns, practices, and positions concerning the factors identified in the six clusters of thematic codes. Commonalities, differences, and partly reconcilable differences are engaged in a critical dialogue, to reveal something of the nature, limits and merits of different positions.

**Part IV** and **Chapter 8** constitute the **meta-synthesis**. From the meta-analytic findings, I identify and connect the key insights regarding each thematic code, and map the principle interpretative positions and their inter-relationships, to provide an explanatory framework for describing, explaining, and understanding moments of deep encounter. I indicate the methodological, theoretical and practical implications; achievements and limitations; and possible future directions, of the research.

Finally, a Bibliography provides citation details, and indicates many (but not all) of the wider methodological, theoretical, and practical resources that helped to inform the research.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

In this chapter, I explain how I approached and undertook the research. In qualitative research it is axiomatic that all researchers are implicated in the research process (Elliott et al., 1999: 221; Willig, 2008: 13), especially since the research and consideration of any phenomenon raises unavoidable paradigmatic choices (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Consequently, I acknowledge my own theoretical stance and preferred paradigm, in the context of various contemporary issues prevalent in the methodological and philosophical resources for investigating and interpreting data. These issues helped to shape my theoretical framework, which I then describe. This theoretical consideration and framework provided an essential platform for my research as a whole, for it underpinned and informed both my methodology, as set out in the final part of this chapter, and the eventual development of my explanatory framework.

2.1 Theoretical issues and perspectives

Potentially every part of my persona, experience and background could be a resource or source of bias for my research (for example, my white, middle-class, male-ness). One particular issue has been a sitting within and between two communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). The two communities encompass, firstly, psychotherapy and counselling, and, secondly, pastoral care and practical theology, with each one itself belonging to wider communities or spheres of influence. Each community has given me horizons and resources from which I have drawn, but also potential limitations that I may not have been able to see beyond. Nonetheless, in my research I have sought to be relevant to both communities, and, where possible, to keep an integrity with the concerns of each. This is similar to the way that Jones (1996: 153) espouses a relational model, in which disciplines interact and mutually influence each other while preserving their integrity.

My academic and life journey illustrates some inter ‘community’ travel. My first degree was in theology (broadly part of the humanities); I then trained and practiced as solicitor (the law being shaped by both the humanities and social science); before becoming a Methodist minister, during which I also undertook a level of counselling training and practice (in both ‘secular’ and ‘pastoral’ spheres). Subsequently my MPhil was based in contextual theology, which shaped my MPhil methodology, but also meant explaining a
research interest in ‘secular’ counselling. In the recent episode, my doctoral studies have been based within the counselling section of an Education department in which social scientific methods are dominant, so that, although counselling and some wider social scientific and philosophical contributions have been the primary focus for this research, I have still needed at times to justify a research interest that includes spirituality and theology. If every researcher is biographically situated and speaks from a distinct interpretive community (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 21), my journeying between communities has inevitably been challenging, but has also involved a rich weaving of various strands and perspectives.

Also woven into those strands has been my response to the contemporary, often contested, intellectual climate. Alongside continuing ‘modern’ themes, there are ‘postmodern’ ideas regarding culture and society; ‘poststructuralist’ understandings of language; and ‘social constructionist’ theories of knowledge (Smart, 1993; Sarup, 1993; Burr, 2003). These diverse yet interlinked ideas and developments have their critics (Loewenthal & Snell’s, 2003: 178f.), suggesting that postmodern influence may be on the wane (Butler, 2002: 127), or that ‘postmodern’ is too fuzzy a term to be useful (Rorty, 1999: xiv, 262); but the concepts involved continue to have “a certain currency” (Speedy, 2008: 15), and have significantly influenced my methodological sources and communities of practice (Kvale, 1992; Graham, 1996; Lyall, 1999; Teicholz, 1999; etc.). Arguably:

the lines of postmodern critique are substantial. They virtually transform the landscape of intellectual life (Gergen, 2001a: 807).

Gergen (2001a) himself characterises postmodern critiques as an attack on three mainstays of modernist psychological science: (1) language as a carrier of truth; (2) an individual mind; and (3) an objectively knowable world. (Gergen refers to language last, but since, as he recognises, the critiques of what the ‘knower’ can ‘know’ are partly dependent on the critique of language, it seemed better to acknowledge and deal with language first, and thereby to emphasise that each critique, and the assumptions they attack, are interlinked (Schwandt, 2000: 196).) Each critique was relevant for my research, although in discussing them I will also flag resources or principles for navigating a response to them (these responses are also partly interlinked, so my categorisation below is not meant to be simplistic, but a way of sketching some interrelated issues).
2.1.1 Language and hermeneutics

The assault on language as a carrier of truth reflects poststructural insights that a sign’s meaning is not stably comprised of both ‘signifier’ and ‘signified’, since ‘slippage’ occurs from signifier to signifier along the signifying chain (to use Lacan’s metaphor), causing the meaning signified to change; as a result, language is viewed, not as being referential, but as subject to ‘différance’ (to use Derrida’s pun): words ‘differ’ from each other, but also ‘defer’ and push away any fixed meaning (Sarup, 1993: 10-11, 44; Belsey, 2002: 83-4). From this perspective, all language systems are “inherently unreliable cultural constructs” (Butler, 2002: 17), leading to a “crisis in representation: a deeply felt loss of faith in our ability to represent the real, in the widest sense” (Bertens, 1995: 11). Equally important, instead of language representing ‘reality’, language (helps to) constitute(s) ‘reality’ [the parentheses allow for a range of views]: “Language is a constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality and of the Self” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005: 960-2).

This critique suggests that no description or explanation of a deep moment will be capable of conveying the ‘truth’ of what might have occurred in a particular instance. Attempts by participants, authors, or me, to convey and understand what might have occurred will always be filtered and perhaps distorted through language. (Spence (1982/1984) similarly observes that multiple ‘texts’ always arise between analysand, analyst, and the readers of a case report.) This will be exacerbated with the transpersonal aspect, where experiences are often considered to be ineffable and beyond language (Valle & Mohs, 1998: 111; West, 2000: 6; Klein, 2003: 44). Moreover, if language constitutes rather than represents ‘reality’ and ‘truth’, moments of deep encounter (and any transpersonal element) may be no more than the creations of language. My account of them would therefore be a construction, and authorship, rather than discovery, and representation, of ‘truth’ (Willig, 2008: 125-6). Consequently, any attempt to characterise or understand a moment of deep encounter is always likely to be fraught, unstable, and subject to misunderstanding.

Although, unsurprisingly, not everyone agrees that language constitutes rather than represents reality (Bertens, 1994: 9; Frie 2003a: 24-5), to a degree (see later) I accept the critique and its implications for my research. Nevertheless, language is still useful: it hooks “objects up to one another” (Rorty, 1999: 55) and provides “access to others” (Sarup, 1993: 10), making attempts to negotiate its use worthwhile (Lynch, 1998). As a
means towards mutual understanding (and notwithstanding Lyotard’s dismissal of the possibility of reaching consensus (Sarup, 1993: 153)), Habermas emphasises hermeneutics (Lyon, 1999: 68). (Although Habermas’ perspective was ‘modernist’, philosophical hermeneutics, especially as developed by Gadamer, has contributed to postmodernism (Rennie, 2000: 495), and to much qualitative research (Smith, 2007).)

Hermeneutics accepts that the meaning and positions of others, as expressed through language and texts, will not be obvious, but inevitably involves interpretation. Whilst not eliminating the postmodern critique of language, since hermeneutics tackles the inevitability of different understandings, it helps with the navigation of that critique, and with the recognition and relating together of different deep-moment understandings. Accordingly, a hermeneutical attitude (rather than ‘method’, of which Gadamer was suspicious (Swinton & Mowat, 2006: 110)) became woven into my theoretical framework.

2.1.2 ‘Self’ and relationality

The modernist theory of an individual ‘mind’, or the notion of an individual ‘self’ (to cast the discussion in the broader terms often employed), is an instance of the subject-object dualisms that have previously dominated Western philosophy (Rorty, 1999: xii, 47). In place of a bounded, “unified and stable”, “rational and self-directing”, ‘self’ (Sarup, 1993: 113; Gergen, in Paré & Larner, 2004: xxii), the postmodern ‘subject’ is understood to be linguistically and socially constructed, and therefore subject to, rather than separate from, the otherness of language and culture (Burr, 2003; Loewenthal & Snell, 2003), thus operating, not as “a unified agency”, but as “a multivoiced and dialogical process” (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2004: 2).

This critique makes conceptualising the interaction of the parties to a deep moment considerably more complex. Instead of an encounter between two separate, autonomous ‘selves’, a meeting occurs between two fragmented ‘subjects’, where the possibility of distinct delineation, between or around them, cannot be assumed (Teicholz, 1999: 23). Where one party might ‘end’, and the other ‘begin’, is relevant for my later discussions concerning ‘boundaries’. For example, a postmodern perspective might resonate with an understanding that boundaries become blurred within deep moments, but might clash with an understanding that boundaries remain distinct.
Although the ‘self’ continues to be conceptualised in many different ways (Elliott, 2007), Gergen (1999; 2001a) argues that the postmodern critique beneficially results in: a more collaborative and reflexive view of human life; greater dialogical engagement; and the reformulation of psychological processes in more relational terms. Whilst this ‘greater relationality’ is checked both by those who detect a greater privatisation of the self and new individualism in contemporary life (Elliot, 2007: 155-61), and by those who protest that ‘relationality’ is not the exclusive preserve of postmodernism (Taub, 2009), nonetheless, ‘relationality’ resonates strongly in this research. Deep moments involve relational processes, whilst my theoretical framework and methodology involve dialogical engagement.

2.1.3 ‘Reality’ and critical realism
Postmodernism attacks the epistemological possibility of finding and knowing an objective ‘reality’, and the ontological possibility that there is a single ‘reality’. It replaces belief in a universal, foundational truth that corresponds to ‘reality’, with relativism, plurality, and multiple constructed ‘realities’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Although extreme ‘relativism’ has been ridiculed (“Nobody really believes that everything is equal”, or that “there is nothing ‘out there’” (Truett Anderson, 1995: 7-8)), which questions its usefulness as a term (Rorty, 1990: xiv), mainstream relativism does not deny the existence of, say, a chair, but rather insists that there is no “single, objective meaning or order to reality” (Lynch, 1996a: 146; Smith & Hodkinson, 2005: 921-2). Thus,

Poststructuralist theorists reject the idea of universal truth and objective knowledge, delivered through the proper use of reason, and assume the contrary, that truths are always partial and knowledge is always ‘situated’ - that is, produced by and for particular interests, in particular circumstances, at particular times. (MacLure 2003: 174-5.)

Ontologically, this perspective would question the ‘objective’ existence of ‘moments of deep encounter’ (or, for example, of any ‘spiritual or divine dimension’); methodologically, relativism would be sceptical that any method could lead to a ‘correct’, or even ‘best’, explanation of such moments (or, for example, of any transpersonal aspect); epistemologically, it would replace the possibility of a single, ‘true’ explanation, with multiple, equally valid explanations. These explanations would be ‘true’ for their proponents, but ‘true’ only in partial, incomplete ways, that would be limited to and contingent on particular perspectives, a
seeing or hearing from within particular individually, institutionally and other socio-culturally embedded perspectives and locations (Pidgeon & Henwood, 2004: 627-8).

This critiques the positions of every author and approach that I have examined, but also my own attempt to bind different positions into a single unifying explanatory framework; such a framework falls foul of the “hatred of all overarching theories” (Sarup 2003: 186), notwithstanding that postmodernism is arguably itself an overarching theory.

The critique of a knowable reality thus questions what might be ‘real’ in moments of deep encounter, and places further limits on what might be achieved through my research. Therefore, it forced me to reflect on my own position regarding the principal research paradigms summarised in Box 2.1, which have assimilated, or resisted, the postmodern critiques.

Box 2.1   Principal research paradigms (configured according to Ponterotto, 2005)

- **Positivism** involves a ‘naive realism’, which upholds a single, objectively knowable and representable, reality.
- **Postpositivism** involves a ‘critical realism’, which upholds an objective reality, that may only be imperfectly knowable and representable.
- **Constructivism-Interpretivism** involves a ‘relativism’, which accepts the social ‘constructionism’ and individual ‘constructivism’ of multiple realities, the knowing and representing of which will be a matter of interpretation.
- **Critical-Ideological**: involves an understanding that realities are constructed through power relations, necessitating an emancipatory and transformative agenda (this extends the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm by more intentionally using research to unmask and challenge power relations, etc.).

Since boundary lines between paradigms can blur (Denzin & Lincoln, eds. 2005: 183-5), and some positions overlap or fall between paradigms (Burr, 2003: 88-103; Ponterotto, 2005: 132), each paradigm may involve a range of positions.

I find elements in each paradigm to be attractive (and cannot help but smile at Downing’s (2004: 137) dry remark that “Psychotherapists are predisposed to act as naive realists”),
which helped me to empathise with different positions around deep moments, and informed the different angles within my thematic codes. However, my overall stance is that of a critical realist, albeit one strongly influenced by the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm. (I prefer the description ‘critical realist’ to ‘postpositivist’; ‘postpositivist’ is sometimes used in a derogatory fashion, whereas ‘critical realist’ is arguably more affirmative, and is the term seemingly preferred by critical realists themselves.) ‘Critical realism’ represents one way of navigating postmodernism (albeit, as with any paradigm, a navigation that is both guided and limited by that paradigm’s own precepts). Although Qualitative Research’s dominant paradigm is constructivism-interpretivism (Swinton & Mowat, 2006: 34-5), Held (1995) in Psychotherapy, Swinton & Mowat (2006) in Practical Theology, and Rennie (1999, 2000) in Methodological Hermeneutics, for example, have likewise adopted a critical-realist approach.

Critical realism combines constructivist and relativist epistemology with realist ontology (Burr, 2003: 95-9; Smith & Hodkinson, 2005: 917-9; Willig, 2008: 129-30). This means neither rejecting, nor fully accepting, the critique of language: language is not guaranteed to represent ‘reality’, but sometimes it may, or may represent it well enough. Epistemologically, it meant recognising that multiple, interpreted positions could result from different perspectives (Kincheloe & McLaren 2005: 319), the researching of which would itself be an act of interpretation (Denzin, 1989b; Janesick, 2000). However, ontologically, it meant holding onto the possibility of there being objective ‘reality’ ‘out there’, the full ‘truth’ of which may not be possible to grasp, but which is still worth striving for. In this research, that meant seeking the most compelling explanations for deep moments; identifying appropriate criteria to distinguish between them; and endeavouring to explain and learn from their interrelationships.

In summary, postmodern critiques of language, ‘self’, and ‘reality’, teach caution, and recognition that my findings may not be ‘objectively true’ or universally persuasive. However, even Gergen (2001a: 808) recognises that “postmodern critiques...constitute important voices, but not final voices”, and, reflecting that

postmodernism can inform realist study of experience rather than simply serve as justification for abandoning it (Charmaz, 2003: 281),
I indentified hermeneutic, relational, and critical–realist principles to respond to these critiques in the context of my research, for they informed my theoretical framework.

2.2 Theoretical framework

I identified a theoretical framework to acknowledge and structure what might otherwise have remained hidden and unstructured in my approach to the research, and to ensure that my underpinning theoretical framework, and my methodology, were mutually consistent and able together to deliver my research aims (see McLeod, 2011: 42, 56; Lynch. 1996a: 144). Box 2.2 summarises the three elements of my theoretical framework.

**Box 2.2 Elements of underpinning theoretical framework**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>An open-minded, attentive attitude;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>A critical dialogue; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>An emergent, overarching understanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.1 An open-minded, attentive attitude

To appreciate the insights offered by the different units of data, they needed to be understood on their own terms. This called for an open-minded stance, with, so far as possible, a neutral and attentive attitude that was willing, at least initially, to consider and respect the potential validity of various interpretations. There were several precedents for this in Psychotherapy and in Qualitative Research:

- Freud’s (1912b: 111) ‘evenly-suspended attention’ suggested remaining open to all possible interpretations;
- in the Existential approaches, the phenomenological rules of ‘époché’, ‘description’, and ‘horizontalisation’ (Spinelli, 2005: 20-2) invited the ‘bracketing’ of any assumptions about the data; a careful attending to everything within the data; and initially treating all possible interpretations as equally valid;
- ‘bracketing’ is also widely practised in Qualitative Research, including beyond the Phenomenological approaches (Fischer, 2009: 587);
- in Grounded Theory, a ‘suspension of biases’ aims to support ‘theoretical sensitivity’ to the pertinences or subtleties of meaning within data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 41-7; Rennie & Fergus, 2006: 496).
However, the impossibility of neutrality is also widely recognised: ‘evenly-suspended’ attention is never completely achievable (Spence, 1982/1984: 113-7); even most phenomenologists recognise that complete ‘bracketing’ is impossible (Langdridge, 1997); ‘theoretical sensitivity’ necessarily involves hermeneutic and constructivist practices (Pidgeon & Henwood, 2004: 627); and data collection and analysis are “mediated by our own reasoning as well as that of the participants” (Silverman, 2006: 380). In response, ‘reflexivity’ is frequently called for, more generally (for example in psychotherapy (Hedges, 2010)), and specifically regarding ‘bracketing’, which is still advocated, but in a reflexive manner (Elliott et.al., 1999: 216). ‘Reflexivity’ pays attention to the researcher’s influence on the research, and to the effect of the research process on them (Etherington, 2004). This reflects a postmodern rejection of “dualist discriminations between the researcher and the researched” (Delamont & Atkinson, 2004: 676), and involves an ongoing “looking back and inward” to examine the researcher’s role in constructing findings, and careful language use to represent those findings (Fischer, 2009).

Hermeneutics also contributed to my intended open-minded, attentive attitude (reflecting the influence of philosophical hermeneutics on qualitative research (Schwandt, 2000: 194-6)). The idea of a ‘hermeneutical circle’ is that the parts and whole of a text need to be understood in relation to each other, requiring a movement back and forth between them. Similarly, an interpreter and a text or data are located within a hermeneutical circle, since inevitably the interpreter brings previous experience and presuppositions to the text and data. Paradoxically, Gadamer argues that, with reflexivity, pre-understandings can be used to enhance understanding: “prejudices are biases of our openness to the world”, guiding our attention to the different “horizon(s) of meaning” within a text, which, if empathically examined and permitted to question the interpreter, can lead to a “fusion of horizons” between text and interpreter, so that pre-conceptions are replaced with more suitable understandings (Smith et.al., 2009: 23-8; Woolfolk et.al., 1988/1990: 13-8; McLeod, 2011: 28-34).

Something of this applied with my approach to the potentially contentious transpersonal aspect. With spirituality, the stance of the researcher becomes even more crucial, given the difficulty of defining or adopting a truly neutral position, and the challenge of being frank about one’s stance without unduly influencing the research process (West, 2011a: 196; 2009a). I hold a Christian understanding (there being many varieties) of a
transcendent, immanent God who is present in helping relationships. However, reflecting my critical-realist stance, this understanding is a matter of conviction: it cannot be known with certainty. To the frustration of any who would insist on a spiritual interpretation of deep moments, or equally for those who would insist on discounting such an interpretation, a spiritual aspect cannot be ‘proved’ either way, whatever one’s preferred paradigm (cp. Stein, 2006: 47). At most, the effects of spirituality might be observed or tested to some degree, but not whether they ultimately refer to a divine or not. Accordingly, my theological convictions, and the possibility of a spiritual interpretation of moments of deep encounter, might be unfounded.

This recognition helped me, when initially examining data, to bracket my spiritual perspective. Again, complete bracketing was impossible, for I clearly held a position (within a hermeneutic circle) concerning spirituality. However, I used my ‘bias’, my interest in a possible spiritual interpretation, to search intentionally for possible transpersonal aspects within the data; yet, once these aspects were located, I endeavoured, open-mindedly and evenly, to consider spiritual and non-spiritual interpretative possibilities alike. Others, such as Hufford (1999), adopt similar reflexive attitudes to spiritual matters. Moreover, since many other perspectives or issues similarly necessarily involve foundational commitments and convictions (Swinton & Mowat, 2006: 89), a reflexive approach towards spirituality might at times be no less feasible than with many other issues or perspectives (for example, many of the issues investigated by Critical Discourse Analysts).

Apart from open-mindedness, hermeneutics also encouraged attentiveness to the data itself, including its authors’ own positions. There was a ‘double hermeneutic’ involved in my research: I was interpreting what were already interpretations, being the various authors’ own understanding of deep moments (“when we interpret the meaning of something we actually interpret an interpretation” (Gadamer, in van Manen, 1990: 26)). These authors were themselves located in various hermeneutical circles, to which they also brought pre-understandings and biases, which, when identified, helped me to clarify the nature of their particular deep-moment interpretation (a principle which informed my fifth thematic code in Chapter 3, which sought to examine the theoretical perspectives underlying any data).
Thus, the first element of my theoretical framework was intended to let deep-moment accounts and interpretations speak initially for themselves, without imposing external interpretive frames upon them, albeit that, inevitably, this could only ever be to a limited extent. Evenly suspended attention, bracketing, theoretical sensitivity, reflexivity, and hermeneutics, all contributed to the intended open-minded, attentive attitude. Hopefully this attitude both diminished any assumptions, and increased awareness and sensitivity, towards others’ positions, as well as my own.

### 2.2.2 A critical dialogue

The second element in my theoretical framework was the assumption that a critical dialogue between various interpretative positions (and regarding their particular features as identified through the thematic codes), in which each could critique others or in turn be critiqued, would help to tease out the genuine differences and commonalities between those positions, and would test their respective strengths and weaknesses.

There are countless controversies in psychotherapy that can be framed, clarified, and partially resolved through dialectical thinking (Downing, 2004: 141).

Considering deep moments from different angles provided a form of triangulation, as frequently advocated in qualitative research to increase the research’s trustworthiness (Denzin, 1989a; etc.). Several resources again helped to inform both the ‘harder’ and ‘softer’ aspects to this element of my framework.

A ‘harder’, adversarial edge to the dialogue came from my decade as a solicitor routinely analysing and weighing cases from different perspectives (the benefits of judicial frameworks are occasionally advocated in qualitative research, as in case study research (McLeod, 2010: 140-1)). The dialogue’s ‘softer’ aspect, involving the seeking of mutual understanding and a learning from different perspectives, derived variously from the more conciliatory aspects of legal and ministerial practice; from the dialogical discipline of ‘Religion and Psychological Studies’ (rather than ‘Psychology of Religion’) (Jonte-Pace & Parsons, 2001); and, from a correlative, dialogical method of theological reflection (Graham et.al, 2005: 154-61) and other critical yet mutual methods within Practical Theology (e.g. Swinton & Mowat, 2006: 77-82), in which all parties to the dialogue have an equal say, but are open to transformation.
A constructive dialogue between traditions is similarly encouraged by the postmodern emphasis on relationality, again involving ‘softer’ aspects: traditions are no longer to be annihilated, but given the right to participate so that “new and more viable constellations of meaning may emerge”; and ‘harder’ aspects: proponents must be prepared “to stand outside their theories” and undertake “astute conceptual analysis”, accompanied by “theoretical creativity” and “refiguring” so as “to articulate new and potentially transformative conceptions” (Gergen, 2001a: 808-10; also Paré & Larner eds., 2004).

‘Hermeneutics’ also contributed to my understanding, given its ability to question texts and yet to engender a collective, dialogical process (Polkinghorne, 2000: 473-4; McLeod 2011: 31). Accordingly, I construed the authors of my different data sources as forming a large hermeneutic circle regarding deep moments, within which the parts needed to be understood in relation to each other and the whole. Gadamer’s ‘hermeneutic of recollection of meaning’, or hermeneutic of ‘empathy’ and ‘affirmation’, offered a ‘softer’ aspect designed to understand texts and experiences on their own terms; whilst Ricoeur’s requirement, in addition, for a ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’, to question texts and experiences from an external perspective, provided a ‘harder’ aspect (Ricoeur, 1970: 28-36; Langdridge, 2007: 49-53). This ‘suspicion’ was needed since we only “perceive something of the Being to be interpreted” (whatever ‘Being’ might be) through conflicts of interpretations (Kearney, 2004: 28); and because, given the impossibility of permanently distinguishing ‘true’ from ‘false’, or ‘better’ from ‘worse’, “argumentation and counter argumentation” provide logic and rationale for “critically evaluating” various interpretations (Bernstein, 1988/1990: 88-90).

Thus, both ‘softer’ and ‘harder’ aspects were required for a ‘critical dialogue’, in order to tease out the strengths, weaknesses, and interrelationships of various positions. (Indeed, the ‘softer’, mutual learning ‘hermeneutic of empathy’ also informed the first ‘open-minded’ element of my theoretical framework; whilst, as with the second element, both the ‘softer’ mutual learning, and the ‘harder’, critical ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’, informed my third element.)

2.2.3 An emergent, overarching understanding

My third theoretical element was intended to ensure delivery of my research objectives (being a greater understanding of moments of deep encounter, the development of a
possible explanatory framework, and the discernment of any resultant implications). Again, a mix of principles and resources contributed to this element.

Hermeneutics encourages the making sense of a hermeneutic circle by the balancing of constituent parts (van Manen, 1990: 30-4), involving negotiating meaning (rather than discovering or constructing “a finally correct interpretation” (Schwandt, 2000: 195)), leading to a ‘fusion of horizons’ (which my proposed explanatory framework could be understood to represent). However, Ricoeur’s assertion that hermeneutics should also provide standards for choosing between interpretations (contrasting with Gadamer’s more relativist approach (Woolfolk et.al., 1988: 19-20; Langdridge, 2007: 51)), also seemed pertinent, if competing interpretations were to be assigned appropriate or preferred places in my proposed explanatory framework. This tension around evaluation also resonated with my critical realism.

My more ‘relativist’ epistemology recognised that there was unlikely to be a single correct way of interpreting deep moments, or of mapping alternative interpretations onto an explanatory framework; there was unlikely to be any way of verifying the interpretive process, or of finally overcoming “the conflict of interpretations” (Spence, 1982/1984: 292; Kearney, 2004: 29). However, my ‘realist’ ontology aimed, nevertheless, through careful analysis and interpretation, to reach an understanding that in some measure would be ‘correct’: even if there could never be a universal truth, there could be “clearer approximations of the truth” (Swinton & Mowat, 2006: 170), and accounts that are more valid (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007: 236). Thus my ‘critical-realist’ aim was to develop, what for me would be, a ‘best’ understanding, with the “theoretical potential to move beyond the particularities of the situation being examined” (Swinton & Mowat, 2006: 49).

Recognising the inevitable contingency of any understanding including my own, I have characterised the proposed understanding as ‘emergent’, both from the research, and in the sense of being tentative and provisional (rather than ‘correct’ and universal); and as ‘overarching’, by offering an ‘overall’ understanding, and for inevitably ‘overriding’ other understandings that might have arisen if different judgments or preferences had applied. Thus I recognised that my ‘emergent, overarching’ understanding might be challenged or improved by others (or subsequently myself), reflecting an understanding of “truth” as being “dialogical and emergent” (Swinton & Mowat, 2006: 170).
To determine my ‘best’ understanding, I needed to make judgments that were reflexive and transparent (Ely et al., 1991: 156), so I established the criteria in Box 2.3. (Although relativists criticise critical-realist attempts to establish evaluative criteria (Smith & Deemer, 2000), I am not sure that such criteria are very different from the evaluative lists which relativists themselves sometimes adopt. For example, Smith and Hodkinson’s (2005: 922) relativist judgments are “discursively considered”, “practical”, and “emotional”, which partly echo my own criteria, and suggest that each paradigm’s evaluative principles may not always be so different.)

**Box 2.3 Criteria for determining an emergent, overarching understanding**

| (1) Reasoning and coherence; |
| (2) Pragmatic usefulness and therapeutic efficacy; and/or |
| (3) Cautious conviction (when issues are otherwise irreconcilable). |

(1) My legal temperament’s preference for rationality and coherence (shared by others, as cited by Schwandt (2000: 202)), was not an appeal to an abstract Kantian notion of “pure practical reason” (Rorty, 1990: xxix), but a reflection of Bernstein’s argument that, notwithstanding the absence of foundational criteria for judging between interpretations, interpretation need not be arbitrary, but can be supported by reason and evidence, involving “a logic of argumentation” and a “choreography of critique” (Woolfolk et al., 1988/1990: 20-21).

(2) Without absolute criteria, I shared the pragmatic instincts of those who (drawing on pragmatism, neopragmatism, and especially Rorty) seek to evaluate interpretations or practice according to what is socially useful or therapeutically effective (Polkinghorne, 1992, 2000; Lynch, 1999a; Gergen 2001a: 808).

(3) In the event that reasoning and/or pragmatic usefulness were by themselves unable to reconcile conflicting positions, I cautiously fell back on personal conviction to determine what might be the better understanding (for example, my consideration of boundaries always involved an ethical awareness). Nonetheless, I continued to recognise alternative possibilities, since my purpose was to map, rather than suppress, any irreconcilable understandings of ‘reality’ (McLeod 2003b: 103). This again reflected that,
overall, my theoretical framework incorporated hermeneutics of suspicion and empathy, and epistemological relativism as well as ontological realism.

In summary, notwithstanding limitations and difficulties, I sought to be open-minded and attentive towards the data; to offer both empathy and suspicion in a critical dialogue regarding the various positions; and to develop, through reasoning, pragmatism, and where necessary conviction, an emergent, overarching understanding. These three elements underpinned my entire meta-study and methodology, but guided in particular the three respective stages of my methodology.

2.3 Methodology

There is authority for allowing methodology to emerge and draw from several methods, rather than adhering to a standard template (van Manen, 1990: 162; Swinton & Mowat, 2006: 50; McLeod, 2011: 166). This selection and deployment of suitable methods accords with the notion of a “methodological bricoleur”, who pieces together and invents whatever methods or techniques are necessary for undertaking the required tasks (Denzin & Lincoln (2005: 4-6); the concept of a ‘bricoleur’ quietly underscores much qualitative research in counselling (McLeod, 2011: 83, 166)). The concept informed each of my methodological stages, as, bricoleur-like, I assembled the necessary methods for advancing my particular project (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005: 317). During the course of this I alighted upon ‘meta-study’ as the best way of conceptualising my overall methodology.

Meta-study is an embryonic form of research (Paterson et.al., 2001: 16, 41), so there is no settled procedure for undertaking such studies, or consensus about how (and whether) to relate together findings from different methodological and theoretical paradigms (Paterson et.al., 2009: 22-23; Dixon-Woods et.al., 2006, 2007: 417-8; McCormick et.al. 2003: 935-7; etc.). Nonetheless, various similar features are often differently configured, and these informed or confirmed my thinking about what might be appropriate methodological steps.

Thus Jensen and Allen (1996) undertake: (1) data retrieval; (2) interpretive synthesis (involving a hermeneutical portrayal of individual constructions, and a dialectical comparing and contrasting between them); in order (3) to generate “a new construction
on which there is consensus”. Fredriksson (1999) identifies: (1) especially pertinent material from different studies; (2) common structures for relating the studies to each other; and (3) a synthesis involving an overall interpretation of the phenomenon. Paterson (et.al., 2001) identifies three concurrent components: (1) ‘meta-data-analysis’, (2) ‘meta-method’, and (3) ‘meta-theory’, which involve the systematic interpretation and analysis of previous findings and their underpinning methodological and theoretical frameworks; to enable (4) a ‘meta-synthesis’, which will account for contradictions and complexities so as to offer a new interpretation of the phenomenon, and thus new theory for applying in practice. (Although these summaries imply a confidence that overriding constructions are possible, I repeat the tone of my theoretical framework, that discernible ‘truth’ is provisional, and that my explanatory framework can at most be tentative.)

Nonetheless, given that meta-study is an evolving research form, Paterson (et.al. 2009:31, 59) also recognises that procedures need to be applied flexibly. Consequently, in identifying the structure, steps and methods most appropriate for my research, I rearranged some of the above features into a three-stage methodology (redistributing, for example, Paterson’s ‘meta-data-analysis’, ‘meta-theory’, and ‘meta-method’, into my first two stages).

My first, thematic, stage was designed to engage open-mindedly and attentively with the data. It involved two interrelated and recursive steps: data identification, and thematic analysis of the individual data, with both being assisted by thematic coding. The second stage undertook a meta-analysis of the thematic analyses, comparing and contrasting the thematic findings and undertaking a critical dialogue between different positions. The third stage, meta-synthesis, mapped the meta-analytic findings into an explanatory framework to provide an emergent, overarching understanding. Box 2.4 summarises each of the steps, which were interconnected and to a degree recursive, in that, as different features became clearer during the research, there was much revisiting of the various steps in order to check out and refine my emergent understanding (Fischer, 2009:588).
Thus my meta-study aimed to locate, analyse and weigh different accounts so that an overarching understanding could be developed into an explanatory framework. I now explain the particular methods involved.

### 2.3.1 Data identification and thematic analysis

My data were the accounts and insights regarding deep moments already available in the literature, thus making use of documentary data (including therapists’ books and articles about therapy) that are under-utilised as a resource in counselling research (McLeod, 1999a: 105), and reflecting the principles that qualitative research works with a wide variety of data (Sanders & Liptrot, 1994: 64), and that working with naturally occurring data can be advantageous (Silverman, 2006: 379). Each account or insight represented a separate data unit. In addition to including ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ data (with or without a transpersonal aspect) to enable comparisons, I also included ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ data, referring either directly to, or not overtly to, deep moments, since ‘indirect’ data also contained valuable insights (for example concerning the constituent aspects of deep moments). Through an ‘interpretive move’, I also extended the ‘indirect’ data to include situations where an approach or author seemed to be unaware of moments of deep encounter, but where a likely interpretation or response to such moments could probably be extrapolated from their wider principles. Such ‘indirect’ data offered a greater range of relevant insights than if ‘direct’ data alone had been considered, which increased the scope and criticality of my research.

My data search could have been very wide, potentially comprising all listening, helping relationships (as indicated by the illustrations of deep moments occurring outside therapeutic relationships provided by Rogers (1957: 101), Hobson (1985: 277), Budgell
Such a search would have been impracticable and unachievable. So, following Paterson’s (et.al., 2001: 33-46) advice that a meta-study’s nature should guide its data sample, I focused on deep-moment phenomena within therapeutic and pastoral relationships, but sought to ensure sufficient breadth to achieve enough comparability (Flick, 2009: 135), and sufficient depth to gather enough meaningful data to be therefore sufficiently comprehensive (Boyatzis, 1998: xi). For this, my MPhil’s preliminary survey offered insight (Tebbutt, 2008: 50-1, 98-100, 110), since it identified areas that required further research to ensure sufficient breadth (particularly the Psychodynamic approaches), and some areas to concentrate on for being data-rich (especially some Humanistic and Eclectic approaches). This led to the areas identified in Box 2.5, which ensured a range of emphases, experiences and insights. (As below, I tend to refer to ‘earlier’ rather than ‘early’ life, to encompass early life, but also to include earlier life influences that may have arisen post infancy.)

**Box 2.5 Areas of data search**

(1) Psychodynamic approaches (inter alia with an understanding that earlier life and intrapersonal dynamics may affect the present);

(2) Humanistic approaches, Eclectic and Integrative approaches (inter alia with an interpersonal emphasis on the present relationship); and

(3) Transpersonal, Spiritual, and Pastoral approaches (inter alia with an awareness of possible transpersonal or spiritual elements).

I excluded the Behavioural and Cognitive approaches because their limited focus on the therapeutic relationship (McLeod, 2003a: 302), and on spirituality (Rowan, 1993: 207-8), suggested that they would provide less data, and that my search should be concentrated elsewhere. Given that, of the therapeutic approaches, the Psychodynamic originated first, it felt natural to start there, and thus often to refer to ‘intrapersonal’ before ‘interpersonal’, but without thereby diluting my working definition’s requirement for an inter-personal element. Although the Eclectic and Integrative approaches sit most naturally with the Humanistic because of their shared interpersonal emphasis, when reporting my findings in Part II, merely for reasons of providing relatively even chapter lengths, I place the Eclectic/Integrative findings in Chapter 6, alongside the Transpersonal, Spiritual and Pastoral findings. The term ‘Spiritual approaches’ is my own loose term for
describing some therapeutic approaches and authors who are particularly concerned with spirituality in therapy.

As for the ‘Pastoral approaches’, my focus was on listening, caring relationships, rather than on broader mystical, spiritual, or pastoral experience and practice. I also excluded approaches with a more determinedly spiritual focus, such as Spiritual Direction (e.g. Fischer (1988/1989), notwithstanding her promising data and theologically interpretive material), or the more ‘conservative’ and evangelical forms of ‘Christian Counselling’ (e.g. Collins, 1988), both on the basis that they might more automatically assume spiritual interpretations for deep-moment experiences, and because some conservative approaches effectively involve a theological rendition of cognitive-behavioural therapy (Lynch, 1996b: 26), and I was not prioritising cognitive-behavioural approaches. Instead, I included the more ‘liberal’ pastoral care and counselling tradition (see Foskett & Lynch, 2001), on the basis that it might be more open to non-spiritual as well as spiritual explanations, making any resultant deep-moment insights more cogent.

Within these search areas, I then needed to locate the most relevant data, being:

information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling” (Patton, 2002: 230; his italics).

‘Purposeful/purposive’ or ‘theoretical’ sampling (which are often synonymous, since differences only arise if a ‘purpose’ is not theoretically defined: Silverman (2006: 307)) aims to gather new data as analyses proceed, so as to develop insights and theory until nothing new emerges once ‘theoretical saturation’ occurs (Pidgeon & Henwood, 2004: 634-5). ‘Theoretical sampling’ has been used in therapeutic meta-type studies (Timulak, 2009: 594). However, ‘theoretical saturation’ is more questionable depending on the nature of the data sample, such as when there are limitations in the primary analyses (Paterson et.al., 2001: 60), as here, given that the deep-moment analyses existing within the literature were often limited, for example in their awareness of other interpretive possibilities. However, by the end of my data search, what was emerging was largely confirmatory material with minor variations and hardly any new insights, suggesting that I had probably achieved sufficient comparability and comprehensiveness to justify the theorisation that was crystallising.
To assist the sampling and help direct the search I developed thematic codes, which also helped me to identify the detailed contents of the data: beyond just gathering what is “lying about on the surface”, data collection involves digging and drawing out the data, so as to develop a richer and more acute understanding (Polkinghorne, 2005: 141-2). However, I stress that these codes were developed equally through my data analysis: my data search and analysis were conducted in tandem, in “an open, flexible approach that moves you back and forth from data collection to analysis”, as “you shape and alter the data collection to pursue the most interesting and relevant material”, in order to fill gaps and shed light on specific issues (Charmaz, 2008: 107; 2003: 265). Others similarly encourage iteration between data collection and analysis (Maxwell, 2005: 95; Polkinghorne, 2005: 140; Swinton & Mowat, 2006: 175-6). Given that iteration instinctively occurred in my research, I treated the steps of data identification and thematic analysis as both belonging to my first methodological stage.

Before returning to the development of the codes, I will explain the thematic analysis. Thematic Analysis is a method in its own right, compatible with realist and constructivist paradigms, and capable of identifying, organising and interpreting themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A theme is a pattern found in the information that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon. A theme may be identified at the manifest level (directly observable in the information) or at the latent level (underlying the phenomenon). The themes may be initially generated inductively from the raw information or generated deductively from theory and prior research. (Boyatzis, 1998: 4.)

Thematic Analysis is widely used within Qualitative Research (McLeod, 2011: 145-7; Roulston, 2001: 280), and in Meta-study (Paterson et.al., 2001: 59). Consequently, my thematic analysis drew eclectically from various approaches (as permitted by Flick, 2009: 435), including Grounded Theory, Comparative Studies, and Interpretive Phenomenology (e.g. Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Flick, 2009: 318-23; Langdridge, 2007: 127-8). Thus whilst Braun and Clarke (2006: 86-93) offer specific procedures for undertaking thematic analysis (and likewise Boyatzis: 1998: 44), they also stress that it is more about following principles than rules (as likewise van Manen, 1990: 79).

My thematic analysis involved noticing themes and aspects within the data, and labelling and categorising them as codes. With an open-minded and attentive attitude I therefore
treated each data unit on its own terms, reflecting Charmaz’s (2006: 49) emphasis that codes should fit the data, rather than data being forced to fit codes. As codes emerged they were clustered together alongside similar codes, into a coding system that captured relevant features (Timulak, 2009: 594). Instinctively I formulated the codes as questions (according to Boyatzis (1998: 4), codes can take various forms). I then applied these questions to each data unit. Thus codes were initially generated inductively from the data; were converted into questions; and were then applied deductively to other data. Boyatzis (1998: 4) and Strauss and Corbin (1990: 111) agree that codes can be used deductively, and the codes therefore guided my data search and analysis.

Importantly however, when applying codes to each unit of data and noting its response, I also examined that unit’s general contents, language and context to identify any other (manifest or latent) themes and insights that might additionally illuminate the function and nature of deep moments. As new or modified insights emerged, my codes and code clusters were tested, revised and added to as necessary (as encouraged by Strauss & Corbin (1990: 111) and Charmaz (2006: 59)). Modified codes were then reapplied to previously examined data, or applied to new data, as appropriate.

Accordingly, as more data units were located and analysed, there was a constant comparison of deep-moment descriptions and insights; a seeking out of similarities and differences; and a relating of them to the emerging codes (Creswell, 2007: 64). Consequently, both the analysis and the coding process itself were recursive, and not linear, as supported by Braun and Clarke (2006: 86), and Smith et.al. (2009: 28). In contrast, Boyatzis (1998: 29) implies that code development, use, and validation should occur in distinct phases. However, my experience suggested that this was neither feasible nor desirable: it was only as the data collection and analysis proceeded that I was able to appreciate properly the key themes and questions involved, causing me frequently to revisit and modify earlier codes, and to (re)apply them to new or previously analysed data. Thus, whilst previously I emphasised iteration between data collection and analysis, here I emphasise iteration within the thematic analysis itself.

As the code development, data identification and thematic analysis proceeded, six clusters of codes eventually emerged to capture the key themes and questions that were repeatedly recurring. Whilst ‘positivist’ and ‘objectivist’ versions of Grounded Theory
might view these codes as ‘discovered’ and ‘objective’ (critiqued by Charmaz, 2003), my critical realist and hermeneutical understanding appreciated that their formulation partly resulted from my own interpretation (“analysis always involves interpretation” (Smith et.al., 2009: 35)). However, in contrast to both ‘positivist’ and ‘constructivist’ versions of Grounded Theory, my thematic analysis was not an end in itself, nor did it involve working up a ‘grounded theory’ as such (a distinction emphasised by Braun & Clarke (2006: 81)). Rather, it provided a platform for the next stage of my methodology, a meta-analysis.

2.3.2 Meta-analysis
For a “higher-phase analysis” than thematic analysis can always achieve (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 97; Paterson et.al., 2001: 14), a further level of analysis was required, with a meta-analysis being

most relevant when a multitude of perspectives about a particular phenomenon exist that appear to be disconnected and at times dichotomous (Paterson et.al., 2001: 56).

There is “no single agreed approach for carrying out qualitative meta-analysis” (McLeod, 2011: 287), so techniques can be flexibly adapted according to the needs of the study (Paterson et.al., 2001: 55). Accordingly, I divided my meta-analysis into two steps, the second of which grew out of the first (so both are woven together in the subsequent reporting in Chapter 7).

Firstly, I considered the overall findings from my thematic analysis. I collated the principal insights according to each thematic code, which provided a “multifaceted...grouping system”, and in respect of the code clusters undertook a “comparative analysis...by comparing each individual report with all other reports” (Paterson et.al., 2001: 55-61). Consequently, the earlier analysis of individual data units was now extended to the relationships between them, and to the relationships between the different concepts, frameworks, and interpretations underlying or connected with them. It required accurate depiction and dialectical comparison (Jensen & Allen, 1996; Paterson et.al., 2001: 60), leading to better understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Paterson, et.al., 2001: 9; Denzin, 1989b).

This similarly reflected Flick’s (2009: 135-6) interim stage within comparative studies, consisting of
the interrelation of a number of case analyses, which can initially be carried out as such and then compared or contrasted to each other.

The process of ‘contrasting’ and not just ‘comparing’ led into the second (although concurrent) step, for I sharpened the meta-analysis by undertaking a mutual critique of the thematic findings, critiquing the distinct and overlapping interpretive positions (and their other constituting factors) from each others’ perspectives. This mutual critique enabled the various positions to be re-examined in the interpretive light of the conclusions that were derived from other studies in the field (Paterson et.al., 2001: 55).

Consequently, different deep-moment experiences and insights could raise questions of each other, to validate or challenge the different perspectives involved (cp. Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005: 319).

Both meta-analytic steps, especially the second, embodied the critical dialogue element of my theoretical framework, enabling the strengths, weaknesses and relationships between different positions to be better understood. As indicated, because the comparing and contrasting were interwoven, the findings for both steps will be presented together in Chapter 7, but I have teased them out here to make clear that two distinct steps were involved, a process of collating and comparing, and of contrasting to the extent of subjecting different positions to mutual critique.

Accordingly, beyond merely summarising or aggregating the examined authors’ analyses (a criticism sometimes levelled at quantitative meta-analysis (Braud & Anderson, 1998: 281-2)), my meta-analysis involved comparison and dialogue between the thematically analysed data, the resultant findings being then available for meta-synthesis.

2.3.3 Meta-synthesis

Meta-synthesis aims to produce a more thorough reflection and complete picture than a single study can achieve, but also the generation of new knowledge and theory to explain the relationships and contradictions between positions (Paterson et.al., 2001; Jensen & Allen, 1996). For this I identified two methodological steps: first, I drew together and devised an explanatory framework to relate the principal accounts, perspectives and interpretations (being, according to Khan (et.al., 2007), a legitimate outcome for a meta-
synthesis), and, second, I evaluated the explanatory framework, and the meta-study as a whole.

Again, there were few established procedures for undertaking a meta-synthesis or devising an explanatory framework. Paterson (et.al., 2001: 111-8, 131), however, recommends developing a meta-synthesis inductively out of the earlier stage findings (see also Ely et.al., 1991: 178), and including the features in Box 2.6.

**Box 2.6 Paterson’s features of a meta-synthesis**

1. Recognise and clarify the revealed aggregations, contradictions, and theoretical influences;
2. Discard certain interpretations [my purpose was to map rather than discard the principal interpretations, but I recognise the possibility that different interpretations might be more, or less, cogent]; and
3. Provide a greater level of synthesis, through theoretical understandings that offer a more comprehensive, accurate, or credible interpretation of the phenomenon.

Much of my framework and synthesis indeed emerged from the earlier stage analyses. The process also embodied a bricoleur-like quality.

The interpretive bricoleur produces a bricolage – that is, a pieced-together set of representations that is fitted to the specifics of a complex situation...The researcher as bricoleur-theorist works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms...connecting the parts to the whole. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 4-6.)

Conceptualising my explanatory framework as an ‘interpretive’ bricolage also resonated with Jensen & Allen’s (1996) ‘interpretive’ meta-synthesis, and with Paterson’s (et.al., 2001: 6-10, 74) recognition that each meta-study stage involves interpretation, so that meta-syntheses involve “constructions of constructions”. Yet notwithstanding her largely constructionist paradigm, Paterson (et.al., 2001: 110-11) also permits a “moderate realism”, since meta-syntheses may yield truths that are better, more socially relevant, or more complete than those from which we currently operate.
This naturally accords with my critical realism, and with the third element of my theoretical framework, the ‘emergent, overarching understanding’, achieved through a fusion of horizons and the application of the criteria in Box 2.3.

Thus my theoretical framework informed my methodological stages, to enable individual deep-moment accounts or insights to be identified, analysed and heard for what they were; to test their nature through comparison and mutual interrogation; and to develop an overarching understanding of the various positions and inter-relationships concerning moments of deep encounter. Consequently, my methodology: inherently built in triangulation by using a number of analytical tools and theoretical perspectives; accessed the phenomenon and its constructions in different ways; transcended the epistemological limits of any one approach; increased the prospects of theoretical generalisation; and, through these factors, potentially improved the quality of the research (Flick, 2009: 65, 101, 130, 405, 444).
PART II: THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Chapter 3: Thematic Analysis – Process

I had two presentational concerns about the thematic process. Firstly, reducing the recursive processes of code development, data identification and thematic analysis into a written lineal account, has inevitably minimised the history, iteration, and interrelated nature of the procedures involved. Nevertheless, rather than spending undue time recounting how the final codes were reached, I set them out in their final form, before indicating something of their origins through a sample analysis. Secondly, there were so many individual analytic or reflective tasks involved that it would have been disproportionate and impossible to have provided an exhaustive account of every step and decision taken. Consequently, I have taken an illustrative approach, trusting that sample analyses and attendant explanations will sufficiently explain the numerous tasks and principles involved:

Authors provide examples of the data to illustrate both the analytic procedures used in the study and the understanding developed in the light of them. The examples allow appraisal of the fit between the data and the authors' understanding of them; they also allow readers to conceptualize possible alternative meanings and understandings. (Elliott et.al., 1999: 222.)

Accordingly, in this chapter I will explain the codes and illustrate how they guided my data search, thematic analysis, and initial data comparisons, so as to indicate how I arrived at the thematic findings in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

3.1 The thematic codes

3.1.1 Developing the codes

My MPhil did not formally involve a thematic analysis, but included an initial analysis of my original data unit (my placement description), from which I identified four themes and related questions (Tebbutt, 2008: 3-7). Effectively, these were four putative thematic codes, which were used to guide my MPhil’s preliminary survey of deep-moment experiences. Through the PhD research, I then developed an understanding of thematic analysis and the use of coding, which I recognised as being a suitable method for the first stage of my meta-study. Accordingly, I thematically re-analysed my placement description and much of the earlier data, as well as the new data that was identified as my search widened and deepened. This raised new themes, questions and perspectives,
together with a realisation that I had not always appreciated or noticed all that was present in the earlier data. Consequently, I regularly revised my emerging codes, until the six clusters materialised. Again, these codes were inductive (they emerged from the data); were subject to refinement and modification as the analysis proceeded; and were deductive, in that they were applied to new data, or, once refined, reapplied to previously analysed data (indeed, some data was re-analysed several times).

I set out the thematic codes in Table 3.1 (their rationale will become more apparent in the subsequent sample analysis). The ordering of the codes reflects something of the sequence in which they emerged (although the more detailed nuances developed as the research progressed), but with the ‘Interpretation’ code placed last, since it often summarised and distinguished different approaches from one another. However, the ordering is not especially significant because, like the themes themselves, the clusters were interconnected, rather than independent from one another.

**Table 3.1  The final thematic codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Number</th>
<th>Title of code cluster</th>
<th>Subcodes within cluster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| (i)         | Indicators of existence and role | (a) Do others experience or recognise similar moments, and, is there a pattern to their occurrence and/or recognition?  
(b) Whose perspective on the experience is being reported: is it that of the author, the listener, and/or the one being listened to; and when did it arise?  
(c) How is the nature and role of deep moments understood (do they operate at the heart of effective therapy)? |
| (ii)        | Aspects – Emphases, attitudes and function | (a) Which aspects or elements appear to be present, and which are emphasised?  
(b) What attitudes and understandings are displayed regarding the nature and role of the aspects involved?  
(c) What is the function of each aspect within moments of deep encounter? |
| (iii)       | Cause and Facilitation | (a) What insights does this data unit offer, and what views are expressed by the author and/or participants, as to factors that cause or facilitate deep moments? |
(b) Specifically, does the focus on, or interaction of, particular aspects or boundaries have a causal or facilitative effect?

(c) Can moments of deep encounter be engineered or facilitated, and, if so, how?

### (iv) Boundaries – nature and role

| (a) | Is the boundary issue significant, in this data unit, and more generally? |
| (b) | How do the author and/or participants understand the nature and importance of boundaries (especially in deep moments)? |
| (c) | What is the role of professional and ethical, personal and psychological, and transpersonal boundaries within moments of deep encounter? |

### (v) Theoretical Frame – type and effect

| (a) | What are the author’s and/or participants’ theoretical perspectives and frameworks (whether underlying or explicit)? |
| (b) | Do these affect the occurrence and/or interpretation of deep moments? |
| (c) | What are the effects of any particular paradigms on the occurrence and/or interpretation of deep moments (and is the reported experience perceived as ‘constructed’ or ‘found’)? |

### (vi) Interpretation – nature and relationship

| (a) | How do the author and/or participants understand what might be occurring in deep moments? |
| (b) | In what respects do these interpretations agree or conflict with those of others, and are there indications for relating or reconciling the points of contrast? |
| (c) | Which interpretation(s) are most cogent or persuasive (how might moments of deep encounter ‘best’ be understood)? |

As indicated, the codes were formulated as questions. These functioned at three levels: ‘What do I understand about this’; ‘What do others understand about this’; ‘What might be the ‘best’ overall understanding about this’ (albeit remembering qualifications around ‘best’)? Occasionally answers at different levels overlapped, but they frequently varied, especially given the answers of different authors at the second level, stressing the need
for caution at the third level. When analysing data, the second level question was usually the most prominent (‘What does this particular author understand about...’). However, I have not made this explicit in the summary codes, since implicitly all three levels were present throughout. As such, I endeavoured reflexively to monitor my own attitudes (the first level); to identify each author’s understanding (the second level); and ultimately to reach conclusions that were carefully considered (the third level).

The codes were also hopefully couched in terms that expressed my intended open-minded, attentive attitude, so as to be open to and capture the range of understandings and perspectives expressed or implicit within the data. To the limited extent possible, the codes were also designed to put to the data the different concerns and angles of enquiry that different paradigmatic positions might have had towards the data. Thus, I attempted to give space to both realist and constructivist type questions (or at least not to exclude either type), in order, again, to be open to whatever viewpoints happened to be present in the data.

3.1.2 Sample thematic analysis of my placement description

To explain the codes more fully, and to demonstrate the continuity between my original data unit and the final codes, I set out below the thematic analysis of my original placement description, according to the final coding. This shows how an analysis according to the thematic codes (being the application of the questions within the codes and the examination of the data for relevant themes) revealed how an individual data unit might address or leave unanswered the particular themes and questions. It also indicates something of how code use and code development went hand in hand.

Below I set out my placement extract again (with annotations that will be explained), which I then analyse by relating particular words to the final version and numbering of the codes. (The wider data in my Placement Report offered further insights regarding some of the codes, but here I want to demonstrate the analysis of a single data unit, which was also the originating data unit.)

...those occasions when the heart of the encounter was revealed. The client would be in touch with their feelings when, through their own process or because of my intervention, they went deeper another notch or two. There could then be the clearest sense of mutual connection, of being present to each other, whilst also being vividly present to the client’s particular insight, memory, issue
or emotion. In such indescribable but palpable moments of encounter, there was almost a mystical quality... (Tebbutt, 2000: 37-38)

(i) Indicators of existence and role:
(a) “...those occasions when...” – at the outset of the research this raised the initial question as to whether others also experienced this type of moment. Once it became apparent that some but not others experienced similar moments, questions arose about the patterns in which such moments occurred or were recognised, and about whether particular approaches were more likely to experience or notice them.

(b) “...there could then be the clearest sense...” – who was experiencing this? My data unit was written from the perspective of the counsellor, and whilst it implied that clients shared the experience, there was no clear confirmation of this. So, in each data unit was the perspective being offered that of the author, listener and/or the one being listened to? Additionally, when did any characterisation of the experience arise: was it an immediate perspective, or constructed through subsequent reflection? (Rennie (1992: 225-6) recognises that participants are not always clear as to whether experiences and understandings are being recalled, or subsequently constructed.) My report was composed after the event, but, the degree to which the characterisation was immediate or subsequently constructed, is unclear.

(c) “…the heart of the encounter was revealed...” – implied that such moments occur at the heart of the therapeutic relationship, and, taking into account the rest of the extract, at the heart of the therapeutic process. In each unit, how was the nature and role of the deep moment understood?

(ii) Aspects – attitudes and emphases:
(a) In the extract, the words in bold type appeared to indicate an intrapersonal aspect; in italicised type an interpersonal aspect; and where underlined a transpersonal aspect (with “the heart of the encounter” and “moments of encounter” possibly relating to all three). The indication of these aspects raised the questions: did others similarly recognise or imply the presence of such aspects, and did they emphasise any in particular?
(b) My unit probably indicated a sympathetic attitude towards each aspect, but no indication of their general nature and role. What were the attitudes and understandings of other authors and/or participants?

(c) Likewise, my unit offered no specific understanding of the function of each aspect within the moment. In each data unit, is any such understanding provided, and what might be a ‘best’ understanding?

(iii) **Cause and Facilitation:**

(a) “...through their own process or because of my intervention” revealed that in my data unit it was not yet clear to me what might have caused the experience. What, therefore, might cause or facilitate deep moments, and do particular data units suggest that the answer might lie in particular therapeutic approaches, processes, or interventions? (McLeod (2011: 47) notes that, whilst most qualitative research is concerned with describing and understanding experience, often explaining it in terms of co-constructed meanings, sometimes qualitative researchers can also identify causal factors.)

(b) In my unit, being present to both the intra- and inter-personal elements appeared to be factors in the experience, and the reference to a “mystical quality” also begged a question about the significance or not of the transpersonal aspect. Did others indicate whether deep moments might be caused by certain interactions between the aspects, or involving boundaries (being a theme that emerged from other data)?

(c) My unit offered no particular insight, but if causation could be established, would it mean that moments of deep encounter could be engineered, even at will; or, alternatively, was it a question of facilitating the right circumstances in which a moment might be sometimes more likely to occur?

(iv) **Boundaries – nature and role:**

(a) This theme was not initially apparent in my data unit, but emerged from analysing other data. I then revisited my placement extract, and realised that, “the clearest sense of mutual connection, of being present to each other”, was a reference to personal and psychological boundaries. The coding question became: was a boundary issue significant in this data unit, and/or more generally in deep moments?
(b) In my reading of the text (and recollection of the experiences), the “clearest sense of mutual connection” suggested a strong connectedness, but “present to” also suggested a continuing distinction (rather than merger or boundary confusion), between the parties. However, beyond valuing this type of boundary encounter, my placement unit was silent regarding boundaries, so how did other authors and/or parties understand the nature and importance of boundaries, especially in deep moments?

(c) More specifically, what might be the roles of:

- professional and ethical boundaries between the parties or around the encounter (the ‘therapeutic frame’: Gray (1994));
- personal and psychological boundaries between the parties; and
- boundaries with a transpersonal dimension, within moments of deep encounter?

(These were the significant boundary types in this research, but others are sometimes identified (Hartmann, 1997: 147-8)).

(v) **Theoretical Frame** – type and effect:

(a) This theme was again prompted by analysis of other data, and concerned the theoretical framework of the data unit’s author, and that of the deep-moment participants. I began to appreciate that the underlying theoretical frameworks, or elements within them, were potentially highly significant for the way that deep moments were occurring, or being noticed, and understood. On revisiting the placement extract I noted at least two hints of my own theoretical frame. The reference to “being...present” echoed Rogers’ passage cited earlier, which suggested some familiarity with his therapeutic approach (which was the case, although this was not the only therapeutic approach to influence my thinking and practice), and the reference to a “mystical quality” suggested an openness to spiritual matters (as already acknowledged). The code question became: what theoretical perspectives and epistemological and interpretive frameworks were operating, explicitly or implicitly, within deep moments, or in their reporting and interpretation? (The perspectives and frameworks might be received from others, or formulated by the individuals themselves.) The code resonated with Flick’s (2009: 457) “hermeneutical
analysis of underlying structures”, which he identifies as being a particular research perspective, pursued by various approaches. For example, Discourse Analysis expects small ‘d’ discourses within data to indicate the presence of larger ‘D’ Discourses (Gee, 2005: 7-8), which informed the ‘attentive attitude’ regarding this particular code.

(b) By itself, my data unit could not conclusively indicate whether person-centred and spiritual influences might have affected the occurrence of the moment, but the unit could be considered alongside other data. Accordingly, what role did the underlying theoretical framework and perspectives play in influencing the occurrence (including the cause, course and consequences), recognition, and/or interpretation of deep moments, as suggested by this particular data unit? (Meta-study expects to investigate the effects of theoretical and other influences (Paterson et.al., 2001: 7-14, 71-2).)

(c) Extending the previous code, what are the effects of any particular paradigms, as may be revealed in this data unit, on the occurrence and understanding of deep moments? For example, did the author and/or parties perceive the deep-moment experience as a whole, or in particular any transpersonal aspect, to be ‘constructed’ or ‘found’? The usefulness of the ‘constructed/found’ distinction has been both affirmed and contested (Smith & Deemer, 2000: 885-6), but it contributed to the framing of one strand of the paradigmatic theme. By itself, my placement extract was not particularly informative on the theme, save that “palpable moments of encounter” and “mystical quality” hinted possibly at essentialist and realist elements within my overall framework (as already acknowledged as part of my critical realist paradigm).

(vi) Interpretation – nature and relationship:

(a) My data unit offered no particular understanding of the moment (save that it possessed the characteristics described, and that it revealed the heart of therapeutic encounter). However, consideration of other data units prompted the question: how did the author and/or participants understand what might be occurring in a deep moment (whether expressly or, allowing for extrapolated interpretations, implicitly)?
(b) As it became apparent that various actual or implicit interpretations were possible, it begged the question: what were the points of agreement and disagreement between the different understandings, and were there any indications as to how different positions might be related or even reconciled to one another?

(c) Out of the two previous questions, a further question emerged: which interpretations appeared to be the most cogent or persuasive, so as to determine how moments of deep encounter should ‘best’ be understood and related? Subcodes (b) and (c) were designed to identify in the thematic analysis any available leads that could be taken up later and used for the meta-analysis and meta-synthesis.

3.2 Using the codes to identify and collect data

With the nature of the codes now explained, I next explain how, within the approaches earlier identified in Box 2.5, the emerging codes guided my data search in three ways, during which judgments were required.

3.2.1 Three identificatory uses of the codes

Firstly, I used the first two codes, ‘Indicators’ and ‘Aspects’, as the lead codes for searching for relevant data, and for confirming its relevance once found. The Indicators code encouraged a search for deep-moment experiences that displayed similar characteristics to my own experiences, or to other deep-moment experiences that became apparent in the literature. Alongside this, the Aspects code directed the search to approaches and authors that concentrated on intra-, inter-, or trans-personal aspects, so as to gather data and insights relevant for understanding these aspects within deep moments, and especially for comprehending the possible nature of their interaction. To illustrate, within Freud’s extensive writings (most of which emphasised an intrapersonal element), I concentrated on possible intersections with the other two elements as being the most likely place for any deep-moment experiences to be indicated. Regarding the interpersonal, I concentrated on works relevant to the therapeutic relationship (including Freud, 1911, 1912a, 1912b, 1913, 1914, 1915[1914]); whilst, regarding a possible transpersonal aspect, I focused on Freud’s works regarding religion and spirituality (including Freud 1907, 1913[1912-13], 1927, 1930[1929], 1939[1934-1938]). With each search, I also followed
up references to his other works whenever they appeared to be promising. (As explained in Chapter 4, these searches revealed relevant data, but no clear examples of deep moments.)

Secondly, at other times each of the other codes could also act as lead code for identifying or confirming relevant data, especially when particular themes needed to be clarified or investigated further. Thus, at times every code had a role in directing my theoretical sampling; yet none ever acted in isolation, since I was also always alert to the concerns of every emerging code. For example, the ‘Boundaries’ code initially emerged from analysis of Brian Thorne’s data, especially his ‘Sally’ case study (Thorne, 1987; and see Chapter 5). Once it emerged, it prompted me to search for other data concerning the boundary theme, in respect of professional/ethical boundaries, personal/psychological, and transpersonal boundaries. So, even if a particular code took the lead when searching for particular data, during my search, any of the codes could still alert me to the presence of possible data, or, once possible data was located, any of the codes might then confirm the data’s relevance.

The third way in which the codes helped guide the data search was within individual data units once they had been located, in which again all the codes could have an identificatory or confirmatory role. Thus regardless of whichever code happened first to identify or confirm the existence of a new data unit, every code would then be involved in the search for all relevant themes within that unit, or in guiding a wider search of that author’s work. The purpose would be to identify all potentially relevant data (including any themes not previously identified or codified). Hence the search would continue each time until every code had been applied as far as possible or reasonable, in that data unit, and more widely in any other promising areas of the author’s work. Whilst some data units were rich and addressed many or all of the codes, other units only covered one or two codes.

I will illustrate how every code would be involved in searching within data once identified by referring to Robert Hobson’s (1985) ‘Forms of Feeling - The heart of psychotherapy’. Initially I noticed the work because its title resonated with my first code’s concern with the ‘heart of therapy’. I then used all the codes to guide the search for relevant data within the wider text, and within particular units of data once identified. Data and
insights relevant to nearly all the codes were identified, and I will set this out later in the chapter as a wide-ranging example of the thematic analysis.

Thus the thematic codes guided the data search in three ways, the ‘Indicators’ and ‘Aspects’ codes generally acted as lead codes for identifying data or for confirming its relevance; although, at times all the codes were used to search for data relevant to particular themes; and, once located, all codes helped direct the search within individual units or the author’s wider work to identify available insights. However, issues of judgment and interpretation were involved throughout.

3.2.2 Using judgment in a process of constant comparison

Discernment and judgment were frequently required when determining whether potential insights in the literature were sufficiently relevant to the emerging codes, or to my subject as a whole, to qualify as data (reflecting that “qualitative research data are a product of the researcher as much as the researched” (Paterson et.al., 2001: 78)).

For example, when considering possible deep-moment indicators in Thorne’s works, I had to judge whether they properly constituted data for the first code, and, if so, what was the exact nature of the deep moments being referred to? Potentially the data included references to: healing, communicative moments describable as a “breakthrough into the transcendental” (Thorne, 1987: 76); “moment of tenderness”, and “fleeting moments” within a “quality of tenderness” (1991/2000: 73-81); “moments...outside time and space” (1996: 14-5); “magic moments” and “transcendental encounter” (1998: 46, 50, 79, 86-9); “intense and transformational moments”, “intensity of connectedness”, “mystical moments of the therapeutic encounter”, and being “fully” or “truly alive in the present moment” (2002: 50, 54, 80-5). (Thorne (2002: 20) also refers to “deep encounter”, but the text is unclear as to whether this means a particular moment, or an ongoing quality.)

My sense in my MPhil (Tebbutt, 2008: 63-5) was that the fuller descriptions which accompanied his different terms and phrases were similar enough to suggest that similar experiences, rather than different concepts, were being referred to, and that Thorne’s vocabulary had probably shifted over time (possibly given the “inexpressible” and “mystical” quality of some of the experiences that Thorne (2002: 80) claimed to be describing). This provisional assessment was confirmed through the more acute thematic analysis in this research. Firstly, Thorne links his experiences to other possible indicators
of moments of deep encounter within the Person-Centred tradition, linking his ‘tenderness’ to both Rogers’ ‘presence’ and Mearns’ ‘relational depth’; indeed, Thorne himself increasingly used ‘relational depth’ as a term, as if replacing some of his earlier terms (Thorne, 1991/2000: 158-9, 1998: 86-9, 2002: 4-8, 37, 80-1; Mearns & Thorne, 2000: 62; etc.). Secondly, Thorne’s data alludes to the three aspects required by the working definition: the intrapersonal, in terms of the interior experience and understanding that he reports; the interpersonal, through his emphasis on the therapeutic relationship and on trust; and the transpersonal, through his understanding that such moments connect to a transcendent or spiritual dimension (Thorne, 1991/2000: 79-81, 162-5; etc.).

Thus I concluded that the cumulative weight of the shared characteristics and overlapping vocabulary between these Person-Centred accounts, and the indication of all three aspects on at least some occasions, outweighed the variations in vocabulary to suggest that a similar core experience was being described which, at least sometimes, constituted moments of deep encounter. However, it remains the case that my linking of Thorne’s accounts to suggest a common experience (and his linking together also of Rogers’ and Mearns’ experiences), and my discernment of the three aspects as sometimes at least constituting moments of deep encounter, involved judgments; and, inevitably therefore, sometimes those judgments might have been wrong.

Accordingly, with any potential indicator it was a matter of judgment as to whether it was sufficiently similar in its core aspects, or too dissimilar, to my original data unit, or to the other indicators that were being identified, to qualify as a ‘moment of deep encounter’. Similarly, with all the codes, it was frequently a matter of judgment as to whether potential data was sufficiently relevant or proximate to other data to justify its inclusion in the research. In the discernments involved, my working definition of a ‘moment of deep encounter’, my theoretical framework, and the questions within the codes themselves, all variously helped to guide the necessary decisions. Nevertheless, interpretation and discernment were still frequently required, for which no hard and fast rule emerged to assess definitively whether any given experience or insight should constitute research data and thus contribute to understanding. The variables involved across the codes meant that any attempt to develop precise parameters, or to apply particular cut-offs, would have been simplistic and of limited help.
Instead, there was a process of constant comparison (Flick, 2009: 407-8). This helped to ensure consistency between my judgments, and thus coherence in my research data and analysis as a whole. In my data search, the process involved constantly comparing new material with previous data (especially in connection with whichever codes were particularly relevant) to help determine which potential units should included as data. Likewise, constant comparison was involved in my thematic analysis.

3.3 Using the codes to analyse data thematically

I suggested above that Hobson (1985) provides a fitting example to illustrate how a search according to all the codes can lead to data being identified (within an author’s wider work, and/or within identified units) that is relevant to every code. Since Hobson’s work provides data for most of the subcodes, it also provides a good example of how I undertook the thematic analysis.

Within Hobson’s work, one particularly relevant data unit was his account of a session with a fourteen year old client, Sam (I have added the Greek letters to aid analysis by breaking the text into sections):-

[a] We sat in silence. It was a very different sort of silence from the tense closed-upness of the first few weeks. Neither of us seemed either to fight against, or to withdraw into it; we sat in it each alone and yet together. [β] Eventually Sam spoke with a new seriousness and decisiveness and I sensed a note of confidence and trust in me, and in himself. ‘I had a dream the other night,’ he said. He had told me before about a few dreams, in a casual way, but now he spoke with a strange intensity, akin to awe. ‘I was by a dark pool. It was filthy and there were all sorts of horrible monsters in it. I was scared but I dived in and at the bottom was a great big oyster and in it a terrific pearl. I got it and swam up again.’ [γ] I felt myself caught up in mystery, in a sense of otherness. At the time, my few words seemed very lame, but I was right to reply in the present tense. ‘That’s good. Brave, too. You’ve got it, though, and pearls are pretty valuable.’ [δ] We said nothing more about the dream, though, this interview was followed by another important step. Sam began to express his feelings and thoughts, his hopes and fears, and I was able to use my book knowledge in formulating his problems. (Hobson, 1985: 5.)

Initially, I analysed this and Hobson’s other data by considering how the themes and questions contained in the emergent codes related to or were answered by the data. Recursively, I analysed aspects of the data again as the codes developed, ultimately by applying the final codes and examining the data in the light of them. I set out that final
analysis below (highlighting the codes’ titles, for more details of which, see again Table 3.1 above).

(i) (a) Since the data search and thematic analysis went hand in hand, the identification of the data unit involved an initial analysis that the themes described in the experience constituted a moment of deep encounter: here was a breakthrough moment, rooted in a trusting relationship, accompanied by a mysterious sense of “otherness”, which therefore echoed key features of my own and others’ indicators. This assessment was confirmed by further analysis in respect of the other codes, and by Hobson’s own description of “Moments of meeting” (of which the above unit seemed to be an example):

Such profoundly moving moments are rare... Yet I have experienced them in the briefest of brief psychotherapy and have reason to suppose that they can have lifelong consequences. ...I have introduced a word, ‘Moment’: the experience of a meeting in and out of time. The heart of psychotherapy. (Hobson, 1985: 277-8)

Hobson’s data therefore contained indicators and a broader awareness of deep moments, which, at the least in terms of the session with Sam, could be described as a ‘moment of deep encounter’.

As to the first code’s enquiry regarding the pattern of deep-moment occurrence and recognition, Hobson’s deep-moment indicators were occurring for, and being recognised by, an author and practitioner with an eclectic or integrative approach (see Hobson, 1985: xii); and, whilst Hobson considered these moments to be “rare”, he held them to be capable of occurring widely, from “the briefest of brief psychotherapy”, to contexts outside therapy (see the wider example at Hobson, 1985: 276).

(b) As to whose perspective was being reported in the session with Sam, since Hobson was himself a participant in the experience, he was able to describe Sam’s speech and process first hand, making it possible that Hobson had accurately reported the experience of both participants. However, the account was still Hobson’s, not Sam’s. Thus it was Hobson who characterised the intensity of Sam’s speech as being “akin to awe”, and it was Hobson’s experience that was being described when he wrote: “I felt myself caught up in mystery, in a sense of
otherness”. Consequently, as with my own placement description, strictly the perspective offered was potentially that of one, not both, participants to the encounter.

(c) As for the nature and role of deep moments, Hobson presented the moment with Sam as having a significant therapeutic effect, referring to the client’s new seriousness, decisiveness, confidence, “trust in me, and in himself”, and his beginning “to express his feelings and thoughts”. More generally, Hobson considered that deep moments “can have lifelong consequences”, and operate at or represent “The heart of psychotherapy” (the exact nuance is unclear, but the broad point is clear), thus supporting my own understanding.

(ii) (a) As for analysing the aspects involved, the references to Sam’s dream, feelings, thoughts and “trust...in himself” indicated an intrapersonal aspect. The trusting therapeutic relationship, immediacy of the conversation (including use of the present tense), and recognition of being “together” albeit with a sense of being “alone”, embodied an interpersonal aspect. A transpersonal aspect appeared to be alluded to in words carrying a spiritual and religious connotation: Sam “spoke with a strange intensity, akin to awe”, whilst Hobson felt “caught up in mystery, in a sense of otherness”. Other transpersonal hints were found in the earlier reference to “meeting in and out of time”, and in various poetic references throughout Hobson’s work, including a quotation from John Donne’s ‘The Extasie’ in the very last words of his book (1985: 281):

When love, with one another so
Interinanimates two soules,
That abler soule, which thence doth flow,
Defects of lonelinesse controules.

All this suggested that a transpersonal, and possibly spiritual, aspect may have featured in Hobson’s understanding, although he does not expand on what this might mean. Moreover, his general emphasis was on the intra- and interpersonal aspects, as in the session with Sam.

(b) Hobson’s attitude to all three aspects appeared to be positive. His work as a whole envisaged the therapeutic relationship (the interpersonal) as enabling the
client more effectively to access their intrapersonal material, a focusing on which could bring about beneficial change. Hobson offered no understanding as to the nature and role of the transpersonal aspect, save for some allusions, such as in the Donne poem (and see further below).

(c) As for the specific functions of the aspects in the Sam data unit, the four sections marked by Greek letters reveal that in [α], both parties were willing to stay with the tension existing at that point in the interpersonal (and possibly in the intrapersonal). In [β] the focus is on the client, who trusted the intra- and interpersonal enough to share something of his intrapersonal. In [β] and [γ] the transpersonal was possibly involved in the client’s strange intensity and the therapist’s experience of otherness. In [γ] the focus is on the therapist’s response, where staying with the interpersonal experience again appeared to be important. In [δ] a breakthrough has been achieved to unlock the client’s process, in which both parties again stayed with the interpersonal and disclosed aspects of their intrapersonal. In summary, the moment of deep encounter appeared to bear out Hobson’s general understanding that, if both parties could stay with the interpersonal and face the intrapersonal notwithstanding the challenges involved, the intrapersonal could then be accessed in a change-enabling way. The transpersonal also featured in the account, but its function was unclear, with Hobson’s citation of Donne’s poem being the closest he came to offering a hypothesis. The poem implied that, once a loving relationship has been established (the interpersonal), “That abler soule” could flow (a possible characterisation of the transpersonal), to help the individuals (perhaps with their intrapersonal and interpersonal, especially concerning aloneness, to which I return).

(iii) (a) As to what causes or facilitates deep moments, in the experience with Sam, the precursor in [α] appeared to be a sitting in silence that they neither fought against nor withdrew into, followed by, in [β], the client’s willingness to trust the interpersonal (presumably aided by his previous experience of the relationship) and his own intrapersonal so as to risk disclosing something of his intrapersonal, and in [γ] the therapist’s willingness likewise to stay with the interpersonal. Staying with and trusting, therefore seemed to be important. More broadly, elsewhere Hobson offered general principles for good therapy, which could also play a facilitative or causal role, if his moments of meeting represent heightened therapeutic experiences:
maybe, in the touch of a hand, in a deep look, in a groping gesture, in a far-flung metaphor, and even in an interpretation worded with care, there can be a Moment of meeting. (Hobson, 1985: 277.)

(b) Hobson’s data offered no specific insights regarding the possible causal or facilitative effects of the interaction of aspects, save that, as noted, the interaction of the intra- and inter-personal aspects appeared to be important (through a willingness to stay with and not flee from the challenges involved in either). A transpersonal aspect also appeared to be involved, but the nature and effect of its interaction was unclear (save as possibly alluded to in the Donne poem). As for the effects of any boundary interactions, again there was nothing specific, although what I say in (iv)(c) below could have relevance.

(c) Hobson’s data did not explicitly address the engineered or facilitated issue. However, the implication from the passages concerning Sam and the one quoted in (iii)(a) above was that, whilst facilitating factors might help to prepare the ground, moments ‘happen’ rather than being engineered (“maybe...there can be”).

(iv) (a) Hobson provided less data regarding boundaries than some other authors, but they still featured to the extent described below.

(b) Hobson appeared to understand boundaries as important:

How to be open to receive and respond to them [Moments of meeting] as we endeavour to ‘penetrate to the core of loneliness in each person and speak to that’ whilst not intruding on his or her creative aloneness? That is the central and unattainable ideal of psychotherapy. It means remaining in touch with and speaking from our own ineradicable loneliness. (Hobson, 1985: 277.)

This implied that, notwithstanding the therapeutic benefits of working with a client at their core, there must also be a respectful non-intrusiveness, and self-awareness about the therapist’s own separateness. Thus, there appears to be a recognition and respect for both parties’ personal and psychological boundaries (which might also imply a recognition of professional and ethical boundaries, since that is a natural consequence for many authors).

(c) If respect for both parties’ personal/psychological (and probably also professional/ethical) boundaries was part of Hobson’s approach (evidenced, in the
Sam unit, by the silent waiting and affirming, rather than undermining, of what Sam said), it implies that observing such boundaries, at the least did not interfere with, and may also have had a beneficial **role** in, the occurrence of moments of deep encounter. As for possible boundaries with any transpersonal dimension, Hobson recorded: “I felt myself caught up in mystery”. However, if this implied a move into “otherness”, he was also able to stay in the present and respond to the client. (All of this, as with every subcode, offered possible points for comparison with other units.)

(v) (a) The focus on a dream and Hobson’s use of “book knowledge in formulating” Sam’s problems resonated with a Psychodynamic approach, although, as already noted, Hobson’s **theoretical framework** was drawn from a number of approaches. (Indeed, Hobson’s ‘Conversational Model’ forms the basis of an integrative approach, ‘Psychodynamic Interpersonal Therapy’: Martin and Margison (2000); Margison (2002); Moorey and Guthrie (2003).)

(b) Hobson’s framework and approach clearly permitted deep moments, but whether it **affected** the frequency or manner of their occurrence compared with other approaches was difficult to determine from his data alone, and required comparison with other data. As to whether Hobson’s theoretical perspectives affected his interpretation of deep moments, in which the theme of aloneness is central, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusion. Since he drew from a number of sources, he might have been alerted to the importance of aloneness as a theme in Existential therapy (Yalom, 1989/1991: 10; Cooper, 2003: 18). Regardless of whether this was so, or whether he simply developed his own appreciation of the issue, it is noteworthy that, from all the sources from which he drew, he chose aloneness as his interpretive theme, rather than anything else, thus emphasising this theme for any deep-moment interpretation discussion.

(c) As to whether Hobson perceived his experience with Sam (or more generally moments of meeting) to have been ‘**constructed**’ by the parties, or whether he considered the particular quality of such experiences to simply ‘happen’ (i.e. in some way to be ‘**found**’), I sensed the latter, since Hobson recounted the moment with Sam as simply occurring and unfolding, without attempting in that part of his narrative to construct or impose any particular meaning regarding it. (However, this
possible implication of a ‘realist’ paradigmatic stance was largely my impression, rather than being explicitly confirmed in the data.) As for any effect resulting from Hobson’s approach as a whole, his integrative therapeutic approach, and probable respect for each possible aspect, appeared not to obstruct, and may have resulted in, the occurrence and recognition of moments of deep encounter.

(vi) (a) The data unit involving Sam did not indicate what Sam’s understanding of the deep moment might have been, but the reference to “alone and yet together” hinted at what appeared to be Hobson’s interpretation of deep moments, set out later in his text. Hobson emphasised the “ineradicable loneliness” experienced by every human being, which he argued should not be avoided, yet can never be shared. To grow

means to explore new ways of resting in and speaking out of our loneliness. Then, there is the hope of a meeting in the space between lonely persons (Hobson, 1985: 281, his italics).

Consequently, Hobson seems to understand a “Moment of meeting” as a “profoundly moving” meeting in this in-between space, that enables, or contributes to, a loving, growth-promoting, “dialogue of aloneness-togetherness”, in which there is penetration “to the core of loneliness” and a speaking to that, without an intruding on “his or her creative aloneness” (Hobson, 1985: 276-81).

(b) A comparison of Hobson’s interpretation with others revealed that his “meeting in the space between lonely persons” as an instance of a “dialogue of aloneness-togetherness” was a distinct interpretive contribution. This interpretation agreed with the relational premise of other ‘relational’ interpretations, and with data identifying ‘waiting’ as a facilitative factor (see shortly below). However, Hobson’s potentially positive attitude towards a possible spiritual aspect conflicted with sceptical positions regarding transpersonal possibilities; and, Hobson’s data offered no indications for ultimately relating or reconciling different deep-moment perspectives, other than his general call for an integrative approach.

(c) How cogent or persuasive Hobson’s interpretation might be judged to be, depended in part on comparison with other interpretations (as discussed later). Personally, I found Hobson’s account to be informative and coherent, and that his
interpretive emphasis on the experience of ‘aloneness’ reflected an existential theme that I have also sometimes observed as being relevant in moments of deep encounter. Accordingly, I found Hobson’s interpretation to be persuasive, albeit alongside rather than to the exclusion of various other interpretations that will be discussed.

Thus, a data search within Hobson (1985) according to the thematic codes led to identification of the data described above, with the thematic analysis of that data offering the new or confirmatory insights that I have described.

### 3.4 Using the codes to reveal points for comparison or contrast

These insights were then available for comparison or contrast in the subsequent meta-analysis (emphasising, again, the interconnected nature of the meta-study as a whole). However, since these insights began to emerge in the thematic analysis and helped to modify the codes to seek out the most relevant data, I will illustrate here the type of points that began to emerge, using examples from previously cited authors.

Hobson and Thorne provided a point of similarity regarding the ‘Cause and Facilitation’ code:-

> We sat in silence. …Neither of us seemed either to fight against, or to withdraw into it; we sat in it each alone and yet together. (Hobson, 1985: 5.)

> Often such magic moments seem to have resulted from the acceptance of powerlessness, which is not a sign of resignation but of a positive stance that unites counsellor and client and leads to a waiting without hope but also without despair. (Thorne, 1998: 46.)

Hobson focuses on sitting in silence and aloneness, without fighting or withdrawing, whilst Thorne focuses on waiting with powerlessness, without hoping or despairing. Despite the different nuances, in both cases the client and therapist jointly and resolutely stay with the silence or waiting, which then leads into moments of deep encounter. The thematic analysis thus revealed these similar data units, which were then available for comparison in the meta-analysis, with that comparison suggesting that a quality of waiting may be necessary for moments of deep encounter to occur, at least sometimes.
In contrast to such commonalities, differences also became apparent. For example, as seen, Mearns’ attitude towards a possible transpersonal aspect and spiritual characterisation differed from Rogers’ and Thorne’s, notwithstanding their shared Person-Centred approach.

Thus, as advocated by Paterson (et.al., 2001: 64), points of comparison or contrast became available for better understanding through meta-analysis; whilst, as advocated by Flick (2009: 130), such points were suitable in number to ensure that the comparative strand of my research remained manageable.

In this chapter, I have therefore explained the thematic codes and their interconnected role in helping to search for and analyse data, leading to the thematic findings that follow in subsequent chapters.
Chapter 4: Thematic Findings for the Psychodynamic Approaches

In this chapter, I summarise the principal findings for my data identification and thematic analysis within the Psychodynamic approaches.

Although ‘psychodynamic’ can refer to a type of counselling derived from (but less intense than) psychoanalysis (Jacobs, 1988, 4-6), I am using the term in its broader sense to refer (like the older term ‘Depth psychology’) to approaches that emphasise a dynamic unconscious (Dryden, 1996: 19-102; Samuels 1989a: 4). Just as there is no universal term to describe these approaches, there is no single way of delineating the subcategories within them, partly because of the crossovers and mutual influences involved. For this research, I distinguished between ‘Psychoanalysis’ (encompassing Freud and those who closely follow his precepts); ‘Relational Psychodynamic’ approaches (reflecting the ‘Object Relational’ and other relational perspectives that emerged from Psychoanalysis); and ‘Analytic Psychology’ (as developed by Jung and his followers). I assigned authors according to their main emphases. As earlier explained, I then followed up any promising leads, concentrating in particular on texts concerning the therapeutic relationship, or spiritual matters, as representing the best prospects for finding indicators and insights regarding deep moments, or the interaction of their constituent aspects.

In order to present the findings in a digestible form, I include a ‘Summary Table’ of my principal findings (as approved by Paterson (et.al., 2001: 66)). Whilst it would be impossible to include every piece of identified and analysed data in any summary, Table 4.1 provides an overall picture. The vertical axis lists the approaches and categories considered, and the horizontal axis the analyses undertaken according to the thematic codes. The Table reveals how the thematic coding enabled the data to be organised into similar thematic areas, thus revealing the common or contrasting factors involved. References are included in the subsequent commentary, where I comment on the analysed data by working down the approaches and across the codes, collating findings across several authors or discussing them individually according to the significance or quantity of the data involved. Again, the aim was not to recount every datum or analysis, but to highlight the principal findings, so as to reveal the significant insights and patterns discerned.
Table 4.1  Summary Table of principal findings from data identification and thematic analysis for Psychodynamic approaches

Key: ‘dm’ = deep moment(s); ‘mde’ = moment(s) of deep encounter; ‘P/E’ = professional/ethical boundaries; ‘P/P’ = personal/psychological boundaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROACH &amp; CATEGORY</th>
<th>(i) INDICATORS</th>
<th>(ii) ASPECTS</th>
<th>(iii) CAUSE &amp; FACILITATION</th>
<th>(iv) BOUNDARIES</th>
<th>(v) THEORETICAL FRAME</th>
<th>(vi) INTERPRETATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 PSYCHOANALYSIS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1 Freud</td>
<td>No indicators</td>
<td>Primary focus on intrapersonal; interpersonal focus is on transference from earlier life; transpersonal dismissed or explained in intrapersonal terms</td>
<td>Projective or regressive processes?</td>
<td>P/E important; weak P/P boundaries result from projective or regressive processes &amp; imply pathology</td>
<td>Psychoanalytic (influence of early life and unconscious); positivist, atheist, suspicious</td>
<td>Interpret mde, &amp;/or transpersonal aspect, as instances of projective or regressive processes, indicating pathology, though opportunity for growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2 Post Freud</td>
<td>dm - Moments of affective dynamic insight (Bateman &amp; Holmes); meaningful moments (Bromberg); nuclear disclosures (Cox)</td>
<td>Predominant intrapersonal focus; more interpersonal emphasis; largely suspicious of transpersonal</td>
<td>Relational qualities, waiting with aloneness, presence</td>
<td>Emphasis on P/E &amp; P/P through therapeutic frame; P/P permeable (pathological or therapeutic); Fromm - lowered inter- &amp; transpersonal boundaries</td>
<td>Psychoanalytic; minority assert that spirituality may not always be pathological</td>
<td>Unconscious becoming conscious (Bateman &amp; Holmes) and spiritual (Cox) interpretive possibilities hinted at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 RELATIONAL PSYCHODYNAMIC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 General</td>
<td>dm - Clinical moments of merger (Garfield); transcendent moments (Kainer)</td>
<td>‘Two-person’ psychology, but lingering emphasis on intrapersonal; limited transpersonal emphasis</td>
<td>Recognition, boundary responsibility, empathic connectedness</td>
<td>P/E important; permeable yet secure P/P boundaries beneficial (&amp; focus on process in the intersect)</td>
<td>Object-Relational plus intersubjective &amp; some constructivist perspectives; maternal factors shape e.g. spirituality</td>
<td>Hints of more positive projective, regressive, &amp; spiritual understandings (Kainer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROACH &amp; CATEGORY</td>
<td>(i) INDICATORS</td>
<td>(ii) ASPECTS</td>
<td>(iii) CAUSE &amp; FACILITATION</td>
<td>(iv) BOUNDARIES</td>
<td>(v) THEORETICAL FRAME</td>
<td>(vi) INTERPRETATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2 Regression (Balint, Bollas etc.)</td>
<td>dm - Harmonious interpenetrating mix up (Balint); mde? - moments of rapport, aesthetic moments (Bollas)</td>
<td>Intra- &amp; inter-personal connection &amp; emphasis; some transpersonal allusions</td>
<td>Significant moments occur rather than caused (Wright); Relationship, waiting, recognition, knowing; P/E not rigid, but beware; P/P loosened for regression</td>
<td>P/E a non-rigid role; P/P: understandings vary re merger &amp;/or retained separation (Mahler v. Stern), yet degrees of loosening &amp; transient oneness; transpersonal boundaries lowered</td>
<td>Different types of regression, benign needed for change; seeking for &amp; care from transformational object; spirituality rooted in (sometimes reduced to) infant experience</td>
<td>Interpret mde, &amp;/or transpersonal aspect, as instances of benign regression, &amp;/or transformational-object-seeking; (narcissistic framework also possible - Kohut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3 Transitional Experience (Winnicott etc.)</td>
<td>mde - Sacred moments (Rubin); moments of transformation, etc. (Jones)</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>Relational &amp; holding qualities, presence, spiritual awareness, capacity to be alone, waiting, recognition</td>
<td>P/P in transitional space are joined and separated</td>
<td>Object-relations; transitional phenomena: created &amp; found</td>
<td>Interpret mde, &amp;/or transpersonal aspect, as transitional experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.4 Projective Identification and – the Analytic Third (Ogden etc.)</td>
<td>dm (Ogden)</td>
<td>Intersubjective emphasis (i.e. intra- &amp; inter-personal); limited transpersonal (unless construe ‘third’ as such)</td>
<td>Understanding the analysand via projective identifications &amp; analytic third, mutual recognition</td>
<td>During projective identification P/P involve blurring &amp; simultaneous separateness and fusion</td>
<td>Projective identifications construct ‘third’, plus constructivist experience of it, eg. re spiritual/non-spiritual</td>
<td>Interpret mde, &amp;/or transpersonal aspect, as a response to projective identification &amp;/or the analytic third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– the Bipersonal or Analytic Field (Baranger &amp; Baranger etc.)</td>
<td>mde - Intense meetings (Di Chiara); dm - creative moments of genuine meeting (Robutti), intense experiences (Baranger &amp;Baranger)</td>
<td>Intra- &amp; inter-personal connection &amp; emphasis; transpersonal alluded to &amp; ? explain as created field</td>
<td>Recognition by the Other</td>
<td>P/E important for assisting P/P, with movement from confusion to clarity</td>
<td>Projective identifications construct ‘field’; distinction between ‘transference’ and ‘relationship’ (only the latter creating dms?)</td>
<td>Interpret mde as replacement of transference or projct identif’n with ‘relationship’, through intense, creative moment of genuine meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROACH &amp; CATEGORY</td>
<td>(i) INDICATORS</td>
<td>(ii) ASPECTS</td>
<td>(iii) CAUSE &amp; FACILITATION</td>
<td>(iv) BOUNDARIES</td>
<td>(v) THEORETICAL FRAME</td>
<td>(vi) INTERPRETATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.5 Shared Implicit Relationship or Intersubjective Field (Stern &amp; Boston Group etc.)</td>
<td>dm - Moments of meeting (Stern &amp; Boston Group, DeYoung)</td>
<td>Intra- &amp; especially inter-personal emphasis; lack of transpersonal (or explain interpersonally)</td>
<td>With authentic response, ‘present’ &amp; ‘now’ moments lead to ‘moments of meeting’, recognition and aloneness together; facilitated not caused</td>
<td>P/E retained, though mild frame breaks helpful; P/P clear but permeable, with intense sharing but retained distinction</td>
<td>Psychoanalytic, intersubjective, plus systems theory, Buber, &amp; Winnicott; construction of field &amp; moments, that change ‘implicit’ relationship &amp; parties</td>
<td>mde as change within ‘shared implicit relationship’ or ‘intersubjective field’, or ‘dyadic expansion of consciousness’; involving ‘real relschp’ (&amp; ‘nonconscious’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.6 Transformations in O (Bion etc.)</td>
<td>mde – acute Transformations in ‘O’ (Bion, Sullivan), cosmic moments of intimate contact (Grotstein, NB listener perspective)</td>
<td>All three, with ‘spirituality’ ‘located’ in or accessible through all three</td>
<td>Rel’shp as container, attention without ‘memory or desire’ &amp; waiting, discipline &amp; being present, at-one-ment with ‘O’</td>
<td>P/P affected through projective identification; transpersonal boundaries affected (but not mysticism(?))</td>
<td>Not positivist or religious, yet mystical etc. influence; ‘O’ in &amp; between parties; transformation in ‘K’ &amp; especially ‘O’ beneficial for change</td>
<td>mde as acute ‘transformation in O’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.7 Psychospiritual Paradigm (Schermer)</td>
<td>mde - I-Thou meetings, intersubjective transcendent states of consciousness (Schermer)</td>
<td>All three</td>
<td>Spiritual perspective on: empathic recognition, disciplined waiting while not knowing; lowered transpersonal boundaries</td>
<td>P/P needed, but also lowered transpersonal boundaries, involving interplay of self &amp; Other, not loss of distinctiveness</td>
<td>Bion &amp; Buber; Psychospiritual paradigm; ‘God’ in all I-Thou meeting; spiritual, guiding analytic third</td>
<td>mde as I-Thou meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROACH &amp; CATEGORY</td>
<td>(i) INDICATORS</td>
<td>(ii) ASPECTS</td>
<td>(iii) CAUSE &amp; FACILITATION</td>
<td>(iv) BOUNDARIES</td>
<td>(v) THEORETICAL FRAME</td>
<td>(vi) INTERPRETATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY</td>
<td>mde? - Moments of synchronicity; moments of reconciliation</td>
<td>All three, but emphasis mostly on intra-, then transpersonal</td>
<td>Accepting, enduring without knowledge, regression, transcendent function; happens rather than engineered</td>
<td>P/P and transpersonal boundaries lowered through participation mystique, collective unconscious, &amp; coniunctio; historically some risk to P/E</td>
<td>Individuation of self psychodynamically &amp; spiritually (‘God’ being found &amp; constructed) through transference (NB only partly distinguished from ‘real’ rel’ship), transcendent function &amp; coniunctio</td>
<td>mde as instances of synchronicity, self-reconciliation, numinous experience, transcendent function, &amp;/or coniunctio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1 Jung</td>
<td>mde - Transcendent, numinous moments (Carter); fourth-dimensional moments of connectedness, peak experiences in therapy (Field); significant moments of connection (MacKenna); coniunctio &amp; numinous moments (Schwartz-Salant); etc.</td>
<td>All three</td>
<td>Acceptance; waiting &amp; not knowing, with present awareness likened to spiritual practice; focus on unconscious &amp; transpersonal third area, but also still on the patient; some P/P boundary loss; facilitated rather than engineered</td>
<td>P/E emphasised; P/P &amp; transpersonal boundaries lowered; simultaneous union &amp; separation</td>
<td>Constructed (projective identification) &amp; found (collective unconscious) ‘mundus imaginalis’ or interactive field; transcendent function, coniunctio; numinous healing (though ? depends more on therapist’s perspective, &amp; different views re. divine); spiritual in intra-, inter- &amp; transpersonal</td>
<td>mde as expressions of transcendent function and/or coniunctio within a numinous field; e.g. mysterious agency using therapist &amp; intersubjective field in therapeutic peak experience (Field), or moment of connection to self and other in which sacred is glimpsed &amp; fleetingly known (MacKenna)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1 Psychoanalysis

4.1.1 Freud

(i) Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, offered no apparent deep-moment indicators, but he offered potentially relevant ‘indirect data’, including that deep moments may not automatically be beneficial if they result from projective or regressive processes and contain pathological elements (see below).

(ii) Freud primarily focussed on the intrapersonal dimension (as likewise psychoanalysis in general (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983: 44)). Freud’s interpersonal focus was largely on the past rather than present, in that he regarded the therapeutic relationship as a means for examining transference (Freud, 1912a). Freud would dismiss ‘transpersonal’ possibilities and explain ‘spirituality’ largely in intrapersonal terms (again, see below).

(iii) A lack of deep-moment indicators meant a similar lack of data regarding cause and facilitation, although, if projective and regressive processes explain deep moments as hypothesised below, these might then be inferred as causing deep moments.

(iv) Freud (1915[1914]) advocated professional and ethical boundaries, and considered that unclear psychological boundaries indicated pathology (Freud, 1930[1929]: 253), an assertion made, significantly, in connection with his discussion of spirituality and the ‘oceanic feeling’ (which he considered to be a desire for oneness or fusion in connection with regression to infantile narcissism). Projective processes were also held to result in weak personal boundaries (Ruszczynski, 1993: 9).

(v) Freud’s psychoanalytic framework, emphasising the unconscious and the influence of earlier life, was positivist, modernist, materialist, and determinist, which for Freud also meant atheist (Freud, 1933[1932]; Gay, 1987: 140f.; Palmer, 1997: 5-9). Hence, as a “master of suspicion” (Ricoeur, 1970: 32-6), if Freud had come across a ‘moment of deep encounter’, he would likely have been suspicious of its ‘transpersonal’ aspect. He would probably have denied that it could have referred to an actual divine or spiritual dimension, and instead would have interpreted it in intrapersonal terms, by assuming the influence of earlier intra- and inter-personal experience.
Indeed, (vi), in Tebbutt (2008: 24-39, 44-6) I extrapolated two provisional interpretations, concerning a) projection and b) regression, which, as possibilities, this further research has widened and upheld.

a) Freud understood projection to be an externalising and defensive part of mental life, which was also capable of creating and colouring a notion of the divine (Freud, 1913[1912-13]: 117-22, 150-3). This invited a **projective interpretation** of moments of deep encounter in two possible ways. Firstly, unconscious projective and transference processes within and between the client and therapist might, in some general way, be responsible, partly or exclusively, for generating the deep-moment experience itself. Secondly, and more specifically, the experience and idea of a transpersonal aspect would be interpreted, not as referring to an actual spiritual dimension or divine object (the possibility of which would be dismissed), but as resulting from projection and wishful thinking, which itself resulted from an infantile longing for benign protection from an omnipotent God (Freud, 1927).

(The possibility of ‘projection’ in spirituality is widely recognised. Palmer (1997: 61), observes that, whilst a projective understanding of the divine did not originate with Freud, his unique contribution was to identify its possible underlying motivation. Jones (1991: 64-8) stresses that, beyond projecting a representation of God, it is an individual’s transference and re-enactment of their general relational patterns towards the divine that is more pertinent. However, Sayers (2003: 50) wittily observes that Freud projected his oedipal theory into religion; and Spero (2010: 452-4) argues that, whilst client and/or therapist may indeed transfer or countertransfer ‘God’ into therapy (and therefore into deep-moment experience or interpretation), it does not preclude the possibility, also, of “other levels of direct or immediate experience with a real divine entity”.)

Freud’s likely advice towards any such projections can also be hypothesised: the parties should check whether any projection or transference was involved in generating the deep moment as a whole, or in any spiritual interpretation of it; whatever any such projection or transference might have been designed to achieve should be identified and acknowledged (as, for example, a ‘wish-fulfilment’ designed to achieve protection or affirmation); the projections or transference should then be withdrawn, and their energy reinvested in the facing of reality without such projections; in particular, the “psychical
infantilism” of any “religious illusion” should be renounced so as to face “hostile life” without it (see Freud, 1930[1929]: 273; 1927: 233). (Freudians recommend the withdrawal of religious projections on the epistemological premise that there is no divine object, and on the therapeutic premise that a splitting of the psychic structure is involved that diminishes the capacity to relate to the real world: McDargh, 1983: 14.)

b) A ‘regressive’ interpretation can also be extrapolated, this time from Freud’s discussion with Romain Rolland regarding the mystical experience of the ‘oceanic feeling’. Freud interpreted this to be “an instance of the primary narcissistic union between mother and infant” (Parsons, 1999: 4), which sometimes persists into adulthood as a “shrunken residue” of the earlier infantile feeling and need, and which can be recapitulated through religious emotion (Freud, 1930[1929]: 251-60). For Freud (1930[1929]: 253, 260) the uncertain boundaries involved suggested pathology, whilst the feeling of “oneness with the universe” represented a desire to regress to the “limitless narcissism” of early infancy. Others similarly characterise this understanding of spirituality as ‘regressive’ (Parsons, 1999: 190; Beit-Hallahmi, 1996: 70-4; Guntrip, 1969: 326).

A regressive understanding might be applied to deep moments, again in two ways. Firstly, client regression might be a causative factor in the occurrence of deep moments. Secondly and more narrowly regarding any transpersonal aspect, a ‘spiritual’ experience or interpretation might result from a desired or actual regression to an earlier stage of ego-development (rather than representing contact with an actual divine or mystical dimension). (Thus, regarding the genesis of spirituality, a projective interpretation derives from Freud’s reflections on the paternal relationship, whereas a regressive understanding derives from reflections about the maternal relationship.) Freud’s likely advice can again be extrapolated. Since he mostly understood regression to be a form of defence, resistance or pathology (Balint, 1969/1984: 127), any regressive tendencies leading to, or present within, a deep moment should be investigated, interpreted as such, and then avoided.

Given Freud’s judgments about pathology, from his perspective both interpretations have a negative tone, and in both broader (regarding the possible genesis of deep moments) and narrower (regarding the possible ‘transpersonal’ aspect) forms. However, as my PhD
research progressed, my understanding of these interpretations developed to appreciate that others also recognise projective and regressive processes, but not always in a negative way; indeed, projective and regressive processes may sometimes also explain why deep moments can have beneficial effects. Consequently, in ‘negative’ and sometimes ‘positive’ forms, ‘projection’ and ‘regression’ continued to provide two of the categories of deep-moment interpretation within the Psychodynamic corpus.

4.1.2 Post Freud

(i) A review of numerous works revealed few indicators, and often as passing references rather than more substantive accounts, including:-

- **Bateman and Holmes** (1995: 176): “sudden ‘ah-ah’ experience, or moment of affective ‘dynamic insight’”, occurring perhaps once or twice per analytic year, when “something the analyst says lifts the whole atmosphere and pieces of a jigsaw come together to form a complete picture”. (This indicates a ‘penny-dropping’ attribute, that also reflects psychoanalytic insight that is not merely intellectual and neutral but “variously described as true, effective, dynamic or emotional” (Watts & Williams, 1988: 71).)

- **Bromberg** (2004: 144-9): “psychoanalytically meaningful moment”, involving awareness of a shift in the interpersonal field and the quality of either party’s “self state”.

- **Cox** (1988: 6, 201, 206-12): intense “nuclear disclosures”, when the patient links emotional disclosure with enhanced understanding in an “amalgam that is ultimately therapeutic”.

- **Black** (2006: 12); **Casement** (1990: 172-5); **Kahn** (1997: 142); **Schwaber** (2007: 35, 38), also indicate possible deep moments.

(ii) The above indicators involved intra- and inter-personal aspects. Notwithstanding a generally increased appreciation of interpersonal relationality (Kahn, 1997), the predominant focus continued to be on the intrapersonal (Wheway, 1999: 108; Symington, 1994/1998: 152-3). A continuing suspicion of spirituality as being misguided or delusive (Rubin, 2006: 133) may be reflected in the lack of a transpersonal aspect in the above examples (meaning they are wider deep moments rather than moments of deep encounter).

(iii) Given the limited deep-moment indicators, there was limited data on cause or facilitation, other than some general requirements on the therapist that echo or draw on similar requirements in other approaches:-
• **General therapeutic relational qualities**, such as empathy, authenticity, and recognition of the individual (Kahn, 1997; Cox, 1988, 1999: 50).

• A living with ‘not-knowing’, whilst ‘being with’ in silence and **aloneness** (Casement, 1985: 221-3; 1990: 156, 160-1); and intuitively timing interpretations to when patients almost see for themselves (Bateman & Holmes, 1995: 175), implying a willingness to wait.

• A quality of **presence** (Kahn 1997: 163, 177).

**(iv)** The importance and interaction of professional/ethical and personal/psychological boundaries is widely recognised, including through establishing and maintaining a ‘therapeutic frame’, the pressures and containment of which can be therapeutically informative and helpful (Langs, 1998; Oaten, 1999). However, Jacobs (1992) and Walker (1992: 137-8) allow some careful flexibility with boundaries to enable therapeutic breakthrough, yet without impairing inviolable boundaries, such as regarding sexual contact.

Alongside this and reflecting the postmodern relational theme, the analyst and analysand have increasingly been understood to be consciously and unconsciously capable of affecting each other, rather than being hermetically sealed and separate (Casement, 1985: 57-8). Consequently, personal/psychological boundaries are recognised as being permeable, with the resultant interactions capable of being ‘healthier’ or more ‘pathological’. For example, Searles (1979: 119f., 134-5, 176-7) distinguishes between ‘pathological symbiosis’ and ‘therapeutic symbiosis’: each is characterised differently, but the latter involves all parts of each person “flowing from and into and between, and encompassing, both of them”, from which both parties emerge with a clearer individuality that is renewed and deepened. Thus, rather than assuming that merger experiences are always pathological, as implied by Freud, Searles’ distinction invites the possibility of more positive understandings, but with discernment required on every occasion.

Possible transpersonal boundaries also receive some implicit attention. Like Freud, Fromm disavowed regression to primary narcissism, but, as a neo-Freudian strongly influenced by Humanism and Zen Buddhism, he advocated oneness with reality (sometimes symbolised as Enlightenment or God) (Fromm, 1951, 1960/1974; Sayers, 2003: 105-114)). Applying this therapeutically, analysts need to retain a sense of themselves, but also to overcome their “own alienation and separateness” so as to be
“soaked with” the patient by sharing their unconscious, enabling the patient through “oneness” with the analyst to experience “transformation” (Fromm, 1960/1974: 112-3, 137-8; Sayers, 2003: 111-4). The implication would be that a lowering of interpersonal boundaries also allows a lowering of transpersonal boundaries, with a positive therapeutic effect.

(v) The theoretical frameworks are psychoanalytic, albeit with evolutions since Freud (Bateman & Holmes, 1995). For example, whilst many still denigrate the ‘spiritual’ as being indicative of pathology, others accept that positivism can be “a valuable debunker of religiosity” yet also assert that ineffable experience cannot always be reduced to projective processes, so that spirituality can be healthy and connected to psychic well-being (Roland, 1996: 145; Klein, 2003: 23, 50-2, etc.; Blass, 2006: 26). As for whether deep moments are ‘constructed or found’, Bromberg (2004: 144) reckons that ‘meaningful moments’ are constructed by patient and analyst; whilst, regarding ‘spiritual’ experience, various views are held (Parsons, 1999: 120-39).

(vi) The possible projective and regressive interpretations resonated with the wide use of projective and regressive principles (including to critique spirituality: Beit-Hallahmi (1976)). As for interpretive insights arising from the deep-moment indicators above:-

- Bateman and Holmes (1995: 176) suggest that moments of affective dynamic insight occur “when the repression barrier is lifted and unconscious knowledge becomes conscious”.

- Whilst no transpersonal aspect is indicated for ‘nuclear disclosures’, elsewhere Cox (1999: 50-60) refers to a process of “poiesis, which is the calling into existence of that which was not there before”; to a resonance between ‘Intimacy’ and ‘Ultimacy’ (citing Buber and Levinas); to an incarnational God being “part of the storm”; and to:

  The conceptual sparking gap between Transcendence and Immanence...[that] impinges upon every human encounter...its energizing and evocative affinities permeate each individual and group therapeutic session, just as much as any formal religious gathering.

Thus Bateman and Holmes offer another category of psychoanalytic interpretation, the **unconscious becoming conscious** (although one implicitly challenged below by Stern and the Boston Group); whilst Cox (notably from within psychoanalysis) indirectly raises the possibility of a **spiritual interpretation** of moments of deep encounter.
4.2 Relational Psychodynamic approaches

Under the influence (especially in Britain) of ‘Object Relations’ theory from Melanie Klein onwards; and (especially in America) of Harry Stack Sullivan’s ‘Interpersonal Psychoanalysis’, Kohut’s ‘Self-Psychology’, and various Intersubjective, Feminist and Relational perspectives; Freud’s emphasis on biological instincts and drives gave way, for many, to more relational models (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983; Mitchell, 2000/2009). This ‘relational turn’ (Pulver, 2007: 43) was based on the twin recognition (initially especially by Fairbairn (1952/1992)) that infants are “object seeking, relationally oriented from the beginning” (Jones 1991: 14), and that, beyond interpreting transference, a ‘real’ therapeutic relationship is “the single most important factor in helping the patient to change” (Gomez, 1997: 74-9, 138).

Initially I collate some general data and insights, before concentrating on some concepts that offer particular interpretative possibilities.

4.2.1 General insights

(i) Whilst I hoped to find more indicators of deep moments in these approaches given their relational emphasis, again there were only those indicated in the following:

- **Garfield** (2006: 33-5): ‘clinical moments of merger’, when “the boundaries of patient and therapist seem to match up in terms of their selective permeability, in a way that may feel like a fleeting moment of merger”, reminding of “the necessary flow across boundaries” between caregivers and infants, that are also “crucial to psychotherapy”. (Garfield does not indicate a transpersonal aspect, but does suggest that adult experiences of merger can include intense moments of creativity, romantic love, orgasm, uncontrollable laughter, or relatedness to your child, and “spiritual moments of union”).

- **Kainer** (1993): ‘transcendent moments’, when “the self is transformed to a higher, more creative, or optimal level of being” (p.154). However, she uses ‘transcendent’ not in a dualistic sense of alluding to another level of reality, but to refer to the transformational characteristics involved, and her illustrations lack a clear transpersonal aspect, notwithstanding that she offers a spiritual interpretation (see below).

- **Benjamin** (1990: 186) offers a general understanding that: “the other must be recognized as another subject in order for the self to fully experience his or her subjectivity in the other’s presence”.

(ii) Notwithstanding a shift from ‘one-person’ to ‘two-person’ psychology (Modell, 1998: 342), the predominant focus continued to be on the intrapersonal (Mitchell, 1998: 181-2,
Gomez, 1997: 212). As for a transpersonal dimension, Object Relations theory (for example) reflects Freudian rather than Jungian roots, so lacks any significant transpersonal or spiritual element (Gomez, 1997: 2). Nevertheless, Winnicott’s theories of transitionality, and Bion’s regarding ‘O’ (see later), have prompted two particular areas of psychoanalytic thinking regarding spirituality (Black, 2006: 12; Field, 2005: 78), with Winnicott’s influence in particular generating an approach to the Psychology of Religion (Wulff, 1997: 320f.; Capps, 2001: 206).

(iii) Deep-moment facilitative qualities may include:-

- Garfield (2006: 34-7): “recognition” of the patient; a therapeutic relationship enabling “knowledge of one’s self in the context of another, the analyst, but eventually by one self”; and “mastery of boundaries and the temptations to violate them”, requiring the analyst in particular “to monitor closely our own boundaries and those of the patient” (and see below).
- Kainer (1993: 169): the therapist aiding the transformation of the self, especially through “profound empathic connectedness”.

(iv) An emphasis on not violating professional/ethical boundaries continues, but also a greater recognition that intersubjectivity involves inevitable, and sometimes desirable, blurring of personal/psychological boundaries (e.g. Teicholz, 1999: 193-205; Gabbard, 2006). Garfield (2006: 31-7) recognises that ethical and psychological boundaries, and the process of individual development, are all connected. She emphasises the therapeutic value of “secure yet permeable boundaries”, warns against therapists longing for a merger that leads them into “boundary trouble”, and suggests that:

Very carefully the therapist tries to find the channels to make a foray into the psyche of the other but then, importantly and necessarily, moves back out.

Josephine Klein (2003: 153f.; 2005) recognises there can be a difference in clarity between conscious and unconscious boundaries, and conceptualises close connectedness as being similar to the intersection within ‘Venn diagrams’ (see Figure 4.1). “Processes in the intersect” operate between and overlap each party, with each person’s unconscious being in touch, merged, or identical, with the other person’s (and, perhaps also for Jungians, with a collective unconscious).
Some possible ‘processes in the intersect’ are discussed later, as possible explanations for different experiences of personal and psychological boundaries, and as potential insights into deep-moment dynamics.

**(v)** The dominant theoretical framework is again psychoanalytic, but as developed through object-relational and other related influences. These developments are in keeping with contemporary, postmodern understandings of individuals as being formed intersubjectively, rather than as possessing isolated minds (Ross, 2010; Teicholz, 1999; Stolorow et.al., 1992, 1994). Constructionist or constructivist influences are also acknowledged (e.g. by Stern, 1985/1998, xxvi-ix), or are reflected in ideas about the joint construction of the analytic ‘third’ or ‘field’ (see below). Spirituality continued to receive limited emphasis, but in place of “the anti-religious animus of orthodox psychoanalysis”:

> The inclusive object relational approach typically assumes that religion is valuable, adaptive, and benign, and that a loving relationship with a good or ‘good enough’ mother (Winnicott, 1971) provides the psychological foundations of faith, mysticism, ritual, and God representations. (Jonte-Pace, 2001: 137.)

Thus an understanding continued that the ‘divine’ is shaped or explained by psychological factors (with maternal influence now coming to the fore: Wulff, 2001: 24), yet with greater sympathy towards the potential value of spirituality.

**(vi)** Regarding the indicators cited above, Garfield does not offer a particular interpretation.
Kainer (1993) foreshadows the developed projective interpretation discussed below, suggesting that an analyst’s empathic reception of an analysand’s projective identifications enables the analysand’s split-off parts to be reclaimed, and their ‘unthought known’ to be expressed (thus also echoing Bollas’ version of a regressive interpretation). Whilst not explicitly indicating a transpersonal aspect, Kainer also offers a spiritual understanding by suggesting that the spiritual lies at the heart of the creative, and that the central themes in powerful moments “are those of resurrection and the redemption of the soul” (p.170).

This introduces the more positive projective, regressive, and spiritual interpretations that emerged from relational approaches, concerning the broader genesis of deep moments, and the narrower transpersonal issue.

### 4.2.2 Regression (and related themes)

I start with regression because it represents a more acute expression of the Relational approaches’ emphasis that an individual’s personality is significantly formed through infant-parent relations (including before birth: Ployé (2006); Ridgway & House (2006)), and that therapy provides restorative opportunities to address past hurt and to free healthier dynamics within the personality: “every analysis will provide moments of regression to earliest dependency when frozen traumata come to the fore” (Rayner (1990: 202), citing Winnicott). In this section, I discuss: a) a debate regarding the nature of infant experience, which is relevant both to discussions about regression, and concerning boundaries; b) some regressive explanations for the genesis of deep moments; and c) some related explanations of the transpersonal aspect.

**a)** Many therapists envisage an initial merged state between the infant and its mother (Gomez, 1997:196), especially, Mahler (1972; et.al. 1975/1985), who envisaged initial autistic and symbiotic phases, from which a child must separate from its mother and individuate, as the beginning of a life-long process of differentiating self from others. Consequently, there is oscillation between the safeguarding of one’s boundaries, and the longing to return to symbiotic fusion and a “blissful state of well-being” (involving healthier or pathological features) (Mahler, 1972: 338; Akhtar, 2006: 95-6). Mahler (et.al., 1975: 3) emphasises that:

> Consciousness of self and absorption without awareness of the self are two polarities between which (the normal adult) moves.
Stern (1985/1998) however has questioned Mahler’s understanding, arguing that an emergent sense of self, and self/other differentiation, begins at or before birth, making the major developmental task the establishment of relatedness rather than separation. Thus, whilst pathological states similar to ‘symbiosis’ or ‘primary narcissism’ may later occur, there are no ‘autistic’ and ‘symbiotic’ phases to which to ‘regress’. Instead,

Union experiences are...the successful result of actively organizing the experience of self-being-with-another, rather than as the product of a passive failure of the ability to differentiate self from other.

During the actual event, the core sense of self is not breached: the other is still perceived as a separate core other. ... The changed core self also becomes related (but not fused) with the other. The self-experience is indeed dependent upon the presence and action of the other, but it still belongs entirely to the self. There is no distortion. (Stern, 1985/1998: 10, 105.)

Although Stern is discussing infant experience, this reflects my own experience of moments of deep encounter, where there is a feeling of close relatedness, but also a retained sense of two distinctive selves that, far from being confused or distorted, are actually clearer to each other.

Jones (1996: 85) suggests that Stern’s findings make it hard to maintain that monistic experiences represent regression to a pre-oedipal period of fusion, as there is no oedipal period of fusion.

Nevertheless, the debate continues, but with some areas of reconciliation, and recognition that merger experiences are too powerful to be dismissed (Applegate, 1989; Akhtar, 2006; Gomez, 1997: 147). Hence, Winnicott (1971/1991: 130), for example, is hesitant about Mahler’s ‘symbiosis’, but accepts the principle of regression.

b) In contrast to Freud’s negative approach to regression and argument that it should be resisted, Ferenczi, and later Balint, Winnicott and others from the Object Relations school, recognised the therapeutic value of benign regression, and advocated that, in appropriate therapeutic circumstances, it should be encouraged (Rayner, 1990: 190-202, 287-9). Bollas likewise values regression, and, additionally, he offers a particular understanding of the mother as a ‘transformational object’, leading to ‘transformational-object-seeking’ throughout life:
the subject is seeking the transformational object and aspiring to be matched in symbiotic harmony within an aesthetic frame that promises to metamorphose the self (Bollas, 1987: 40).

(i) Regarding possible deep-moment indicators,

- **Balint** (1969/1984: 75, 135-9, 143) advocates re-establishing or regressing to the infant-parent experience of ‘harmonious interpenetrating mix up’, through religious ecstasy, sublime moments of artistic creation, and through “certain regressive periods during analytic treatment”. A sudden change of intensity in analytic atmosphere is followed by “tranquil, quiet well-being” and “arglos” (a German adjective describing a simpler, trusting, truer nature), as a “new beginning”, involving discovery rather than repetition, that leads to a “more satisfactory relationship to an important object”.

- **Bollas** (1987: 16) refers to ‘aesthetic moments’, in which an individual feels a deep subjective rapport with an object (a painting, a poem, an aria or symphony, or a natural landscape) and experiences an uncanny fusion with the object, an event that evokes an ego state that prevailed during early psychic life.

**Jones** (1991: 119-20) links these to what he describes as ‘transformational moments’; whereas **Wright** (2006: 178-81) connects them to his description of gracious, non-verbal, outside-of-ordinary time, ‘significant moments’. Whilst none of these experiences are explicitly connected to interpersonal therapeutic contexts, Bollas introduces ‘aesthetic moments’ during a therapeutic discussion, implying their relevance to, perhaps even occurrence in, therapeutic contexts.

- **Bollas** (1987: 23) also offers a more definite deep-moment indicator by referring, in the analytic relationship, to ‘moments of rapport’, which lead the patient to ‘re-experience’ the transformational object relation...[in which] the patient’s identification of the analyst as the transformational object is not dissimilar to the infant’s identification of the mother.

(ii) **Balint** (1969/1984: 135, 147-8) emphasises a two-person psychology, and that regression is an interpersonal, not just intrapersonal, phenomenon, requiring the involvement and support of the therapist. Other than his parallel with moments of religious ecstasy, Balint does not obviously refer to a transpersonal aspect. However, **Jones** (1991) and **Wright** (2006) allow for a possible spiritual element; as does **Bollas** (1987: 16-7, 30-40) when discussing the ‘Spirit of the Object’, and suggesting that transformational objects and aesthetic moments can feel “sacred”, or when (elsewhere) musing on the possibility of God living in the unconscious (Sayers, 2003: 199).
(iii) Whilst probably ‘peak experiences’ rather than ‘deep moments’, Wright’s (2006: 178) suggestion, that ‘significant moments’ “occur [and] cannot be called forth on demand”, can nonetheless be noted.

As for facilitative factors:

- Instead of emphasising interpretation, the therapeutic relationship should reproduce early mothering, thus inviting regression by its acceptance, reliability, trustworthiness, lack of hierarchy and “hard edges”, and quality of being in-tune and alongside the patient (Balint, 1969/1984: 109, 180; Rayner, 1990: 194-201; Gomez, 1997: 118-21).

- Balint (1969/1984: 142-3, 180) advocated (like Winnicott) a willingness to wait silently without interfering, enabling the patient to “reach himself”.

- With a “mutually trusting argos atmosphere” established as an “absolutely necessary pre-condition for new beginning”, both parties can recognise the patient’s internal life and individuality, replacing escape or rescue with the experience of vulnerability and a mourning for the formative deficit or loss (Balint, 1969/1984: 138-45, 182-4; Rayner, 1990: 193, 200; Gomez, 1997: 118-21).

- Bollas (1987: 22-9) similarly emphasises an unobtrusive relationship “often more maternal than was the actual mother’s care”, involving “a kind of symbiotic or telepathic knowing” (resonating with Stern’s ‘relational knowing’ below?), which offers regressive space and echoes of the transformational object.

Adjustments to boundaries may also be necessary:

- Historically the therapeutic frame’s boundaries were relaxed to a degree, in that Ferenczi and Winnicott were flexible with sessions and arrangements, and (like Balint) engaged for example in hand-holding to replicate aspects of the maternal environment, and to help those for whom classical analysis had proved ineffective, against which criticisms were raised. However, each later gave up their more active and holding techniques, and Balint found middle ground by warning against both harsh or rigid boundaries, and against malignant regression that risked pathological boundary loss or violation (Rayner, 1990: 195-6, 200-1; Balint, 1969/1984: 145; Gomez, 1997: 121-2).

- Personal/psychological boundaries nonetheless need to be loosened to tolerate the patient regressing and engaging with the analyst in “a sort of harmonious interpenetrating mix-up” between them, reminiscent of the primary infant relationship (and, in terms of the absence of sharp boundaries, being similar to the interpenetration of water within a fish’s mouth and gills, being part of both fish and sea) (Balint (1969/1984: 66, 127-8, 136-7, 142-5).
Additionally regarding boundaries, Rayner (1990: 198-202) notes that “states of fusion or non-differentiation” are transient, and that the analyst “does not also have to become totally absorbed” (hence, patient and analyst may experience boundary loss to different degrees, perhaps further explaining different boundary experiences around deep moments).

Balint and Winnicott believed that “regression was necessary for change”, as a temporary organized return to dependence, where “the re-emerged true self can meet environmental failures without false-self defences” (Rayner, 1990: 193-5, 287-8). Balint (1969/1984) described those failures as giving rise to a “basic fault” that, to be addressed, required beneficial, not defensive and malignant, regression (arguing that Freud mostly encountered the latter, whilst Ferenczi emphasised the former (Balint, 1969/1984: 149)).

For Bollas (1987: 13-40), a mother’s handling and care forms the earliest human aesthetic, prompting an adult search for the transformational object. The memory of being “transformed by the other” can be briefly re-experienced (rather than recreated) in intense, reintegrating, aesthetic experiences that invoke and recall “a psychosomatic sense of fusion”. The analytic space therefore functions as “an invitation to regress in the care of a transformational object”, so as to “relive his infantile space in the transference”. Since the initial rapport took place pre-verbally through a dialogue of “being-with” (meaning that aesthetic moments remind of something “never cognitively apprehended but existentially known”, that constitutes the “unthought known”), the analyst must similarly offer a pre-verbal silence and empathic thought. However, whilst transformational-object-seeking may be “an endless memorial search for something in the future that resides in the past”, the process looks forward as well as back: as Jones (1991: 122-3; 2002: 89) emphasises, the continuation of the primary experience that (re)constitutes the self speaks ultimately, not to regression, but to transformation.

Moments of ‘harmonious interpenetrating mix up’ offer another possible indicator of deep moments, explained by an understanding of ‘benign regression’; as do ‘moments of rapport’ (and possibly ‘aesthetic moments’), that can be similarly explained, but which also invite an additional understanding that deep moments may reflect ‘transformational-object-seeking’.
c) The above has concentrated on explaining the genesis of deep moments as a whole, but regression may also explain the transpersonal aspect.

Klein (2003: 178) suggests that Bollas’ ‘aesthetic moments’ stands in the same line as Freud’s thinking about oceanic feelings. Bollas (1987: 16, 30-40) recognises that aesthetic moments evoke the conviction of being in “rapport with a sacred object”, an absolute certainty that he has been cradled by, and dwelled with, the spirit of the object, a rendezvous of mute recognition that defies representation.

Such moments involve solitude (echoing the ‘aloneness’ theme), symmetry, a “caesura in time”, and a sense of fate echoing religious conversion. They feel familiar, sacred, reverential, and exist outside cognitive coherence since:

They are registered through an experience in being, rather than mind, because they express that part of us where the experience of rapport with the other was the essence of life before words existed.

When linked to a mythic structure, these earliest object-ties generate belief in a deity’s transforming potential. However, although it seems to insult “the integrity of uncanny experience” given that “the sacred precedes the maternal” (because our earliest experiences occur before we know our mothers as objects in their own right), “spiritual experiences” can be reduced to “the discrete administration of the mother”.

Others similarly trace ‘spiritual’ experience to the pre-verbal infant-maternal relationship, and therefore might similarly account for any spiritual characterisation of the transpersonal element. They also identify potentially beneficial effects for such therapeutic or spiritual ‘oneness’.

- **Kohut** links general and spiritual merger experiences to infant experience, and envisages potentially transformative effects for them when involving movement from inward focus to outward commitment. A sense of merger may result from extending one’s ‘grandiose self’, but, unlike Freud, Kohut does not perceive narcissism and idealisation as infantile states to be outgrown, but as potential sources of self-esteem and motivation. He applies similar principles to ‘mystical’ mergers and relationships with ‘God’. Additionally, he conceptualises ‘cosmic narcissism’, not as losing individuality, but as participating in a supraindividual and timeless existence that entails a commitment to the ideals involved. (Kohut, 1966: 268-70; 1971: 27, 106, 114-5; Jones, 2002: 6-7, 18-31.)

- **Kristeva** suggests that a mother’s oneness with her baby encourages and brings into being her baby’s soul or spirit, and that analysts similarly bring the life of
their patients’ soul or psyche into being through an empathic loving oneness with them. However, whilst psychoanalysis helps patients to recover oneness with another, unlike mysticism, it also help them to dissolve that oneness so as to recognise their difference and separateness from others (Sayers 228-37; Capps, 2001: 306-7).

- **Meissner** (1984: 72, 138f., 150-4, 183-4) recognises that therapeutic and divine relationships may emulate the safe, nurturing maternal relationship, and that a regressive return to the roots of trust can facilitate progression. Regression can also inform creative moments of mystical union, involving dissolution of self and absorption into a loved transcendent object (and hence a dissolution of personal-transpersonal boundaries).

- **Milner** emphasised the healing effect of recovering the illusion of oneness with another, including through mystical experience or being in love, so, as an analyst, she facilitated patients’ recovery of oneness with another (Sayers, 2003: 5, 162-184).

Thus regressive-type interpretations might also explain a spiritual characterisation of the transpersonal element within moments of deep encounter, as being a transformative recapitulation of, yet also progression beyond, infant-parent experience. Regardless of whether “the illusion of oneness with another” is “metaphorically or actually divine” (Sayers, 2003: 242), a merger-type experience is a central feature in any regressive-type explanation of moments of deep encounter.

### 4.2.3 Transitional experience

**Winnicott** (1953, 1971/1991) conceptualised a third, intermediary or transitional area between (in particular) mother and child, and between inner and outer worlds. Through creative play and the use of illusion, the child learns to be alone and together, and to negotiate the gap between individual understanding and external reality, and between what the child does and does not control, in order to develop safely. Within this ‘potential space’, ‘transitional objects and phenomena’, from teddy bears to religious experience, can help manage separation anxiety, and provide inspiration, from infancy to adulthood.

Therapy offers an opportunity for transitional or potential space, as part of a holding, facilitative environment. Rather than interpretation, the provision of this relational environment is understood to be the curative factor that enables early developmental needs to be met, allowing the individual to reach their true self, and to grow. Underlying this, and reflecting the relational model’s more positive understanding of regression, is
Winnicott’s understanding that regression is a search for missing relational experience, and part of the individual’s capacity to bring about self-cure (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983: 200-1) (interestingly, this last point echoes the humanistic theme of self-actualisation).

(i) Notwithstanding Winnicott’s (1965/1976, 1971/1991) concern with the therapeutic environment and his influence on the psychoanalytic study of religion, I still found a lack of deep-moment indicators in his work, or that of those influenced by him, save for:-

- **Rubin** (2006: 139): “certain moments in treatment – perhaps when the analytic dyad is highly attuned...when it feels as if something sacred is happening in the consulting room”. (Rubin, p.145, also refers to spiritual experiences, but these are probably ‘peak experiences’, rather than ‘deep moments’.)

- Although **Jones** (1991: 119-34; 1996: 129; 2002: 102) is not explicitly referring to therapeutic contexts, he indicates at least three types of moment that are probably sited in interpersonal contexts and which may overlap, one clearly having a transpersonal aspect: “In the moment of transformation and new found intimacy the presence of God might be glimpsed” (as already noted, he also links ‘transformational moments’ to Bollas’ ‘aesthetic moments’); secondly, Jones refers to ‘transitional experiences’ being ‘noetic’ (i.e. an authentic source of knowledge, echoing the ‘penny dropping’ and ‘bigger picture’ characteristics of moments of deep encounter); and thirdly to Buber’s I-Thou type encounter and “moments that evoke the depths of our personal being”, “characterised by timelessness, unity and transformation”.

(ii) Jones and Rubin indicate all three elements (as, more widely, do others). However, hopes of further indicators from the intersection of inter- and trans-personal emphases were disappointed, since Winnicott generally concentrated on intra- and inter-personal dimensions; whilst Pruysier (1974/1975), Rizutto (1979), McDargh (1983) and others who apply Winnicott’s ideas to religion and spirituality, concentrate on the spiritual development of infants and adults, rather than on the therapeutic relationship, or on any ‘spiritual’ phenomena that might arise during it.

(iii) General and specific facilitative factors may include:-

- **Rubin** (2006: 148) cites therapeutic relational qualities including respect, non-judgment, deep attentiveness, safety and serenity; surrendering to the therapeutic process, without belief as to how treatment should unfold (and thus to go wherever the therapy leads); and, a quality of presence, and wider spiritual awareness to help therapy become a ‘sacred space’.

- For transitional experience to occur, **Jones** (2002: 103) cites Winnicott’s (1971/1991) therapeutic relational requirements for safety, trust and
dependability (to which should be added Winnicott’s (1965/1976) stress on a facilitative, holding environment, and his understanding of regression).

- Winnicott also emphasises a capacity to be alone, including in the presence of another, as an infant, and in therapy (1958, 1971/1991: 47); the ability to wait in therapy and to withhold interpretations: “If only we can wait, the patient arrives at understanding creatively and with immense joy” (1965/1976: 235-7, 1971/1991: 57, 86); and the importance of recognition: “When I look I am seen, so I exist” (1971/1991: 111-8).

(iv) Winnicott (1971/1991: 47-8, 107-8; etc.) refers to the baby and mother, or patient and analyst, as moving from merger to autonomy, requiring reliability in the relationship and yet a reduction in the mother/analyst’s adaptability to the baby/patient’s needs, a willingness by both to permit separation, and the playful use of the potential space between them, in which they are paradoxically “joined and separated”. Gargiulo (2004: 98) describes transitional space as a “gentle mixture of self and other”.

(v) Additional to his object-relational framework, and understanding of transitional experience explained above, Winnicott (1965/1976: 181; 1971/1991: 89) suggests that, paradoxically, transitional objects and phenomena are both created, and waiting to be found: “the object must be found in order to be created” and “to become a cathected object”. Thus, if moments of deep encounter, and/or their transpersonal aspect, are interpreted as being, or as involving, transitional phenomena (see further below), it would suggest that, to some degree, such moments, and/or their transpersonal aspect, may be ‘created and found’.

(vi) Winnicott (1971/1991: 14, 38f., 120) indicates that therapy involves intermediary space, and that intense transitional experiencing continues into adulthood, including in religion. As intense experiences involving an interplay between inner and outer worlds that lead to growth, moments of deep encounter might be interpreted as transitional experiences, again with broader and narrower applications.

A broader application, regarding the genesis of deep moments, would envisage them as transitional experiences resulting from the parties’ interplay through a third, intermediary area, in which transitional phenomena, including moments of deep encounter, may arise. Spero’s (2010: 456) observation would support this, that “the most valuable psychological transformations occur” in the transitional space of psychoanalysis.
Similarly, a ‘narrower’ application would explain the transpersonal aspect as a phenomenon generated through transitional space, especially when characterised spiritually, since spiritual experience can be understood as a ‘transitional phenomenon’, with any ‘deity’ invoked being a ‘transitional object’.

- Rubin (2006: 139) infers that spiritual moments “arise in the intersection and interaction of self and world”, partaking of both but belonging to neither; being “neither inner psychic reality nor external reality”, yet each contribute to them.

- An existing God-image may be brought into an analysis having arisen earlier in infant or other transitional space, but Spero (2010: 453-7) also envisages that a God-image may be mutually discovered and created within the analytic transitional space (or third – see below).

Whilst for Freud any ‘spiritual’ experience or ‘God’ image would be an illusory pathological projection, for Winnicott, ‘illusion’ can have a vital, beneficial role within transitional experience, regardless of whether a divine object actually exists; indeed, as a transitional phenomenon, any ‘spiritual’ aspect would possess a ‘created and found’ quality, that was “neither purely subjective nor completely objective” (Jones, 2002: 101; Rizutto, 1979: 209; Meissner, 1984: 178; Ulanov, 2001: 11; Blass, 2006: 27-8).

Winnicott’s insights can be categorised as firstly extending a regressive understanding, given his understanding of infant and therapeutic transitional space; secondly, relates to a widened ‘projective’ understanding (both because transitional space is a form of interpersonal ‘field’ that may result from projective processes (see my next section), and because transpersonal aspects may be explained as ‘illusory’ transitional phenomena (albeit with a more positive characterisation than in Freud’s account); and, thirdly, allows for ‘spiritual’ interpretations, as suggested by Rubin or Jones.

4.2.4 Projective identification and the analytic third or field

Others have also developed the idea that a third area of experience arises between the parties, in which deep moments may occur. I will discuss in turn: a) unconscious projective identifications between the parties, which generate b) a ‘third’, or c) a ‘field’.

a) Melanie Klein identified **projective identification** as a form of projective process whereby the projector splits off and projects intolerable material onto a recipient, material which they believe the recipient really possesses, so that, in the analytic situation, the analyst resists being emotionally influenced by the projections, which are
merely the patient’s phantasy (Spillius, 1999: x). However, reflecting a shift from one to two-person psychology (Sandler & Sandler, 1998: 113-6), Bion and others, including Ogden (1979, 1994b), developed Klein’s basic understanding. They conceptualised projective identification as an unconscious communication of projected material, not just onto, but also into, a recipient, through manipulative pressure in the interactions between them. The recipient, for reasons of their own pathology, unconsciously accepts the communication, consequently feeling and behaving in a manner congruent with the projected material (“being the recipient of a projective identification is like having a thought that is not one’s own”; Ogden, 1979: 365). Although a potentially destructive mechanism, it also affords an opportunity for growth, provided that the recipient can be aware of each person’s dynamics and ‘digest’ the projected material, before offering it back in a less pathological form; and, provided that the projector can then experience and reintegrate the painful material as their own.

Both original and developed understandings of ‘projective identification’ offer further nuances for a projective interpretation. Unconscious projected phantasy might initiate an encounter between the parties that generate deep moment type qualities, or might generate a transpersonal aspect, including a divine image (thus Grotstein (2004b: 86), for example, suggests that “mankind created god through projective identification from a spark of its own inner immanent ‘divine’ self”).

b) Additionally, projective identifications might lead to another phenomenon that may also explain the generation of deep moments. Ogden (1994a, 1994b, 1996) suggests that unconscious projective identifications contribute to the generation, by and between the parties, of an ‘intersubjective analytic third’, being:

a jointly but asymmetrically constructed and experienced set of conscious and unconscious intersubjective experiences in which analyst and analysand participate. (Ogden (1996a: 884); ‘asymmetrical’ because therapy focuses in particular on the analysand.)

(i) I found no obvious indicators of moments of deep encounter in Ogden, simply some broader deep moments (e.g. Ogden, 1994a: 14), so the data referred to below are indirect and the explanation is extrapolated, but it offers another possible interpretation.
(ii) Ogden emphasises that intra- and inter-personal aspects exist, not in isolation, but in a close, mutually influencing dialectic, in which each are also influenced by the analytic third (Ogden, 1992; 1994a: 4, 17). Generally Ogden (1994a: 13) does not refer to a transpersonal aspect or employ spiritual allusions, but he does refer to “treading on sacred ground”, and being “altered by our experience in and of the analytic third”. The analytic third may be one way of explaining the sense of a transpersonal aspect (see (v) below).

(iii) Ogden (1994b: 102-6, 184) stresses:

- understanding the analysand at both conscious and unconscious levels;
- working with the projective identification and analytic third in effect to free and enable “an experience of I-ness that each individual in isolation could not have created for himself” (i.e., a particular use of relationship); and that
- each party must recognise the other in their individuality (which may be mediated through interpretation):

  It is only through the recognition by another who is recognized as a separate (and yet interdependent) person that one becomes increasingly (self-reflectively) human.

(iv) Projective identification involves a significant blurring of psychological boundaries, in which to an extent the usual dialectic between separate subjectivities collapses into an “experience of being simultaneously within and outside of the intersubjectivity of the analyst-analysand” (Grant & Crawley, 2002: 28; Ogden 1996: 884; 1994b: 9, 101; 1994a: 4). Grotstein (1981: 214) suggests that it involves a dual track, ‘siamese twin’ model, in which there can be two states of mind simultaneously on two different levels: one of separateness and the other of fusion.

This offers another way of explaining why people may feel both closely linked and separate at same time, or why in deep moments some may report fusion and others separateness.

(v) In addition to his psychoanalytic framework, Ogden (1994a: 17; 1996: 884) employs a constructivist perspective, understanding the analytic third to be created by the parties, and that each party experiences the third, not identically, but according to their own personality and meaning system. Thus, for example, some understand the ‘third’ spiritually (Spero, 2010: 453-7; Grotstein, 2000: 257-8; 2004b: 84-5; Schermer, 2003: 105,
249), and others non-spiritually (Silverstone, 2005: 81-2). If understood spiritually, Grotstein (2000: 257-8; 2004b: 84) perceives ‘God’ as being ‘constructed’, but also allows for the possibility of ‘God’ being ‘found’, when he refers to two aspects of God, the one that we are driven to create and the one whose existence – if at all – is utterly ineffable.

(vi) An experience of the analytic third, involving recognition, closeness, and sometimes transpersonal ‘otherness,’ might be another way of explaining the genesis of moments of deep encounter, and/or their transpersonal aspect.

c) As Ogden (1996: 884) acknowledges, there are other related conceptualisations of intersubjectivity, including by Winnicott (transitional space), Bion (regarding dyads and groups), Langs (bipersonal field), and especially Madeleine and Willy Baranger, whose ideas have had particular influence in the Latin countries (Momigliano & Robutti, 1992; Ferro & Basile, 2009; Ferro, 2010). The Barangers independently envisaged that, especially through projective identifications, the parties jointly create a bipersonal or analytic field (Baranger & Baranger, 2008; a paper summarising their ideas over 50 years). The unconscious phantasy that structures the bipersonal field

is something created between the two, within the unit that they form in the moment of the session, something radically different from what each of them is separately (Baranger & Baranger, 2008: 806).

(i) Possible deep-moment indicators include references to:

- creative moments of a really genuine meeting (Robutti, 1992: 2), and
- intense experiences (Baranger & Baranger, 2008: 806), because
- “When the experience of meeting is particularly intense, the emotional states evoked have a special quality. They are similar to those evoked by the perception of beauty in the Arts, or to the feelings of serenity and completeness aroused by contemplative experiences. This is what Bion calls being in ‘O’.” (Di Chiara, 1992: 28; I explain ‘O’ later.)

(ii) An overall intra- and inter-personal emphasis follows from the perception that the parties are unavoidably connected (Robutti, 1992: xxii; Momigliano & Robutti, 1992), although Sopena (2009: 143-4) argues for staying focused on the intra-psychic. In
addition to Di Chiara’s spiritual allusions, a transpersonal aspect may arise from the sense that:

An environment or space is created in which something emerges of which neither of the two is any longer the master (Momigliano, 1992: 8);

or from the perspective that:

The field model...has introduced a new configuration of the unconscious which results from therapeutical encounter and goes beyond the individual level (Sopena, 2009: 144; this may or may not relate to Jung’s ‘collective unconscious’, to which Sopena does not refer).

(iii) Again, recognition is important: “The intrapsychic has to go through the Other – symbolic place – in order to be able to unfold and be recognized as such” (Sopena, 2009: 144; “symbolic place” is not explained).

(iv) Given unconscious intermingling and “the blurred frontier between the intersubjective and the intrapsychic”, the analyst must maintain the therapeutic setting and their own identity, in order to avoid pathological projective identification or fusion (Sopena, 2009: 144; Momigliano & Robutti, 1992: 7, 48-9, 67-8; Di Chiara, 1992: 30-3, 78-87). The Barangers therefore suggest the analyst should avoid or limit projective counteridentification and instead offer interpretation, which, if absorbed intellectually and experientially by the patient will enable them to re-introject the projection in a different form. Again, this echoes Ogden’s insights, and might explain the experience of boundary confusion and a sense of a third (“something radically different from what each of them is separately” (Baranger & Baranger, 2008: 806)), followed by clarity between parties, and a reparatory reintegration of the patient’s internal world (thus, in a deep moment, involving movement from confusion to clarity).

(v) An unconscious bipersonal field is jointly (albeit asymmetrically, since the analyst must maintain the therapeutic setting) constructed through projective identifications, which can be managed therapeutically (Bezoari & Ferro, 1992; Momigliano, 1992), enabling:

an oscillation between two poles, Transference↔Relationship, the former representing the repetitive moment and the latter the creative moment of a really genuine meeting (Robutti, 1992: 2).
This distinguishing between ‘Transference’ and ‘Relationship’ is echoed elsewhere, and it offers a significant challenge to any notion that projective processes (such as transference or unaddressed projective identification) can by themselves cause deep moments, if such processes merely remain at the level of repeating past process. Rather, it is when the opportunity is seized to address and/or experience a previous process differently, that a “creative moment” and “genuine meeting” can occur.

(vi) Within a jointly created bipersonal or analytic field, replacing transference and projective identification (involving overlapping psychological boundaries) with ‘relationship’ in intense and creative moments of genuine meeting, may explain the cause, course, and nature of deep moments. This may attract a spiritual characterisation (Di Chiara), but not necessarily so. As with Winnicott’s transitional area and Ogden’s ‘analytic third’, a projective interpretation is extended into the idea of an intersubjective field.

4.2.5 Shared implicit relationship and an intersubjective field

The notion of a field is also taken up by Stern (et.al., 1998a) and the Boston Process of Change Study Group, but in a different way, since their version of deep moments do not give the same place to transferential processes or projective identifications. Stern and the Boston group envisage a ‘shared implicit relationship’ or ‘intersubjective field’ between analyst and patient, reflecting that of caretaker and child, in which ‘moments of meeting’ occur that involve a qualitative shift in their ‘implicit relational knowing’, with lasting effects. This section therefore echoes some of the principles considered in the previous section, although the lack of any focus here on projective identification is also a distinction requiring a different category.

(i) Moments of meeting involve:-

special ‘moments’ of authentic person-to-person connection...with the therapist that altered the relationship with him or her and thereby the patient’s sense of himself (Stern et.al., 1998a: 904);

some of the most nodal experiences for change in psychotherapy. They are very often the moments most remembered, years later, that changed the course of therapy (Stern, 2004: 176).

Whilst change largely occurs graduallly and imperceptibly (Nahum et.al., 1998; Morgan et.al., 1998), more rarely, moments occur that are more dramatic and irreversible (Stern,
2004: 165-182), regardless of whether they are captured in words, explicated and mutually validated, or not (Harrison et al., 1998: 313). Change results, interpersonally, regarding the shared experience and relational anticipations of each partner, and intrapersonally, since new forms of agency can now be expressed (Lyons-Ruth et al., 1998: 282).

Stern and the Boston Group identified these experiences inter alia from empirical research; the relevance being that the perspectives described included those of therapists and patients.

- From outside the group, DeYoung (2003: 179) also cites ‘moments of meeting’.

(ii) The group emphasises the interpersonal (“the intrapsychic has become subordinate to the intersubjective”), but also the positive role of authentic meeting on the intrapersonal (Stern 2004: 148; et al., 1998: 917). A transpersonal aspect is not indicated (whilst Carter (2010) introduces a transpersonal aspect, his is a Jungian perspective), or might be explained in interpersonal terms:

At this moment of forming a dyadic state of consciousness, and for the duration of its existence, there must be something akin to a powerful experience of fulfilment as one paradoxically becomes larger than oneself (Tronick et al., 1998: 296).

(iii) Stern (et al. 1998a: 909-17; et al. 1998b: 303-7; 2004: 149-86, 219-27) provides possibly the most researched and detailed account available of what might lead up to a deep moment (or at least in this ‘moment of meeting’ form).

- Within both infant-caretaker and therapeutic relationships a ‘moving along’ process occurs that involves strings of ‘present moments’, which last from micro-seconds to a few seconds, and involve verbal and non-verbal dialogic exchanges that mark slight shifts in direction, leading forwards in a non-linear manner to achieve gradual change.

- Additionally, sometimes a ‘present moment’ becomes a ‘now moment’, which is “‘hot’ affectively, and full of portent for the therapeutic process”, “pulling one more fully into the present” (Stern et al., 1998a: 909-11). ‘Now moments’ are “weird” from being unexpected and unsettling, and “pregnant” with feelings of imminence, requiring a “decision” as in a “moment of truth”. They may also involve challenge to the therapeutic frame (see (iv) below)

- If the opportunity is seized by each partner responding personally and authentically (i.e. it cannot simply be a technical manoeuvre), a ‘now moment’ will become a ‘moment of meeting’, involving “joint intersubjective recognition
in a new form” (Lyons-Ruth et al., 1998: 282), enabling both parties to appreciate more fully what it is like to be the patient.

- ‘Now moments’ may lead to interpretations or interpretations to moments of meeting, but something more than interpretation is required, since early infant developmental relationships do not involve ‘interpretation’ (Tronick et al., 1998: 299). ‘Now moments’ may be “missed” or “fail”, but can also be “repaired”, or “endure” for later response.

- When they occur, ‘moments of meeting’ are followed by ‘open space’, in which the partners disengage from their specific meeting and can be alone, in the presence of the other (Stern et al., 1998b: 305; hence echoing Winnicott: Fonagy, 1988: 349), enabling assimilation of the moment and the finding of a new equilibrium in their altered intersubjective state (again, something which echoes my own deep-moment experiences).

- Once completed, the partners take up ‘moving along’ again, but within the new intersubjective context.

However, Stern (et.al., 1998a: 912) also implies that the form and appearance of such moments are unpredictable, thereby implying that they cannot be ‘caused’ as such, but merely facilitated by the authentic and personal response of each party.

(iv) “Now moments may occur when the traditional therapeutic frame risks being, or is, or should be, broken”, but only in mild forms such as through questions, laughter, or reference to something external; enabling in a moment of meeting the “presence of two people experiencing one another outside of” and “unhidden by” their usual “professionally prescribed roles” (Stern et.al., 1998a: 912-5). Nonetheless, this partial freeing from the strictures of the transference relationship should not abrogate maintaining a “professional’ relationship” (Stern et.al., 1998a: 917; Morgan et.al., 1998: 327).

According to Stern (2004: xviii, 77, 125-31), “Two minds (or more) can interpenetrate and share roughly the same experiences”, through an overlapping in the shared moment of each person’s “phenomenal consciousness”:

You have your own experience plus the other’s experience of your experience as reflected in their eyes, body, tone of voice, and so on.
Indeed, an “intersubjective consciousness” can arise. However, if permeable, interpersonal boundaries will still remain clear, given awareness that the other’s experience accords with one’s own:

self-consciousness must also be operating so there is no confusion about who owns which phenomenal experience. The two experiences are intermingled but also separate.

This fits with Stern’s data earlier (section 4.2.2.a) that there may be an intense sharing of experience, but also a retained distinction between the parties.

(v) The Boston Group is interdisciplinary yet predominantly psychoanalytic, with a relational and intersubjective perspective, but also uses systems theory and cognitive elements in researching and formulating its developmental and therapeutic model (Stern, 2004; Fonagy 1998: 346-8). According to Beebe (1998: 333-5), the model’s centrepiece is Sander’s concept of a ‘moment of meeting’, formulated from observation of infant-mother sleep-wake feeding cycles, and influenced by Buber’s understanding of healing through meeting, and Winnicott’s description of the ‘sacred moment’ when a child becomes aware that another ‘knows’ what they ‘know’ within. Whether between caretaker and child or in therapeutic relationships, mutual recognition through moments of meeting is understood to facilitate healing, identity, agency, and self-regulation.

The relationship and moments of meeting are understood to be co-created, but the processes involved are conceptualised slightly differently, with Stern (et.al., 1998a) emphasising a ‘shared implicit relationship’, and Lyons-Ruth (et.al., 1998) ‘implicit relational knowing’ that intersects in an ‘intersubjective field’, moments of meeting altering them all. In particular,

• Tronick (et.al., 1998) suggests that patient and therapist create ‘dyadic states of consciousness’ that emerge from the mutual regulation of affect between them (as influenced by their procedural knowledge from past relationships). In a dyadic expansion of consciousness (a moment of meeting) each person’s state of consciousness becomes more inclusive and coherent by incorporating elements of the other’s state of consciousness. Old elements of consciousness are reconfigured into the new state of consciousness as past or present relationships are (re)experienced, resulting in new behaviours and experiences in the present and future.

Thus, out of the change with the therapist, a therapeutic change is assembled in the patient (p.298).
(vi) ‘Moments of meeting’ might therefore be interpreted as a change within the ‘shared implicit relationship’ or ‘intersubjective field’, or as a ‘dyadic expansion of consciousness’.

The nature of the change involved is distinguishable from Bateman and Holmes’ ideas (section 4.1.2) about the removal of resistance and lifting of repression, in that Stern (2004: 113-22) argues that ‘implicit knowing’ (which is changed through moments of meeting) is ‘nonconscious’, rather than being repressed, unconscious material needing to enter consciousness, even though present moments themselves enter consciousness. The change involved also has an experiential and relational rather than intellectual quality, in that interpretations alter “the intrapsychic landscape of the patient’s explicit knowledge”, but moments of meeting alter “the intersubjective landscape of the patient’s implicit relational knowing” (Stern et.al., 1998b: 307).

Additionally, ‘real’ and ‘transference’ relationships are again distinguished (although any dichotomy is qualified by the continued place assigned to transference (Fonagy 1998: 350-1; Morgan et.al., 1998)):

We will define the ‘real relationship’ as the intersubjective field constituted by the intersection of the patient’s and the therapist’s implicit relational knowing. This field extends beyond the transference-countertransference domain to include authentic personal engagement and reasonably accurate sensings of each person’s current ‘ways of being with’. (Lyons-Ruth et.al., 1998: 285.)

‘Moments of meeting’ occur in the ‘real relationship’ since “transference and countertransference aspects are at a minimum in a moment of meeting” (Stern et.al., 1998a: 915-7). This again suggests that deep moments reflect a present, authentic relationship, rather than transferential processes.

4.2.6 Transformations in ‘O’

Although some of the previous interpretations may, in some configurations, count as spiritual interpretations, the next two sections offer more explicit spiritual possibilities.

As an original thinker with a mystical quality (Grotstein, 1981/1983a; Sullivan, 2010), Bion analysed thought and feeling processes with the help of mathematical designations in order to avoid pre-assigned meanings (Sayers, 2003: 214-5). This included reference to ‘O’ (possibly from ‘ontos’, the Greek for ‘reality’: Symington, 2006: 79):
I shall use the sign O to denote that which is the ultimate reality represented by terms such as ultimate reality, absolute, truth, the godhead, the infinite, the thing-in-itself.

[O] can be known about, its presence can be recognized and felt, but it cannot be known. ... No psycho-analytic discovery is possible without recognition of its existence, at-one-ment with it and evolution. The religious mystics have probably approximated most closely to expression of experience of it. (Bion, 1970: 26, 30.)

Sullivan (2010: 41; also Schermer, 2003: 71) emphasises that ‘O’ is an open-ended, neutral term: “Bion never sounds as though he believes in God; he believes in O”. Grotstein (1981/1983a), Symington (1994/1998), and Eigen (1981), for example, have all been influenced by Bion, and have similarly identified spiritual and mystical aspects to psychoanalysis.

(i) Bion (1965, 1970) refers to therapeutic “transformations in O”, acute experiences of which may constitute indicators of deep moments (Sullivan (2010: 252-7) provides some possible examples). Furthermore, Grotstein (1997: 81) suggests that Bion:

began to realize the importance of the cosmic moment of intimate contact, not only with the patient in the immediacy of the clinical moment, but ultimately with himself experiencing the intimacy of that clinical moment, a phenomenon that he termed intuition, which designated his experience of ‘O’, that is, of ‘at-one-ment’, not only with the analysand, but quintessentially with his own experience of himself registering the impact of the analysand’s recounting of his/her experiences. This kind of transformation was new to psychoanalysis but not new to Eastern philosophy or to the philosophy of the mystics. What uniquely characterizes it is its transcendence of knowing (‘K”).

The therapist’s own experience of the moment is emphasised here, allowing sometimes for the listener, but not necessarily the talker, to notice or attribute greater significance to a deep moment. Grotstein also suggests the experience was new to psychoanalysis, which, if such experiences constitute moments of deep encounter, helps to explain the paucity of reported experiences in the psychodynamic approaches.

(ii) In addition to intra- and inter-personal elements, Rubin (2006: 150; likewise Schermer, 2003: 25) suggests that Bion’s theorising is compatible with spirituality, notwithstanding that he does not explicitly refer to it, given that he attempts “to depict and not reduce actuality”. This possible spiritual element has both ‘transpersonal’ and ‘intrapersonal’ locations, given Bion’s understanding of “the ubiquity of ‘O” and its ineffable location “inside us as well as around us” (Grotstein (1997: 83-4), who also suggests that ‘the
unconscious’ and ‘God’ are the same phenomenon seen from different vertices; likewise Sullivan (2010: 32, 66) notes ‘O’ s inner and outer qualities, yet links ‘O’ to Jung’s collective unconscious). The interpersonal, in the form of a close, psychoanalytic relationship, also offers a “pathway” for both partners into mystical experience (Symington & Symington, 1996: 178).

(iii) General and particular insights regarding deep-moment facilitation would include:-

- Like the maternal relationship, the analyst must ‘contain’ the patient’s projections and develop a ‘capacity for reverie’ (to ‘dream’ the emotional experience between the parties to make it available); paying attention to their own preconceptions and to what is occurring in the patient (as if “being in the presence of a mystery”); involving (the poet Keat’s) ‘negative capability’ that lacks ‘memory or desire’, tolerating what cannot be seen or sensed, and giving space to “thoughts awaiting someone or something to think them” (Sayers, 2003: 214-221, conveniently collating various Bion quotations). Sullivan (2010: 226-37) similarly refers to “not-knowing”, waiting, and ‘negative capability’.

- This is “preparatory to a state of mind in which O can evolve”, requiring the analyst to have “faith that there is an ultimate reality and truth” even if unknown, and to “focus his attention on O”, with which “the analyst cannot be identified: he must be it” (Bion, 1970: 27, 33):

  the therapeutic task is to open oneself to the O of the moment by being as fully present as possible (Sullivan, 2010: 244).

  This requires discipline (Symington & Symington, 1996: 121-3).

- Interpretations (and transformations in ‘K’) may precede or follow a transformation in O, but O’s involvement is more important than making something intellectually conscious, and ‘at-one-ment with O’ is ultimately essential for growth (Bion, 1970: 26-32; Sullivan, 2010: 244, 252-7).

(iv) (Bion’s insights concerning projective identification and their impact on personal-psychological/interpersonal boundaries have already been encompassed in section 4.2.4.)

The idea of ‘at-one-ment’ with ‘O’ suggests a loss of transpersonal boundaries, especially if conceived in metaphysical terms (Grotstein (1997: 87) argues that Bion rejoins psychoanalysis to metaphysical epistemology), although Bion (1970: 87) argues that this is not the same as mystically seeking oneness with a deity, because the “‘thing-in-itself’...can never be known” (however, is apophatic mysticism very different?). Grotstein (2004b: 86) therefore suggests the attempt to become one with ‘God’ is not about
identification, but “a transient dissolution of self-Other boundary, not unlike a mother and infant in reverie”.

(v) Bion’s Kleinian perspective was also influenced by Platonic, Kantian, Eastern and mystical thought, and was neither positivist nor religious (Grotstein, 1997; 2004a; Symington & Symington, 2006; Back, 2006: 11). Bion understood ‘O’ to be “the ultimate landscape of psychoanalysis”, and

a cosmic, ontological reality that is forever evolving and intersecting the emotional frontier of the individual as he/she contacts objects (internal or external). This intersection occurs in intimate human relationships (Grotstein, 2004a: 1081, 1096).

Sullivan (2010: 41, 65, 247) likewise emphasises the pervasive nature of O, which functions “in the analyst, in the patient and, most especially, between the two”, although the resultant change may be disturbing and not just pleasant.

Transformations in ‘O’ (involving “growth in becoming”) and ‘K’ (enabling the patient better to ‘know about’ themselves) can reinforce each other (Bion, 1965: 140, 156-63; Grotstein, 2000: xxx; Sullivan, 2010: 254), providing a double characteristic to the ‘penny-dropping’ feature of deep moments: new intellectual insight from ‘transformations in K’; new experiential insight from ‘transformations in O’.

(vi) Acute ‘transformations in O’, expressed in ‘cosmic moments of intimate contact’, may be another way of explaining moments of deep encounter, and their inclusion of a transpersonal aspect.

4.2.7 Psychospiritual paradigm

Schermer (2003: 26) offers a ‘psychospiritual paradigm’ to integrate a psychological model with spiritual principles.

(i) Schermer (2003: 104) refers to I-Thou meetings, including when:

for a moment, the patient and I saw God together. (Certainly, it would have been grandiose and sentimental for either of us to have viewed it that way at the time – we were just struggling to get somewhere with his treatment!) What I mean is that we formed a connection, a genuine relatedness that was missing or obscured before that juncture.
Additionally, Schermer (2003: 180, my highlighting) refers to

transcendent states of consciousness...that...are probably occurring intersubjectively when the therapist’s intuition is highly ‘in synch’ with the patient. ...Most therapists have had moments with patients where it is as if they are improvising music together.

(ii) Schermer (2003: 101, 182) stresses the interpersonal, not just the intrapersonal, by acknowledging relational and intersubjective perspectives, and affirms a spiritual aspect, the experience of “a felt presence of an Other”, which may be considered “our unconscious, our ‘double’, or God”.

(iii) Similar facilitative factors again emerge, but layered with a spiritual understanding:

- Schermer (2003: 199, 216) emphasises that patients have a spiritual need to be heard and responded to as a ‘Thou’ not an ‘It’ (i.e. recognised for who they are), and that empathy enables I-Thou meeting.

- Adopting Keats’ ‘negative capability’ and joining the patient in darkness, the analyst must temporarily exist in a ‘cloud of unknowing’ to grasp the hidden meaning within the patient’s mind, leading “both to catch glimpses of something Other” (Schermer, 2003: 129, 218-220; citing Bion).

- Watchfully waiting and reaching out for “new and unexpected possibilities to emerge from that Otherness” is likened to prayer or mystical listening, and involves therapist self-discipline akin to a selfless spiritual renunciation (Schermer, 2003: 182-7, 214f.).

Lowered transpersonal boundaries can lead to growth (see below).

(iv) Schermer (2003: 122-136) recognises the need for boundaries and separations, yet also that a desire for oneness is natural, involving lowered interpersonal and/or transpersonal boundaries. This “temporary dissolving” of boundaries echoes infant oneness, and, rather than being pathological, is essential for growth (a “dying” of self leading to rebirth in union), although, he also contrasts interpersonal merger (as an emotionally powerful but short-lived physical desire), with the lasting change resulting from spiritual union “with an Other who is all-encompassing and all-enveloping”. Thus he emphasises the value of lowered transpersonal boundaries, stressing that “spiritual union is not so much a loss of distinctiveness as it is a joyful interplay of self and other”.

116
Schermer (2003: 23-6) is widely influenced, but especially by Bion and Buber. Schermer’s own framework centres on development of a ‘psychospiritual self’, the self’s inner core that seeks union with the divine. Therapy becomes a ‘spiritual journey’ and ‘devout prayer’ when:

the participants meet in an ‘I-Thou’ relationship in the presence of an Other, with a sense that this Other constitutes the ultimate source, the ‘final cause’, the knowledge, and the outcome (Schermer, 2003: 183).

Schermer then makes some bold spiritual claims: since “God is in I and Thou meeting” and “immanent in all genuine ‘meetings’ among us”, a “felt presence of God” leads to profound change. Yet he also suggests that ‘God’ may be variously understood, and within and/or beyond the self (again, here influenced by Bion’s thinking) (Schermer, 2003: 17, 29, 69, 136, 161-5).

Schermer (2003: 105), also suggests that the ‘analytic third’ is

the felt presence of an additional subjectivity which incorporates but is beyond that of the patient and the therapist. This psychic presence may be sensed as a fateful movement in the treatment process, an atmosphere in the consulting room, or an uncanny feeling of ghostly presence. Although such experiences of a third are not necessarily identified as God-presence, I believe that they possess a similar structure in consciousness and have the potential to develop in the direction of mystical experience and spiritual awakening. Indeed Jung held that these presences are archetypal representations of the collective unconscious...The analytic third also serves as a type of supraordinate guide on the therapeutic journey...

Schermer (2003: 249) does not highlight projective identification, but suggests that the third consists of spiritual and ethical values, to which the parties look for guidance and support: “They open up to the unknown, the ineffable, the benevolent yet challenging Other”.

(vi) Moments of deep encounter would best be interpreted, from Schermer’s perspective, as ‘I-Thou meetings’. 
4.3 Analytical Psychology

4.3.1 Jung

Although once anointed by Freud as his successor, Jung assimilated his own concerns and principles to develop a related but distinct area of psychotherapy known as ‘Analytical Psychology’ (Wehr, 1985/2001).

(i) Again I concentrated on possible intersections of intra-, inter-, and trans-personal elements in Jung’s writings, but found a lack of clear indicators (possibly explained by his overriding intrapersonal emphasis – see (ii) below). Jung’s classic example of synchronicity (1952/1969: 437-8, 525-6), where a young woman recounted her dream regarding a golden scarab, only for Jung to be interrupted by a similar insect tapping on the window pane behind him, which led to therapeutic breakthrough, arguably includes all three aspects, so may be one form of a moment of deep encounter. Jung (1938/1969: 81) also refers to:

> a moment when long and fruitless struggles came to an end and a reign of peace began...They came to themselves, they could accept themselves, they were able to become reconciled to themselves, and thus were reconciled to adverse circumstances and events.

Jung goes onto to refer to having made “peace with” or submitted to “the will of God”. However, it is unclear whether a therapeutic or even interpersonal context is involved (i.e. whether peak experiences, or moments of deep encounter, are being indicated).

(ii) Jung understood therapy to be a dialectical, interpersonal process, so that, radically at the time, he faced his client rather than using a couch; however, despite this, “Jung’s emphasis is invariably on the intra-psychic life of the individual” (Stevens, 1994/2001: 120-3; Sayers 2003: 82). Consequently, Jung wrote relatively little about the analytic relationship itself, with ‘The Psychology of the Transference’ being his one significant work regarding it (Sullivan, 2010: 36, 211; Sedgwick 2001: 54).

However, a transpersonal element was also crucial, in two interrelated ways. Firstly, Jung understood ‘God’ to be central to human experience and therapeutic growth (Wehr, 1985/2001: 159, 292-4, 436, 457), although:

> Throughout his writings Jung repeatedly insists that he is not talking about God as absolute being since this is unknowable but rather is asserting the psychodynamic
experience and image of the numinous or divine and how this has been expressed by people in various God-images. (Simanowitz & Pearce, 2003: 118.)

Secondly, Jung conceptualises the collective unconscious as “the impersonal and transpersonal foundation of the psyche” (Palmer, 1997: 100). ‘God’ is conceptualised as an archetypal form within the collective unconscious (Palmer, 1997: 123), so the collective and the spiritual are connected to the individual psyche, providing a “link between our own lives and the inscrutable intentions of the great universe itself” (Stevens, 1994/2001: 157). Thus, like Bion, Jung stresses the necessity for an essentially unknowable or transcendent dimension within the analytic endeavour, a dimension that can and needs be experienced within a human relationship (Schwartz-Salant, 1991: 347).

Thus in terms of overall emphasis, whilst an ‘objective’ relationship is required for a person to individuate, the “introverted, individualistic and spiritual biases of Jungian Psychology are evident and undeniable” (Stevens, 1994/2001: 153-5); and, given his intrapersonal emphasis, even the dyadic, I/Thou, character of much religious experience and relations to ‘God’ are overlooked (Wulff, 1997: 468; Sayers, 2003: 4, 61).

(iii) Jung offers some general facilitative factors for the analyst, some of which echo those of others:

- the importance of the therapist accepting the patient (and themself, linking to Jung’s ‘wounded healer’ concept) and being authentically present (Jung, 1932/2001: 240; 1925/1954: 195; Sedgwick, 2001: 53, 73-5);

- giving up the quest for knowledge (which Schwartz-Salant (1991: 347) suggests, like Bion, is a central theme of Jung’s), and enduring the tension of opposites and withstanding the temptation to explain or reassure, whilst using dream analysis and ‘active imagination’ (Casement, 1996: 95-6; Jung, 1946/1966); and

- allowing therapeutic regression to allow new growth (Sedgwick, 2001: 64), and therefore working with and equally valuing conscious and unconscious material which, with the help of the analyst’s mediation and a “shuttling to and fro”, can be brought together through a ‘transcendent function’ acquired by the patient (Jung, 1916/1969).

Although again an indirect insight, Jung (1938/1969: 7) implies that spiritual experience is independent of will (the ‘numinosum’ – Jung uses Otto’s term - “seizes and controls the human subject, who is always rather its victim than its creator”), implying that (if
spiritually understood) moments of deep encounter happen, rather than being engineered.

(iv) Jung (1921/1971: 456-7; 1935/1977: 42; 1946/1966: 183; 1948/1968: 205) refers frequently to a ‘participation mystique’, a primitive process and transference relationship caused by projection, leading to ‘unconscious identity’ between the parties whereby the individual cannot clearly distinguish themself from the other, a ‘oneness’ at times within the whole subject-object relationship. It can represent a return to childhood or even the womb, and can be experienced interpersonally such as in marriage, or spiritually (Jung, 1925/1954: 192).

A lowering of transpersonal boundaries can also be understood, both because “the unconscious is greater than the individual ego and we do not know its boundaries” (Jones, 2002: 98), and because the spiritual quest for “cosmic connection” (Stevens, 1994/2001: 157) is accessed through the collective unconscious, which reveals that ‘God’ also exists within us (Sayers, 2003: 89).

Jung (1946/1966: 252) distinguishes ‘coniunctio’ (the union of opposites, within and between persons, and involving what could be understood as a spiritual quality – see further below), from ‘participation mystique’, since ‘coniunctio’ is “never an initial state: it is always the product of a process or the goal of endeavour”. However, it is comparable with ‘participation mystique’ in that it also involves “unconscious identity”. Both concepts might therefore apply to a merger within deep moments, although, if a deep moment is the product of the preceding therapeutic process, ‘coniunctio’ might be the more applicable term and concept.

At times a lowering of psychological and transpersonal boundaries led Jung to breach professional and ethical boundaries, as in his relationship with Sabina Spielrein.

In Jung’s case it was the spiritual affinity which fuelled his sexuality, not the other way about. ... It may have been Jung’s readiness to meet her at the deepest levels of his inner life that was the crucial factor that mobilised her own healing potential. (Field, 1996: 116.)

However, whilst creative and immensely deepening of understanding, the episode produced much pain and ethical concern (Field, 1996: 110-7).
Jung’s (1961/1998: 234) central goal is ‘individuation’, the development of the self. Since ‘God’ and ‘Self’ are empirically indistinguishable (Jung, 1954/1970: 546), Palmer (1997: 150-4) argues that individuation is also a religious process. An intra- rather than inter-personal process is involved, requiring attention to the individual’s relationship with various aspects of their own psyche; however, since the self is “God within”, by seeking unity and self-realization the individual becomes a means through which (quoting Jung) “God seeks his goal”, God being a guiding principle of unity within the depths of the individual psyche (Storr, 1986/1998: 20-5).

Jung (1938/1969: 86-8) understands ‘God’ as ‘found’ and ‘constructed’: we do not “create” but “choose” and characterise God, who is distinct from our projected images and “goes on working as before, like an unknown quantity in the depths of the psyche”. Rather than treating neuroses, the approach to the numinous is the real therapy and in as much as you attain to the numinous experiences you are released from the curse of pathology. (Jung, in a letter quoted by Wehr (1985/2001: 347).)

The transcendent function brings together conscious, unconscious, and the opposites within (Wehr, 1985/2001: 206, 251; Mendoza, 2004: 47), and is aided by regression and a transferential, intersubjective matrix (Palmer, 1997: 107-10; Carter, 2010: 218). Jung also employs principles from alchemy, which he relates to the projection of unconscious contents and archetypal forms, understanding ‘coniunctio’ as an unconscious union of opposites producing change and contributing to individuation (Jung, 1946/1966: 171, 321), although he similarly refers to the transcendent function producing “a living, third thing...that leads to a new level of being” (Jung, 1916/1969: 90). This offers another version of a therapeutic ‘third’. However, rather than creating a distinct or separate entity, the ‘third’ is the product of the ‘transcendent function’ and ‘coniunctio’, being an integration and transformation of the opposites and parties involved (see Sedgwick, 2001: 53). Finally, whilst transference is distinguished from real human relationship (Jacoby, 1984: 10), Jung (1928/1969: 353) indicates that discussing the transference may have an ‘I-Thou’ quality.

Jung himself interpreted the ‘scarab’ experience as an instance of synchronicity, but which he also implied in the context of therapy was rare. The other profound moments
referred to were raised in a discussion about mandalas and the centring of self that such symbols can represent, involving, as the relevant passage indicates, **self-reconciliation** and acceptance. His frame also emphasises psychodynamic, unconscious, and alchemical-type processes, which can be involved in the reconciliation and individuation of the self. The profound moments referred to (or moments of deep encounter in any event) may result from development of the **transcendent function**, perhaps involving **coniunctio** (or **participation mystique**) in moments of unconscious identity, with any spiritual aspect representing a **numinous experience**. Although these are extrapolated psychodynamic and spiritual interpretations, but they are coherent in terms of Jung’s wider framework.

Within this coagulation of contributing principles, Jung’s (1946/1966) work on ‘The Psychology of the Transference’, which utilised diagrams from the 16th Century alchemical text the ‘Rosarium Philosophorum’, offers a more acute, analogous way of explaining moments of deep encounter. Midway through Jung’s account of the Rosarium (and of “the criss-crossing” of the conscious and unconscious relationships between analyst and patient (Casement, 1996: 95)) occurs the **coniunctio**, the union of two figures (variously king/queen, brother/sister, sun/moon; representing analyst and patient), from which the accompanying woodcut (Jung, 1946/1966: 249) omits the picture of the dove that was previously present:

> In this union the Holy Ghost disappears as well, but to make up for that, Sol and Luna themselves become spirit (Jung, 1946/1966: 252).

In the Rosarium’s and Jung’s schema, there follows death, ascent of the soul, purification, and return of the soul.

> The ‘soul’ which is reunited with the body is the One born of the two, the ‘vinculum’ [Latin for bond/link/tie] common to both. It is therefore the very essence of relationship (Jung, 1946/1966: 295).

There follows new birth. Potentially my application telescopes these phases, but what strikes me is that, interpersonally in a moment of deep encounter, the spirit can be conceptualised as being absorbed by the parties, who themselves become spiritual, with the spiritual also becoming the essence of the relationship between them. Alternatively, applying the concepts intrapersonally to the patient, in their integration of projections and reconciliation of internal opposites, the patient likewise becomes spiritual, with the
spiritual relating their disparate parts together so as to enable individuation (Jung, 1946/1966: 236-8); “it is the spirit which unites”, and “which brings to life” (Jacoby, 1984: 107). Potentially this offers an interpretation that is psychodynamic and spiritual.

4.3.2 Post-Jungians
Samuels (1985: 19) uses the term ‘post-Jungian’ to emphasise both the connectedness to, and distance from Jung, of his followers. Samuels identifies classical, developmental, and archetypal schools, although in my briefer treatment I group these approaches together.

(i) Whilst deep-moments are not universally indicated (for example, Corbett (2006) and Clark (2012) discuss spiritual experiences brought into therapy, rather than those arising within therapy), I identified various indicators:

- **Carter** (2010: 218-24) refers to the Boston Group’s ‘moments of meeting’ and adds a Jungian spiritual understanding, referring to ‘moments of transcendence’ and to

  A **numinous moment** of dyadic expansion and sense of being surrounded by the self .... It was a **magical moment**. We were both wrapped in the dragon [the patient’s dream image]. ... paradoxes and polarities had been held in our interaction over many months of being together and the dragon represented something larger that held us both. We were in awe of the imaginal other co-created between us and emerging within her psychic conjunction of conscious and unconscious. We both were moved by an expansion within and between.

- **Field** (1996: 10, 70-80; 2004: 12-3) refers to a ‘fourth-dimensional state’ “characterised by stillness, silence and intense mutuality”, with “the conviction that healing is taking place”, although sometimes it may be the patient, not the therapist, who recognises its significance at the time (i.e., moments may be reported from the talker’s perspective, and not just the listener’s, or author’s). Such experiences may also be only brief and rare, but unforgettably they can resolve crisis, enhance being, and suggest a level of existence “incomparably more ‘real’ than our everyday experience”.


- **MacKenna** (2009: 176-80) refers to **significant moments** and **moments of connection**, when internal re-connection occurs generating high emotional intensity, often accompanied by numinous archetypal or ‘heightened spiritual’ imagery creating an aura of numinosity.
• **Schwartz-Salant** (1988: 44-54; 1989) refers to experiences of *coniunctio* as a here and now event, and to a **numinous moment** on discovery of an unconscious dynamic structure.

• Other indicators may include: **Mathew’s** (2003: 112-4) moment “on the verge of coniunctio”, and “pivotal moment”; **Redfearn’s** (2000: 178-9) healing, eternal moment; **Richardson’s** (2003: 160-2) “now happenings” and moments of merged ideas and understanding; and **Samuels’** (1989a: 81, 165-6) embodied countertransference, and mystical experience in the countertransference.

(ii) Jung’s emphasis on all three elements continues, with a continuing focus on the intrapersonal (Jones, 1991: 5); probably greater stress on a relational process (Christopher & Solomon 2003: 7; Sullivan, 2010: 1f.); and a sense of contact with something greater (Klein, 2003: 172-4), being both transpersonal and spiritual, since the ‘collective unconscious’ is understood to contribute to a ‘third’ or ‘field’ developed by the parties that is frequently characterised as ‘numinous’.

(iii) There is facilitative emphasis on:

• A personal **relationship** involving **acceptance** (“the only place from which change can begin”: Field (2004: 21), echoing Rogers) and respect; empathic and interpretive understanding; and unconscious and transferential processes (Sedgwick, 2001; Field, 2004: 11-21; MacKenna, 2009: 179; Jacoby, 1984: 91).

• Present awareness (likened to **spiritual practice**), and giving up any attempt analyse or cure (Field; 2003: 173-7) similar to Keats ‘negative capability’ (MacKenna, 2009: 178); which involves “**not knowing** beforehand so as to make a space between analyst and patient for something to emerge between them” (Schwartz-Salant, 1991: 367), and a quality of **waiting**:

• if I can find the courage simply to give myself up to the frozen emptiness, to suffer it through with the patient in silence, it somehow changes by itself (Field, 2004: 19; also 1996: 76).

• With active imagination and awareness of projective identification, **focusing on the ‘third area’** rather than a hastening to interpret it, experiencing the linking structures and enabling them to be transcended and the ‘interactive field’ to be transformed (Schwartz-Salant, 1988: 49-56; 1989: 200-2).

• A “profound recognition of the **numinosum**” is required (Schwartz-Salant, 1989: 201-2); being “attuned to that which comes to us from beyond—either the ‘beyond within’ or the ‘beyond without’”, yet not falling “under the spell” of a numinous, archetypal aura, **but still focusing on the patient** (MacKenna, 2009: 174-9).
Regarding boundaries, Pearson (2003: 281) argues that being submerged in a patient’s unconscious enables mutative processes between the parties. Redfearn (2000: 178-9) recognises that, even as an illusory fusion with an idealised self-object, **boundary loss** may facilitate communication, and, that

Moments when we feel at one with another person may even be experienced as healing, sublime, and in a sense eternal.

However, Redfearn emphasises that integration of the Self is also required, and not just “an autistic demand for oneness”.

Field (1996: 72) suggests that therapy “can **facilitate**” (rather than engineer) a ‘fourth-dimensional state’. Sedgwick (2001: 23) suggests that transcendent numinous experiences “are rare and Jungian psychotherapy cannot guarantee them”, being “acts of grace (or illusions), outside of psychotherapeutic intention”.

**(iv)** Professional/ethical boundaries and the frame are emphasised (Brown & Stobart, 2008; Sedgwick, 2001: 120f.), and the possible impact on them of a desire for fusion of personal boundaries (Schwartz-Salant, 1988: 44, 55), so that therapeutic fusion is not automatically helpful (MacKenna 2002: 335). However, lowered personal/psychological boundaries may be helpful. Although wary of neurotic countertransference, Samuels’ (1989a: 151f.) concept of ‘embodied countertransference’ entails a usable communication from patient to analyst, that involves a physical, sensual expression or incarnation of part of the patient’s psyche within the analyst (thus, I suggest, partly echoing ‘projective identification’).

Jung’s ‘participation mystique’ is also widely recognised (Brown & Stobart, 2008: 2; Christopher & Solomon, 2003: xvii, 7; Jacoby, 1984: 34), and linked to both infant experience and the possibility of new beginnings (Field, 2004: 11; Jacoby, 1984: 44), and to transpersonal possibilities (Jacoby, 1984: 50) and the ‘unio mystico’ (for Schwartz-Salant (1988: 55-6), a “state of union with the transcendent self”). Schwartz-Salant (1988: 51-3) suggestions that ‘coniunctio’ transcends the

alternating states of fusion and distance, the opposites whose painful conflict is usually denied and falsified by the deceptions of projective identification.
For Field (2004: 12; 1996: 10, 71-3), ‘fourth-dimension’ union experiences involve a powerful and indissoluble connection to others, and a simultaneous sense of our own separateness and uniqueness: a “simultaneous union and separation of self and other”.

(v) In their theoretical frameworks, many Post-Jungians link transference and projective identification to notions of a ‘third’ area, and include a transpersonal, frequently spiritual, element.

Following Corbin, Samuels (1989a: 161-93) conceptualises a ‘mundus imaginalis’ or imaginal world, which he likens to Winnicott’s illusory third area, save that in addition to the parties’ co-creating projective phantasies, the mundus imaginalis also involves pre-existing ‘psychic reality’ (i.e., it is both ‘constructed’ and ‘found’). Employing Jung’s “alchemical metaphor”, an “interpersonal coniunctio inspires and ignites the internal coniunctio”, with any accompanying mystical qualities being, for Samuels, a pluralistic “mysticism of persons”, rather than a “mysticism of the one true God”.

Schwartz-Salant (1988; 1989) also refers to a ‘mundus imaginalis’, to Winnicott’s transitional area, and to an ‘interactive field’ that is neither inside, outside, nor merely in-between the parties. The field involves individual and joint phantasies that involve a deepening of the dyadic level, but it is also part of a larger field involving the collective unconscious. Like the alchemical ‘Mercurius’, projective identification has defensive, trickster, but also revelatory, qualities, so that, if the parties’ and the field’s underlying transferential and linking structures (and central images of unconscious couples) can be uncovered, the transcendent function may emerge and ‘coniunctio’ occur, enabling the transformation of the third area’s perceptions and dynamics, involving a spiritual element:

When the numinosum incarnates, healing is nearby. ... Once the numinosum becomes part of the patient’s (normal-neurotic) functioning personality, we enter a phase in which the patient aligns with life and against death (Schwartz-Salant, 1989: 200).

Carter (2010: 218-9, 225) highlights the transcendent function as the central therapeutic process for effecting change, emerging from “the reflective function of the individuals and the dyad within a co-constructed field”; although Ulanov (1997: 128) also stresses a
transpersonal quality, suggesting that the transcendent function additionally brings into consciousness

the mysterious presence of what lies beyond and undergirds the whole analytical enterprise. As analysts we acknowledge dependence on a source of wisdom greater than our own and on all those who mediate it to us.

Likewise, Field (1996: 71-4; 2004: 18-21) suggests that healing results from

the inter-subjective field brought into being by the patient-therapist relationship. By this means we give access to some ever-present, mysterious agency that uses us as its instrument.....We can assist the healing power – whatever its source – by focusing our empathy, intelligence, skill, training, and experience to ensure that the maximum of light can pass through us.

Field also refers to “the numinosity of the therapeutic relationship”; to the ‘mundus imaginalis’ and to transitional space; and to transformational “fourth-dimensional” experience occurring in the therapeutic context (and not just when alone, as in ‘peak experiences’). (Silverstone (2005: 84-8), a psychoanalyst, links Field’s fourth dimension to her ‘moments of deep mutuality’, but dispenses with any spiritual element, arguing for two “equally effective ways” of considering the same material. She wondering whether a therapist’s framework may influence the experience: the “healing power, may be...a quality that resides in the therapist who contains this dimension as a system of belief”).

Numinous experience may heal but also disturb, and (like ‘God’-images) may arise from the collective unconscious and “transpersonal levels of the psyche”; whether such experience transmits an actual divinity or not, remains unprovable and ‘unknown’ (Corbett, 2006; Hubback, 1999: 91-2; Sullivan, 2010: 52; Stein, 2006: 47-9). If the numinous is part of the transpersonal, it is also part of the intrapersonal (“the spiritual becomes confirmed and amplified through the psychological” (Stein, 2006: 47)), and the interpersonal (the spiritual works in the relating to the other and “between the two, in the couple” (Sullivan, 2010: 65; Hubback, 1999)). Huskinson (2006) argues that Jung misread Otto: Otto pointed beyond numinous experience (which in itself cannot induce progressive change) to ‘the holy’ (experience of which develops the Self). MacKenna (2009) agrees, and (echoing Hobson’s ‘aloneness-togetherness’) argues:

the hallmark of the sacred...lies not so much in the experience of heightened numinosity, though this may sometimes be present, but in the capacity for a
certain quality of symbolic relatedness to self and other, which can accept the otherness of the other and so is able to live with separation, absence, loss (p.179).

(vi) Like Jung, the Post-Jungians offer psychodynamic and spiritual interpretative possibilities. Moments of deep encounter may be understood as expressions of the ‘transcendent function’, and/or ‘coniunctio’, occurring in a numinous field. For example:

- Carter (2010: 222) interprets her patient’s ‘dragon’ symbol as reflecting a conjunctive process leading to greater cohesion, and the ‘moment of meeting’ as a “significant element in an emergent transcendent process”.

- Field (2004) suggests a mysterious agency can use the inter-subjective field and therapist, enabling peak experiences in therapy.

- MacKenna (2009: 179-80) emphasises a relatedness to self and other that leads to moments of connection in which something is glimpsed and at least perhaps partly understood...epiphanies in which God, or the ‘sacred’, is fleetingly known.

- Schwartz-Salant (1988: 49, 54) refers to “a numinous moment [being] a here and now experience of the archetypal transference”, and to ‘coniunctio’ as (sometimes) a particular event.
Chapter 5: Thematic Findings for the Humanistic Approaches

This chapter presents the principal findings for various Humanistic approaches, similarly in the form of a Summary Table with subsequent commentary.
Table 5.1  Summary Table of principal findings from data identification and thematic analysis for Humanistic approaches

Key: ‘dm’ = deep moment(s); ‘mde’ = moment(s) of deep encounter; ‘P/E’ = professional/ethical boundaries; ‘P/P’ = personal/psychological boundaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROACH &amp; CATEGORY</th>
<th>(i) INDICATORS</th>
<th>(ii) ASPECTS</th>
<th>(iii) CAUSE &amp; FACILITATION</th>
<th>(iv) BOUNDARIES</th>
<th>(v) THEORETICAL FRAME</th>
<th>(vi) INTERPRETATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1 Person-Centred</td>
<td>mde - Flowing peak moments, moments of presence (Rogers); moments of relational depth (Mearns &amp; Cooper); moments of tenderness, &amp; fleeting, magic, or mystical moments (Thorne); etc.; researched from therapist and client perspectives</td>
<td>Interpersonal relationship emphasised; self-actualising intrapersonal; transpersonal often also indicated, interpreted spiritually (e.g. Thorne) &amp; non-spiritually (e.g. Mearns)</td>
<td>Rogers’ six conditions; acceptance; letting go, here &amp; now focus &amp; receptivity, powerlessly waiting; client response &amp; co-presence; spiritual discipline; risking partly reduced boundaries; some hints at engineer dm, but mostly only facilitate</td>
<td>P/E upheld, but frame and P/P boundaries lowered to achieve mde (although wariness re. fusion – i.e., wary of under &amp; over involvement); some claim joined &amp; separate; Thorne raises awkward questions about how far to risk P/E, but balance asserted</td>
<td>Self-actualisation through close intersubjective relationship; focus on I-Thou (or rather, Thou-I) relationship not transference (limited reparative/regressive hints); Thorne etc. include spiritual framework; Knox implies constructed.</td>
<td>mde as expression of intense relational &amp; therapeutic process (‘peak moment’, congruence, presence, rel’l depth, tenderness); some add spiritual element (sharing sacred space, enter/something larger/enters, swept into divine relsh’p); hints also at regressive or reparative explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROACH &amp; CATEGORY</td>
<td>(i) INDICATORS</td>
<td>(ii) ASPECTS</td>
<td>(iii) CAUSE &amp; FACILITATION</td>
<td>(iv) BOUNDARIES</td>
<td>(v) THEORETICAL FRAME</td>
<td>(vi) INTERPRETATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2 Existential</td>
<td>mde? - Deep I-Thou connections (Cooper), unifying I-Me relationships (van Deurzen-Smith); dm - melds &amp; moments of ‘ah hah’ resolution (Sterling &amp; Bugental), extraordinarily intimate moments (Yalom)</td>
<td>Intra- and inter-personal; some indicate a transpersonal aspect (without necessarily a religious meaning)</td>
<td>Relationship, being present, confirming otherness, staying with, pursuing truth, attentive in silence; boundary loss for meld; cannot make dm happen</td>
<td>Passing ref to P/E; loss of transp’l &amp; P/P boundaries for I-Me rel’shp; loss or P/P essential for meld &amp; not pathol. (tho’ reservations re fusion, &amp; ref to Buber re balance); meld phases may explain different boundary experiences</td>
<td>Existential + often phenomenological &amp; dialogical, e.g. both ultimate aloneness, &amp; importance of I-Thou; ambiguous re transference etc; hints at ‘constructed &amp; found’ quality</td>
<td>mde as deep I-Thou connection (Cooper), unifying I-Me relationship (van Deurzen-Smith), or meld experience &amp; moment of ‘ah hah’ resolution (Sterling &amp; Bugental)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3 Gestalt &amp; Dialogical</td>
<td>mde- I-Thou moments (Hycner, also L.Jacobs, Wheway); dm/mde? - peak spiritual experiences (Williams), ‘Aha’ experiences &amp; final contacts (Clarkson)</td>
<td>Intra- &amp; (increasingly emphasised) inter-personal aspects; some also identify a transpersonal, &amp; as connected to the interpersonal</td>
<td>‘Dialogical’ rel’shp, risk meeting, confirmation/inclusion, grace, presence, letting go, staying with, client opening, spiritual awareness; prepare for, but I-Thou &amp; presence beyond our control</td>
<td>P/E upheld; P/P loss in ‘confluence’ may be positive or pathological; I-Thou encounter involves simultaneous separateness &amp; relatedness</td>
<td>Awareness of relational field, phenomenology, I-Thou/dialogical emphasis; some psychodynamic &amp; transpersonal connections</td>
<td>mde as ‘ah ah’ completion of Gestalt cycle &amp;/or final contact; intense, culminating I-Thou moment; or as a peak spiritual experience during therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROACH &amp; CATEGORY</td>
<td>(i) INDICATORS</td>
<td>(ii) ASPECTS</td>
<td>(iii) CAUSE &amp; FACILITATION</td>
<td>(iv) BOUNDARIES</td>
<td>(v) THEORETICAL FRAME</td>
<td>(vi) INTERPRETATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.4 Experiential</td>
<td>dm/mde? - Significant moments of movement (sometimes patient alone notices), very good moments (Mahrer); acute felt shifts (Gendlin)</td>
<td>Predominant focus is intrapersonal; some interpersonal emphasis and transpersonal possibility (though non-spiritual)</td>
<td>Focusing, presence, waiting, respect, client risk opening up; Mahrer advocates going beyond empathy to lower P/P; facilitated rather than engineered</td>
<td>Degree of flexibility but P/E also upheld; Mahrer emphasises lowering P/P leading to fusion &amp; significant change</td>
<td>Humanistic but also eclectic, focus on exploring &amp; opening internal felt-sense; not all agree with Mahrer; differences re constructivist possibilities</td>
<td>mde as significant moments, which may include beneficial fusion or integrating contract (Mahrer), or felt-shift (Gendlin)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1.1 Person-Centred approaches
I begin with Rogers’ Client- or Person-Centred approach since it deeply influenced the Humanistic therapies as a whole (Haugh, 2008: 37; Thorne, 1992: 90-109), and I give it significant space to reflect the amount of relevant data, including several empirical studies.

(i) Earlier, I identified and discussed various indicators:

- Rogers’ “moments of movement”, moments of “full experiencing”, “flowing peak moments”; “effective moments”, “really helpful...rare moments”; and moments of “presence” – see subsection 1.3.2

- Mearns and Cooper’s “moments of relational depth”; “in-depth relational encounters”; “relationally deep encounters”; and “moments of intense contact” – see 1.3.3.

- Thorne’s healing, communicative moments; “moment of tenderness”, “fleeting moments” within a “quality of tenderness”; “moments...outside time and space”; “magic moments”; “intense and transformational moments”, “intensity of connectedness”, “mystical moments”, and being “fully” or “truly alive in the present moment” – see 3.2.2.

Like Thorne (see earlier), others discuss and often also connect presence, tenderness, and/or relational depth, whilst identifying:

- experiences of “deepest healing”, “reverence” and, in the silence, an “altered state of consciousness” (Hawkins, 2010: 35-7);

- “profound moments” reported by researched counsellors (experiences that Knox also connects to the ‘transpersonal’ experiences described by Rowan and Jacobs (2002)) (Knox, 2007: 326);

- moments of insight reported by clients of significant or meaningful moments of intense connection within the therapeutic relationship (McMillan & McLeod, 2005: 286);

- in encounter groups, moments of deep connection with one other, of feeling connected to a beyond, to a reality greater than our group (Prüller-Jagenteufel, 2006: 120);

- “rare occasions” of
spiritual presence or ‘presence’ proper with its characteristic of being in a qualitatively different state of consciousness (Schudel, 2006: 133);

- Powerful experiences of transformation “like the flicking of a switch”, resulting from acceptance of the unacceptable (Wilkins, 2000: 34)

- “particular moments” (Worsley, 2000).

As noted with other approaches, the acuteness of these moments may vary. For example, Cooper’s (2005) research appears to refer to broader and more general moments than the rarer and more intense examples cited by Schudel. Again, my sense would be that some at least of these indicators would qualify as ‘moments of deep encounter’. Also, whilst Leonardi (2010: 69) notes that recent Person-Centred developments have focused on the issues of presence and relational depth, a distinction needs to be drawn between presence, tenderness, and/or relational depth as underlying (albeit profound) relational qualities, and/or focusing on the expression of these qualities in particular moments. This distinction was apparent in the original accounts: Rogers refers to “another characteristic...my presence”, being expressed “At those moments...”; Thorne’s ‘fleeting moments’ expressed his wider quality of ‘tenderness’; Mearns and Cooper (2005: xii, their italics; Mearns, 1996: 308)) explain that ‘relational depth’ relates:

both to specific moments of encounter and also to a particular quality of a relationship...an enduring sense of contact and interconnection between two people. ...there will be many moments of relational depth, but there are also likely to be times when there are less intense moments of contact.

Schmid (1998b: 75) similarly distinguishes between ‘relationship’ and ‘encounter’, suggesting that:

Relationship...can be understood as facilitating encounter as well as resulting from encounter.

At one level the distinction has limited significance: qualities can only be expressed from moment to moment (and Wiggins (et.al., 2010: 150) concludes that relational depth is “more a short-lived event than an enduring experience”); however, the distinction is pertinent later when discussing facilitation.

Regarding perspective, Greenberg & Geller (2002, 2010) have researched ‘presence’ from the therapist’s and then from both parties’ perspectives; Cooper (2005) and Knox (2007)
have researched relational depth from the therapist’s perspective; McMillan & McLeod (2006), Knox (2008), and Knox & Cooper (2010) from the client’s; and Mearns (1996: 307-9), and Wiggins et.al. (2012) from both. Some differences are reported. Mearns and Cooper (2005: xii) emphasise that “each person is fully real with the Other”, and Knox and Cooper’s (2010: 253) found that clients did identify a level of mutuality. However, McMillan and McLeod (2006: 289) suggest that a sense of ‘I-Thou’ contact is less significant for clients, since the

focus of attention at such moments was the [client’s] self, with awareness of the therapist remaining very much in the background of their consciousness. In fact, too much awareness of the therapist was viewed by clients as an impediment to self-exploration. As a result, the concept of mutuality (“each person [being] fully real with the Other”), which is given substantial emphasis in therapist-based accounts of relational depth, was quite absent in the client version

I am not sure that there is such a dichotomy here. In my own deep-moment experiences as listener and talker, the focus has usually been on the crystallising intrapersonal experience for the talker’s self, and thus I agree with McMillan and McLeod’s emphasis on the client’s self, yet this occurs within a facilitating, holding interpersonal relationship that can display an ‘I-Thou’ quality (and sometimes also a transpersonal quality). Since McMillan and McLeod’s research affirms clients’ awareness of the therapists being present in the background and appreciation of being able to focus on themselves, I query whether McMillan and McLeod are over claiming an absence of each person being “fully real with the Other”. Rather, sometimes the focus may be on the client’s intrapersonal end of the experience (requiring more of a ‘Thou-I’ attitude – see (v) below), sometimes more on the interpersonal I-Thou type quality (which McMillan and McLeod do acknowledge as clients reporting, albeit much more rarely); or these may be two types within a larger class of experiences.

Notwithstanding differing intra-/inter-personal emphases, more generally McMillan and McLeod (2006: 289) illustrate that deep moments are also experienced from the client’s perspective. Knox (2008: 188) also notes differences between client and therapist perspectives, but similarly concludes that:

not only do some clients experience moments of relational depth with their therapists, they may also perceive those experiences to be highly significant moments in therapy, with an enduring positive effect.
Knox therefore also indicates the beneficial role ascribed to deep moments, a conclusion shared by others. For example, Mearns and Cooper (2005: xi) argue that relational depth represents “the heart of a healing relationship” and “the essence of what therapy is all about”, the benefits enduring beyond therapy (as Knox implies) or more immediately assisting the therapeutic process itself, as clients learn to trust the intense moments and the “greater depth offered through them” (Mearns & Cooper, 2005: 52-3; Wiggins et.al., 2012: 150).

(ii) Notwithstanding an intrapersonal stress on individual autonomy and self-actualisation, Rogers’ (1957: 96) understanding that “significant positive personality change does not occur except in a relationship” makes the Person-Centred approach “an interpersonal theory” (van Kalmthout, 1998: 56-7). For Mearns and Thorne (2000: 85), “the relationship is the therapy”, with the emphasis on it increasing (according to Keys and Proctor (2007: 359)).

As noted in sections 1.3.3 and 3.2.2, Rogers (later in life), Thorne, and arguably Mearns and Cooper, all indicate a transpersonal aspect, but whilst Rogers and Thorne refer to a spiritual dimension, Mearns and Cooper explain relational depth in interpersonal terms as “fundamentally dyadic”. Having reviewed the data in the various accounts and research studies, my impression is that whilst sometimes only intra- and inter-personal elements were indicated, often a transpersonal element is also indicated. Again, sometimes spiritual terms are not used: for example, in McMillan and McLeod (2005: 286), clients report an altered awareness of time, reality and boundaries that is difficult to describe yet without making spiritual allusions; whilst sometimes spiritual characterisations are employed: for example, Wiggins, Elliott and (notably) Cooper’s (2012: 150) quantitative internet-based survey of “relational depth events” (with 342 responses) concluded that:

relational depth is composed of a number of possible elements, especially those associated with deep relational experiences such as love, connectedness and respect. In addition, experiences of transcendence appear to constitute a specific component of relational depth, labelled by informants as ‘spiritual’ and ‘magical’. This implies that relational depth can include experiences that go beyond everyday therapeutic encounters.

(iii) The Person-Centred therapeutic approach highlights Rogers’ (1957) six interconnected “necessary and sufficient conditions” for therapeutic personality change, the ‘core conditions’ being acceptance, empathy and genuineness (or ‘congruence’).
(Haugh and Paul (2008: 19, 248) claim that these “are important factors in the success of all approaches”; although Mahrer (2007) illustrates that they are not universally accepted as being “necessary and sufficient”.) These conditions cultivate a non-directive, non-expert, ‘growth-promoting climate’ that respects a client’s ‘self-actualising tendency’ and ability to know best how to move forward (Rogers, 1942: 33, 126-8, 270; etc.; Mearns & Thorne, 1988: 83; Haugh, 2008: 43). However, as noted, Rogers (1990c: 137) also suggested: “simply my presence is releasing and helpful”, and that:

Perhaps it is something round the edges of those conditions that is really the most important element of therapy – when my self is very clearly, obviously present (quoted in Thorne, 2002: 55).

Whether presence was a late additional or an overarching condition has been debated. Generally, the latter view seems to have prevailed, presence being perceived as a culminating integration of Rogers’ conditions (Wilkins, 1999: 68-74); or as a necessary precondition for their expression, yet overarching and going beyond them (Geller & Greenberg, 2002: 83-5; 2010: 600-7). Similarly, relational depth is understood to combine and express to a high degree all of Rogers’ six conditions (Mearns, 1994: 7; 1996: 308; 2010: 86; Mearns & Cooper, 2005: 35-7; Cooper, 2005: 94). Prüller-Jagenteufel (2006: 120), Schmid (1998b: 85), Wiggins (et.al., 2012: 150) make similar points. Altogether, it suggests that deep moments may represent, or result from, a heightened application of more general therapeutic qualities.

Specific factors for facilitating presence, tenderness, and/or relational depth, especially in their deep-moment expressions, are also suggested, the following being a sample:

- When discussing effective therapeutic moments, inter alia Rogers emphasises acceptance (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990b: 48); involving accepting the client in their difference in that moment (also requiring therapist self-acceptance), which paradoxically leads to change (Rogers, 1961/1967: 19-22; 1967: 24; 1980: 105; 1990c: 136). Wilkins (2000) endorses acceptance and the communication of unconditional positive regard as the key condition, notably leading directly to the moments he describes.

- Mearns and Cooper (2005: 35-45, 113-35; Mearns, 1994: 5-8; 1996: 307; Cooper, 2008a: 94-5) going beyond surface relational competencies; respecting the client’s ‘Otherness’; being internally ‘still’ and not afraid, letting go of aims, expectations and techniques, and working in the here and now; and that clients must also be willing to share be known, and receive (which they describe as ‘co-presence’).
• Thorne (1991/2000: 81, 156-7, 162-5; 1998: 46-54; 2002: 104) characterises the Person-Centred approach as ‘loving’ the client, with both parties’ trust necessary to risk tenderness (with potential boundary implications – see (iv) below), with congruence increasing presence (see also McLeod, 2003a: 174-7), whilst accepting powerlessness in order to wait without hope or despair, yet acknowledging “the infinite resources by which we are surrounded”.

• Additionally Thorne (1987: 75-76; see also 1994; 1996, 14; 1998: 86-9; 2002: 37-46, 76, 83-5; likewise van Kalmthout (2006), Worsley (2009: 185)) calls for a “spiritual discipline” enabling therapists to prepare for and create a climate where both they and their clients can be fully open to the mysterious power in which they share but which is greater than they.

This discipline includes putting oneself “in the presence of God”, and engaging in periodic “focused holding of the absent client” when apart (Mearns and Cooper (2005, xii) also refer to holding the other in mind, but for Thorne it includes prayer).

• McMillan & McLeod’s (2005) research suggests a safe, unobtrusive therapist style, likened to good or ideal mothering, is required, and that clients must be willing to “let go” and enter an enduring relationship with the therapist; Cox (2007: 221) likewise emphasises the reciprocal nature of relational depth, and Geller and Greenberg (2010: 608) that clients need to be open to the therapist’s presence.

• Geller and Greenberg’s (2002) refer to preparation for and the process and experience of presence, requiring (inter alia) transparent meeting, involving being openness, full attention to the client’s process and what is occurring between them, and “moment by moment receptivity” in a gentle, intuitive “being with and for the client”, “physically, emotionally, cognitively and spiritually”.

(When referring to the last reference, Mearns & Cooper (2005: 38) change, without acknowledging it, ‘spiritual’ to ‘visceral’, reflecting presumably their preferred theoretical frame!)

• Knox and Cooper’s (2010) research endorsed client experience of therapists as being trustworthy, real, and genuinely caring and desiring to understand (with therapists being distant, powerful, interpreting, misunderstanding, or saying but not really meaning the right words, in relationships lacking moments of relational depth) (findings which corresponded with McMillan and McLeod (2006)).

• Wiggins’s (et.al., 2012: 152, etc.) research found that relational depth events were not related to therapy duration but occurred more frequently with a strong therapeutic alliance and with female participants, and that connectedness, love (in the Greek sense of ‘philia’ or even ‘agape’), respect and intimacy were frequently involved, meaning that therapists may need to be open to experiencing intimacy, love and possibly even transcendence.
Regarding being facilitated or engineered, West (2004: 64-5; 2007a: 107) suggests that Geller and Greenberg claim that “healing moments...can in fact be taught to experienced therapists”, implying they can be engineered. However, the distinction between ‘presence’ as an underlying quality, and its expression in particular moments, is pertinent. So, whilst Geller and Greenberg refer to “training in” and “cultivation of presence” (2010: 601-8), they are generally referring to presence as a quality or stance:

Therapists’ presence can be viewed as the condition of being fully receptive in the moment, and in immediate contact with the other’s inner experience, which then allows the relationship conditions to emerge and be expressed. (2002: 84)

Therapists’ presence is understood as the ultimate state of moment-by-moment receptivity and deep relational contact (2002: 85).

Therapeutic presence is an internal and relational therapeutic stance (2010: 601)

Accordingly, I do not read them as explicitly claiming that presence can be taught so as to manufacture ‘presence’ in the form of moments of deep encounter. Rather, cultivating ‘presence’ as a quality or stance may facilitate and enhance the prospects of moments of deep presence periodically occurring.

Mearns and Cooper (2005: 53, 96, 113) offer a similar ambiguity, by suggesting that the parties’ shared commitment to the relationship and working at depth enables

a confidence that the Thou-I encounter is achievable at will and welcomed by both.

Since this occurs in a section on ‘Relational depth as a continuing relationship’ it may imply that a quality rather than particular moments are being referred to, but then later they suggest

in the developed and continuing relational depth, the moments can equally be initiated by the client

which more clearly implies that such moments can be engineered (although it is unclear whether significant or more minor deep moments may be involved). However, they later qualify this by asserting that therapists can try to “facilitate” relational depth, but cannot “create” it, since it requires both parties, and cannot be aimed for (which would be to impose a desire on the other, negating a genuine meeting with them). Similarly Cooper (2008a: 97-8) observes:
counsellors cannot make such a meeting happen, partly because it requires two people, and partly because it is the kind of phenomenon that seems to be chased away the more it is chased after.

Others are less ambiguous that deep moments may be facilitated but not engineered: Rogers (1990c: 137) suggested that there was nothing he could do “to force this experience”; Thorne (1998: 87; 1987: 76) agrees, and argues theologically:

grace cannot be commanded to come down but at least we can do our bit to ensure that we are in a state of readiness for its arrival.

(iv) Two interconnected tensions emerge in the Person-Centred approach to boundaries, firstly between personal/psychological merger and separateness. Lowered personal/psychological boundaries are reported by Rogers (1990c: 138-52): “indwelling in the client’s world” involving “a mutual and reciprocal state of consciousness”; Thorne (1991/2000: 78; etc.): “We are truly members one of another”; Mearns (1994: 8; 1996: 307): “right inside me”; Geller and Greenberg (2002: 78-9): ”extending...one’s boundaries”; Mearns and Cooper: (2005: 46): “interpenetration”; McMillan and McLeod (2005: 286) “it was shared identity...she became like...part of me”. (Rogers (1990c: 137-8), Thorne (2002: 51, 88), and Geller and Greenberg (2002: 78) also possibly imply lowered transpersonal boundaries, without developing this.)

Mearns and Cooper (2005: 46, 94) explain the lowered boundaries by citing Stern’s (2004) “shared or ‘intersubjective’ consciousness” causing two people briefly to “traverse the same ‘feeling-landscape’”, and Buber (1923/1958: 22), suggesting that:

The therapist is so alongside the client that the client is not aware of him as a separate, independent existence. As Buber puts it: “I do not experience the man to whom I say Thou. But I take my stand in relation to him, in the sanctity of the primary word. Only when I step out of it do I experience him once more”.

I.e., one is so close to the other in the deep moment that one does not notice their separateness, but, when stepping back from it, boundaries become clear again. Thorne (2002: 59) similarly implies that, whilst lowered boundaries may be necessary to be fully present, boundary loss should not be permanent; whilst Rogers (1990d: 238-52) also implies a return to (or the better establishment of) clear boundaries, since a positive therapeutic outcome includes a more accurate perception of self and others.
Accordingly, Schmid (1998b: 84) recognises “a continuous and fertile tension of unity without fusion”, which he suggests involves “plurality...and...unity”. Rogers (1990c: 137-8) implicitly supports an understanding that unity and separateness may co-exist in moments of deep encounter, recording a group participant’s report that:

I felt the oneness of spirit in the community…I felt its presence without the usual barricades of ‘me-ness’ or ‘you-ness’...And yet with that extraordinary sense of oneness, the separateness of each person present has never been more clearly preserved.

The tension between separateness and merger is intertwined with a second tension, between the **beneficial effects both of lowered personal/psychological boundaries, and of professional/ethical boundaries**.


> Our notions of boundaries, proprieties and professionalism are challenged if we are really serious about the concept of meeting our client at relational depth. (Mearns & Thorne, 2000: 143.)

Mearns and Cooper (2005: 58, 72) challenge a tyranny of “norms” around boundaries (especially in the psychoanalytic approach), and argue that:

To fully encounter a client in an in-depth way means letting go of our agenda and being with him, in whichever way he is and in whatever direction he wants to go.

Mearns and Cooper (2005: 50, their italics; also 54-62, 124-36) recognise that whilst relational depth can be risky for the client, but paradoxically it:

> gives the client a *sense of safety* that far exceeds the norm for therapeutic relationships. Through that sense of safety they can begin to explore aspects of their self that are, for them, the most profound, aspects that they can rarely face themselves and would *never* share.

Thorne (2002: 9-30; 1991/2000: 77, 165) similarly suggests that, trusting the client’s self actualising tendency and accompanying them into “the mysterious unknown”, requires
counsellor and client to trust the moment and risk “being fully alive”; but it has boundary implications:

a boundary – especially a rigidly prescribed one – speaks of a ‘so far but no further’ mentality. It suggests an unwillingness to venture into unknown terrain, the unexplored ‘no-man’s land’ where almost inevitably those who have suffered most need to venture if they are to face the depths of their pain and their terror. The therapist who is prepared to be a companion in such terrain must sometimes move across a boundary courageously or risk leaving the client stranded in a place of fear to which is then added the desolation of abandonment. (2002: 20.)

This raises questions about how far boundaries might be stretched, risked or broken. Thorne’s (1987) notorious ‘Sally’ case study included moments of deep encounter (‘healing, communicative moments describable as a “breakthrough into the transcendental” (p.76)), but also involved engaging with the client in a naked embrace. Thorne (1987; 1998: 47-8, 81-5) insists they were not engaging in sexual activity, and that the action followed from engagement with their therapeutic journey, helping to heal and integrate the issues involved; although “fraught with danger”, they revealed their trustworthiness to themselves and each other, which was central to the client’s transformation. For Thorne, therefore, professional and ethical principles were not breached, although most would strongly disagree (as recognised by Hawkins (2010: 30), West (2000: 69), and Tebbutt (2008: 69-74), where I discuss the case more fully).

Nevertheless, whilst regarding the Sally case Hawkins (2010: 28-37) sits “well and truly on the fence”, she asks: “Do we have the courage to be fully present, utterly and authentically ourselves?”, acknowledging that in her own therapy “the deepest healing has happened when my therapist has taken risks”, and similarly in her own practice recognising that:

To be a companion who is alive in the process of healing, we have to live, we have to be alive to living and have the courage to make mistakes. The times when I have found myself going to the edge have been those where something greater than my client and I seems present. Something has changed in the space between us and we are transported into another realm where there is nothing to do than follow the flow and trust in the process. Those are the times when the deepest healing seems to take place.

Having researched therapist risk-taking, Knox (2007) finds that risk can indeed deepen and move a relationship forward. However, her illustrations suggests that more limited, potentially ‘appropriate’, rather than ‘severe’, risk-taking seems to have been involved
(although any degree of risk-taking inevitably ‘risks’ an unforeseeable impact). Moreover, notwithstanding their advocacy of being fully present and risking relational depth, Thorne, Rogers, Mearns and Cooper all stress the dangers of weak professional/ethical and/or merged personal boundaries.

Thorne (1998: 51-9, 107-8; 2002: 20, 65-73; Mearns & Thorne, 2000: ix) acknowledges the dangers of sexual and physical abuse, and the need for appropriate ethical and professional boundaries (and his own national role in developing them), and is alert to the danger of merger, which he explicitly links to sexuality. Hence he argues against a “fusion or the falling in love that leads to all kinds of sexual complications”, arguing it did not occur with Sally, since it:-

would have meant a collapse of the boundaries between us and a loss of the separateness which is crucial for maintaining and enhancing the autonomy of the individual. Love which is expressed in ‘the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth’ cannot permit such fusion if it is to remain true to its nature. (1987: 75)

Rogers (1942: 95-108, 234; 1973a: 35; 1990a: 121; 1990b: 133) recognises the value of “limits” in counselling, and is wary of merger, enquiring “Can I be strong enough as a person to be separate from the other?”. Notwithstanding affirming flexibility regarding the therapeutic frame, Mearns (1994: 10-1; Mearns & Cooper, 2005: 38-58) warns against ‘over involvement’ and asserts the importance of a “‘holding’ therapeutic context” in which “the client’s Otherness” is respected, requiring therapists not to “fuse or merge with their clients”. Cooper (2008a: 100) stresses making the relationship as ‘safe’ as possible, including by “maintaining appropriate boundaries”, to help clients trust their counsellor and enable them to open themselves in encounter.

Thus presence or relational depth sometimes requires a flexibility and relaxing of boundaries to help trust and healing, yet great self-awareness and appropriate professional and ethical boundaries are also necessary to facilitate safety and trust, and therefore healing. The Sally case study powerfully interrogates where the balance should be struck. Broadly, however, the Person-Centred approach seeks to hold the tension between adapting to the client’s needs and achieving therapeutic intimacy, but within appropriate professional and ethical boundaries (Keys & Proctor, 2007: 360-3; Wilkins, 1999: 74; Worsley, 2007: 347-9).
(v) As indicated, the Person-Centred approach aims for a “very close and intimate relationship” to facilitate the client’s actualising tendency: therapists enter into an intensely personal and subjective relationship with the client...without knowing cognitively where it will lead, satisfied with providing a climate which will permit the client the utmost freedom to become himself (Rogers, 1961/1967: 184-5).

Rogers’ ‘modern’ perspective perceived individuals as separate entities interacting with others rather like billiard balls, but his central relational emphasis has continued, and now attracts a more contemporary intersubjective understanding, that conceptualises both the ‘self’ and the Person-Centred approach in dialogical terms (Mearns & Cooper, 2005: xiii, 1-15; Mearns & Thorne, 2000: 172-89; Schmid, 1998a: 45-6). This relational emphasis connects also with more relationally oriented Psychodynamic and CBT approaches, although Cooper (2008a: 100-1) emphasises that relational depth “comes primarily from a person-centred background”.

Rogers’ ‘here and now’ relational emphasis meant that he was hostile towards the psychodynamic emphasis on transference, viewing it as “preventing true relationship and...defending the therapist against real involvement” (Thorne, 2002: 56). Rogers (1990b; Owen, 1999: 169-71; Clarkson 2003: 74) still recognised the possibility of transference, but found that acceptance of the underlying feelings tended to dissolve transfential attitudes, so he did not focus on it. Similarly, Thorne does not pursue transferential possibilities where a psychodynamic therapist might (see his ‘Emma’ case study where he does not focus on the client’s saying “just now you were my father” (2002: 74, 84)). Nor does he pursue regressive possibilities, notwithstanding:

My hunch is that, with some of my clients, it is in a moment of tenderness that I am able to extend to them that welcome to the world which they never received at birth (Thorne 1991/2000: 79; and the Sally case study: 1987: 66-72).

Mearns and Cooper (2005: 1-2, 16-34, 46-8; Cooper, 2008a: 96-7) understand relational depth as able to heal psychological distress from earlier relational damage, including offering a reparative role in connection with childhood experience, however they do not develop this potential childhood link, and stress that relational depth does not involve “a dependency relationship in any shape or form”. Mearns and Cooper (53, 142) also assert “there are absolutely no transference phenomena” (which belong to a “much more superficial level of relating where people are still being symbols for each other”) in either
moments of intense contact or a continuing quality of relational depth; nor are there any projective identifications (likewise, Mearns and Schmid, 2006: 263-4).


As noted, unlike Mearns and Cooper, the later Rogers and especially Thorne incorporate a spiritual dimension into their theoretical perspective. Thorne acknowledges that spiritual phenomena may be understood in psychological terms (1998: 44-5), but his Christian faith (1991/2000, 19-22; etc.) leads him to view counselling as a powerful, mystical process (1998; 2002), in which the therapist can become part of the divine activity, powerfully connected to forces for good, an agent for healing, and even, he suggests, an “initiator of the mystical awareness which can bring about transformation” (2002: 65, 82). The therapeutic relationship then becomes “the ultimate I-Thou encounter where the liberating mystery of being is experienced”, “where spirit touches spirit and where ‘something larger’ is experienced”, consequently becoming “fully alive in the moment” and “swept up into eternity” (2002: 7, 63, 80).

Prüller-Jagenteufel (2006), van Kalmthout (2006), and Leijssen (2010) also have spiritual elements in their frameworks. However, from an agnostic perspective, Knox (2007: 326-7) considers whether in “surrendering themselves to something larger, as is often described”, the parties may have “created something larger between them, then surrendered themselves to it”. More generally, Cox (2009: 217) acknowledges that the parties may co-create the intersubjectivity involved in relational depth.

(vi) Any person-centred interpretation would interpret deep moments as **intense expressions of broader relational qualities and therapeutic processes** (e.g. Rogers’ “When I am at my best”, or Mearns and Cooper’s “moments of relational depth”).
More precise explanations within this principle may also be postulated and applicable. For example, Rogers (1961/1967: 148-51) suggests that a client’s “incongruence between experience and awareness [may be] vividly experienced as it disappears into congruence”, so that “the client feels cut loose from his previously stabilized framework”, often wondering “what has ‘hit him’”; however, this “moment of full experiencing becomes a clear and definite referent”, and a crucial point in the process (the sixth of, for Rogers, seven stages in the therapeutic process), being “moments [that] are in some sense irreversible”. Rogers (1961/1967: 156-8) then summarises the strands involved in the whole therapeutic process, suggesting that in

the flowing peak moments of therapy...all these threads become inseparably woven together. In the new experiencing with immediacy which occurs at such moments, feeling and cognition interpenetrate, self is subjectively present in the experience, volition is simply the subjective following of a harmonious balance of organismic direction...the person becomes a unity of flow...an integrated process of changiness.

Whether as a ‘penny-dropping’ experience of incongruence turning into congruence, or as a culminating ‘peak moment’ of the therapeutic process as a whole, these are possible deep-moment relational interpretations.

As noted, Mearns and Cooper consider that a relational interpretation is all that is required (although the relationship may also have a reparative function), notwithstanding that they include (according to my construction) a transpersonal aspect in their account. Others, however, acknowledge a transpersonal or spiritual element, that contributes to explaining moments of deep encounter.

- Rogers (1990c: 137) suggests that ‘presence’ involves becoming “part of something larger”, so that profound “growth and healing and energy are present”.

- Geller and Greenberg (2002: 78) report therapists recording “an extrasensory level of communication” between the parties “when in presence”, involving “an expanded or altered state of consciousness” and “merging”, described and therefore potentially explained as:
  - “sharing sacred space”;
  - an “empathic resonance with a place that she wasn’t even expressing”;
feeling like a “vessel of information...this is esoteric language, sort of moving through me and connecting to me”, and feeling connected to a “larger sphere of something”.

- Thorne (2002: 45-6; 1994; 1996: 14-5) refers to being “fully present where ‘something larger’ enters in and potent healing forces are released”, of thus being “swept up into the divine relationship” and, for a fleeting moment, being “whole and holy, fully human and therefore the incarnation of the divine”.

Additionally, Thorne (2002: 50-1) understands relationship as necessary for growth, including when through experiencing aloneness; whilst Thorne’s (1987: 66-72; 1998: 82) Sally case study also includes a regressive element by referring to pre-natal/inter-uterine work, thus offering earlier life interpretive possibilities alongside his relational and spiritual explanations.

5.1.2 Existential approaches

Although Existential counsellors may be relatively few in number, existential insights have had a much wider impact (McLeod, 2003a: 271). There are various branches of Existential psychotherapy (Cooper, 2003), but there were no compelling reasons in this research to distinguish between them.

(i) A number of deep moments are indicated. Firstly, the ‘I-You encounter’ is “a major therapeutic modality” for Existential psychotherapy (Clarkson, 1990: 156), with the I-Thou relationship and moments of face-to-face meeting enabling mutuality and self-awareness to develop (Frie, 2003b: 148-155, citing Binswanger). Within this, Cooper (2003: 20, 103) suggests that there is potential for “moments of deep I-Thou connection”. Cooper illustrates this by referring to Laing’s silent, breakthrough encounter with a young client, noting that:

Laing believed that the decisive moments in therapy were often the ones that were unpredictable, unique, unforgettable, always unrepeatable and often indescribable – moments of I-thou encounter, which as Buber (1923/1958) states, cannot be ordered or planned.

Secondly, van Deurzen-Smith (1988: 207-9) suggests that, in addition to I-It and I–You modes of relating within Existential therapy, a third ‘I-Me’ level is possible, involving:

the perfect merging of two beings who totally identify with each other and who operate in absolute self-forgetfulness, aiming at something that transcends their separateness and thus binds them together.
To a certain degree the existential counselling relationship aims at the mode of the **unifying I-Me relationship**. The counsellor and the client will usually experience this coming together of their project at the moment when the work is progressing towards an honest appraisal of the client’s aspirations.

van Deurzen-Smith suggests that the “unity momentarily experienced” is not the identification of the I-You kind that is also important and usually referred to as empathy. The ‘I-Me’ goes beyond empathy, to involve a recognition that individual differences are for the moment unimportant and an awareness of what binds, and a coming closer to the meaning of life. She draws parallels with religious experiences of merger that absorb and replace distress with renewed strength. Whilst many forms of therapy fail to mention it, many experienced practitioners are capable of allowing this merging to occur at some stages during a series of sessions...which can make the outcome suddenly so miraculously positive.

Surprisingly, apart from referring back once to her original 1988 account (van Deurzen & Kenward, 2005: 107-8), van Deurzen does not appear to comment further or mention her concept of the ‘I-Me relationship’, and, so far as I can tell, it has not been taken up in other existential works (Cooper (2004) refers to ‘I-Me’, but as paralleling Buber’s ‘I-It’, and accordingly in a very different sense to van Deurzen.)

Thirdly (Rowan (2005: 166) alerted me to this), **Sterling and Bugental** (1993: 42) refer (during role-play in supervision) to the way that a distinction between self and other suddenly and unexpectedly can dissolve.

It is as though there is a collapse of the separated consciousnesses into one **melded experience**.

This causes bodily surprise and alarm, and an impulse to escape the meld. Yet in going in deeper:

Suddenly a **moment of ‘ah hah’** comes, a **resolution**, in which the sense of discovery includes a return to a clear sense of separate consciousnesses and a new level of knowing characterized by the sense, “Now I know what I didn’t know, but I already knew”. Specific knowledge becomes clear and carries with it a familiarity, a rightness of recognition that I have now brought into consciousness what was already present but not yet seen. Characteristics of this moment are the return to comfort in the body, relaxation, and clarity.
The intra-personal, ‘penny-dropping’ insight, gained from a close interpersonal encounter, echoes my experience, albeit that it differs in the prior loss of boundaries, and in the absence of any evident transpersonal aspect.

Additionally, without evident transpersonal aspects:

- **Spinelli** (2007: 164-6) affirms Stern’s thinking regarding present moments; and


(ii) Cooper (2003: 18-20, 113-5), for example, indicates intra- and inter-personal elements, but not explicitly a transpersonal element; although he does imply one when citing Buber, and also van Deurzen’s reference to a spiritual dimension (“of things that can’t be seen or proven”). For van Deurzen (1997: 123-8), this spiritual dimension concerns meaning and value, and is not necessarily religious or transcendent (trusting the ‘Divine’ can be considered “irrational” (Yalom, 1989/1991: 260)), although she also refers to Buber’s sacred quality of encounter and to dialogue happening sacramentally (van Deurzen & Kenward, 2005: 64). She also hints at a transpersonal dimension when locating the ‘unifying I-Me relationship’ “on the ideal dimension”, and when drawing analogies with religious and sexual experience:

> oneness then becomes a path towards the infinite...there is a pure sense of belonging to an absolute and superior world: one feels in seventh heaven (van Deurzen-Smith, 1988: 208-9).

Thus, some deep-moment indicators potentially have three aspects (but with wariness about religious understandings), but not all (see Sterling and Bugental, Spinelli, Yalom).

(iii) Facilitative factors include:

- an emphasis on the relationship, that involves being present with them and risking entering into the encounter, allowing for unfolding, confirming the other’s otherness, whilst recognising that the other is never fully knowable (Yalom, 1989/1991: 11, 91, 185, 195; Cooper, 2003: 19-20, both citing Buber);

- Spinelli (2007: 15-8, 57-64, 107, 112; 2008: 54) similarly emphasises Buber’s I–Thou dialogical relationship and inclusion (rather than empathy), being present, accepting, staying with unknowing and be attuned and
highly connected; whilst Moja-Strasser (2009: 32) refers to being grounded and needing to let go to be available in the encounter.

- van Deurzen-Smith (1988, 209) suggests that:

  The strength of the merging stems from the absolute honesty and from the genuine intensity of the **pursuit of truth in both counsellor and client**.

- More generally van Deurzen-Smith (1997: 227) points to **attentiveness** and **silence**; with Binswanger suggesting that the loving I-thou relationship “reaches its highest form in silence” (Frie, 2003b: 151-2).

Sterling and Bugental (1993: 43) require a loss of personal/psychological boundaries for their type of deep moments; van Deurzen-Smith (1988, 209) suggests that hers cannot be made to happen “through a specific technique or other artifice”; whilst Cooper (2003: 103) reminds that according to Buber “moments of I-thou encounter...cannot be ordered or planned”.

(iv) A loss of boundaries is integral to van Deurzen-Smith’s (1988, 208-9) ‘I-Me relationship’, with hints that this could be construed as lowering transpersonal as well as personal/psychological boundaries:

  the individual surrenders her aspirations to selfhood and strives for something greater

  In the unity of the shared project individual differences become unimportant for a moment. All that stands out is the awareness of an underlying motive which binds people together. The energy and enthusiasm generated in such a moment of merging with an absolute notion of one’s own destiny can be considerable.

van Deurzen-Smith (1992: 38) hints also at the importance of professional/ethical boundaries:

  The trick, I found, was to balance a willingness to immerse myself in [the client’s] preoccupations, with a retention of adequate boundaries in order to remain in charge and sane in the process.

However, van Deurzen-Smith (1988: 209) stresses the “catalytic” effect of merger, as that:

  which can make the outcome suddenly so miraculously positive...Counselling can be very valid without this component. It is however rare that the client will feel deeply moved and inspired to make life into something new and more complete without this sort of experience.
Sterling and Bugental’s (1993: 40-6) ‘meld’ also relies on merger, and reveals, they argue, that humans are ontologically joined together, in an intersubjective field that involves a continuum from separate to related. Since individual identity is not confined to skin parameters, a meld is not pathological (nor, they imply, an inappropriate merger, or mere countertransference); rather it is an experience of ‘Mitwelt’ (‘Being-with’). Initially “immersion” in the session involves the customary perspective of separateness, so that the “boundarylessness” and union experienced in the “meld” is unsettling for being unexpected and unaccustomed. However, experiencing the meld leads to an “ah hah’ resolution” and a return to separate consciousness, yet with the “deeper knowing” gained. These phases might help to explain why some emphasise merger and others distinction in their accounts of deep moments; on some occasions it could be that different stages of the experience are being noticed or emphasised.

Yalom (1989/1991: 1-2, 7, 11, 39, 57; Cooper, 2003: 81-2) is wary of inappropriate merger or fusion, and seeks to help clients face their fundamental aloneness (ultimate aloneness being one of the existential givens of human existence), whilst Cooper (2003: 20; 2004: 66) suggests that Buber is not referring to merger, but offers a balanced ‘independence-in-relation’. Thus the data reveals a range of experiences and perspectives.

(v) The Existential approaches have a very developed philosophical frame with existential, often phenomenological, and frequently dialogical, elements drawn from European philosophers such as Husserl, Heidegger, and Buber (Cooper, 2003; Spinelli, 2007; etc.), contributing to various perspectives referred to above. The Existential framework responds ambiguously to psychodynamic principles such as the possibility of transference (e.g., Rollo May considers it distorts the encounter, but Bugental values its role in therapy (Grant & Crawley, 2002, 78)), and shares some ground with other humanistic approaches (e.g., Worsley (2009: 155-73) identifies links with Person-Centred therapy), albeit challenging

The humanistic arrogance which believes mankind to be the centre of the universe and which encourages a blind pursuit of individual rights and freedom (van Deurzen-Smith, 1988: 12).

Sterling and Bugental (1993: 45) understand joining and separateness to be a co-creation, and similarly van Deurzen (1997: 224-30) refers to the “in-between that we create”, which need not rob each other’s space, but create a new space. This offers a limited
‘constructed’ quality to the experience of deep moments, but the emphasis on not planning for or making them happen also implies a ‘found’ quality.

(vi) The Existential “dialectical view of life” takes into account different points of view (Deurzen-Smith, 1988: 60), so, unsurprisingly more than one deep-moment interpretation arises from these approaches, the three principle possibilities being: a ‘deep I-Thou connection’ (Cooper and others); an expression of the ‘unifying I-Me relationship’ (van Deurzen-Smith); and a ‘meld experience’ with a ‘moment of ‘ah hah’ resolution’ (Sterling & Bugental).

5.1.3 Gestalt and Dialogical approaches
The earlier Gestalt focus on active experimentation during therapy to enable client concerns to be experienced as much as talked about (Perls, 1969; et.al. 1951), has shifted to a more dialogical approach concerned with ‘contact’ formation and disruption within therapeutic relationship (McLeod, 2003a: 162; Watson et.al., 1998: 6, 12). The influence of Buber’s I-Thou relation has also generated ‘Dialogical psychotherapies’ that are not exclusive to Gestalt therapy (Hycner, 1991: 4; Friedman, 1988), but, given the close connections between Gestalt and Dialogical approaches (Yontef, 1998; Hycner & Jacobs: 1995), I have included both in this subsection.

(i) I identified three types of indicator, reflecting Gestalt, dialogical, and transpersonal, perspectives.

A Gestalt cycle of experience may take years to complete, or

may also occur in a matter of seconds as in the sudden ‘aha’ experience when a client suddenly integrates a new insight... Such an insight may completely alter the relationship between past and future, expectation and understanding, figure and ground (Clarkson, 1989: 6).

Clarkson (1989: 34-5, 111) also refers to ‘final contact’, a full and complete contact (at the boundary between self and environment) marking closure of a particular Gestalt, accompanied by climaxes of grief, rage, love, insight or enlightenment, resolving impasse, and irrevocably changing the individual.

Final contact is difficult to describe because it is so essentially an experience which beggars words and analysis. It might be considered similar to what Maslow (1968) called ‘peak experiences’.
Lynne Jacobs (Hycner & Jacobs, 1995: 77-9) is also aware of ‘Aha’ and integrative moments. However, Jacobs (1989: 28-29) also refers to a second deep-moment indicator:

The I-Thou moment is a special moment of insight or illumination wherein the participants confirm each other in their unique being. Such moments occur at various times during genuine dialogue, and are often culminating points of the dialogic process. The I-Thou moment is the most intense moment of what Polster and Polster (1973) call a contact episode. Any experience of an I-Thou moment is a confirmation of the possibility of integration and wholeness, a confirmation of the healing process by which one can restore one’s relation to the world. Sometimes this moment of illumination occurs between a therapist and patient who engage so unreservedly with each other that the essential being of both persons is touched.

Whilst noting that Buber does not formally do so, Jacobs (1989: 28-29) distinguishes between the broader I-Thou ‘process’ and particular ‘moments’ within it. Wheway (1999: 113-4) makes a similar point (as does Clarkson (2003, 176) regarding the dialogical relationship in general). Wheway (1999: 113) refers to I-Thou moments, being:

moments of authentic meeting in which one’s own wholeness and the wholeness of the other are encountered with full aliveness.

Hycner (Hycner & Jacobs: 1995: 7-9, 38, 92, 97) also refers to I-Thou moments, in which sometimes words may precede silence, involving

a meeting of something deep inside of me with something deep inside this other person. In this meeting of silence, a real speaking can occur, an interpenetration and merging of our human spirits, which enriches us both, and makes us whole.

Hycner suggests that both parties experience such encounters, but also acknowledges that at times either party might feel they have experienced an I-Thou moment, but without the other being consciously aware of it.

Thirdly, Williams (2006: 6-11) suggests that Gestalt therapy cultivates and mirrors spirituality through peak, spiritual, transpersonal, or mystical experiences, which

may reflect realisation, becoming, and/or uniting with something within and/or beyond ourselves... Many have reported peak spiritual experiences as a result of Gestalt training or therapy.
Although not absolutely clear from this reference whether such experiences occur within or subsequent to therapy, Williams does explicitly suggest that “spirituality manifests itself in Gestalt therapy and in the therapeutic relationship”, with

human connection and relationship the basis for an embodied type of spiritual experience (beyond the personal).

(ii) Above, the first two indicators emphasise the intrapersonal, ‘penny dropping’ nature of deep moments; all three (but especially the second) reflect an interpersonal aspect; whilst the third (and possibly the allusions to Maslow and Buber in first two indicators) indicates a transpersonal aspect.

Generally Gestalt therapists affirm both intra- and inter-personal elements, with an increasing emphasis on the therapeutic relationship and the importance of the interpersonal, intersubjective or ‘interhuman’ (Buber’s term for the ‘between’), rather than on ‘self-actualisation’ (Hycner & Jacobs, 1995: 94, 108-9, 116-20; Clarkson, 1999: 19).

Additionally, Williams (2006), Harris (2000), and Hycner (1991, 69-87; Hycner & Jacobs, 1995: 93) also refer to a spiritual or transpersonal dimension (without implying any particular understanding of ‘spiritual’); however, Jacobs considers a ‘spiritual’ dimension to be unnecessary (although she refers to Buber’s dialogue being a “transcendental process”: Hycner & Jacobs, 1995: 60).

Hycner (1991: 78-9) is influenced by Buber’s understanding:

one enters the spiritual domain through an I-Thou meeting with an otherness ... the connectedness we feel in an I-Thou moment with another connects us with the ‘Eternal Thou’. Those moments of deep interpersonal meeting take us to the edge of the sacred.

For Hycner this leads to a transforming, rather than merely transcending, of our limitations. As noted in (i) above, Williams also understands the transpersonal to operate or be experienced within the interpersonal.

(iii) Facilitative factors overlap between several authors; some samples are set out below:-
For Yontef (1998: 88-100) the relationship is central, as a safe environment for experimentation, and for ‘dialogue’ that modifies a fully mutual ‘I-Thou’ to honour the task and context of therapy.

Clarkson (1999: 16-21, 60, 121, 127-9, etc.) refers to techniques and experiments that can help address unfinished Gestalt cycles, but these are secondary, given the primary value of the living existential encounter between two real human beings, both of whom are risking themselves in the dialogue of the healing process. The central focus is the moment-by-moment process of the relationship between the client and the counsellor. In this encounter, the goal is a full and complete authentic meeting between these two people.

Paradoxically, only through recognition and acceptance of the individual as they are, can productive change become possible (echoing Rogers).

Applying Buber, Friedman (1999: 77-81; 1988: 22-6, 33-6; 2003: 53f.) suggests that healing through meeting requires: confirmation (including of what the other can become); inclusion of the uniqueness of the other (which, unlike empathy, does not “abolish the distance between” the parties); mutuality (even if full mutuality is not possible); and the ‘grace’ that allows discovery of what is required in each situation. Quoting Buber (1965: 71), confirmation involves being made present to ourselves by the other and knowing that we are made present by him.

For Hycner and Jacobs (1995: 4, 7, 15-28, 38, 46, 53, 93-100; Hycner, 1991: 41-52, 84-5, 103-19) the dialogical involves: being emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually available to others; letting go of expectations, including the intention to heal or of ‘unmasking’ e.g. a particular motive, rather than perceiving and meeting the whole person; and surrendering to the between, courageously staying with and trusting the unfolding, with presence being both powerful and powerless. However, the client’s ‘opening’ is also required.

Williams (2006: 16-7) argues that including the ‘spiritual dimension’ facilitates healing by widening the range of experiences that can occur, and providing a larger context for the relationship. Hycner (1991: 87; Hycner & Jacobs, 1995: 93) makes a similar point, referring also to ‘stewardship’ and ‘service’ of the dialogue.

However, Clarkson (1989: 74) observes: “there can be no prescription for existential meeting”. Thus for Wheway (1999: 114), the I-thou process involves working towards the conditions under which I-thou moments may spontaneously occur... I-thou moments cannot be purposively achieved, but they can be prepared for.
Hycner and Jacobs (1995: 10, 64-5, 92) suggest that the ‘dialogic’ encompasses both I-Thou and I-It moments (likewise, Friedman (1988: 21)). I-Thou encounter cannot be aimed for: it would it turn it into an I-It, and, anyway, genuine meeting is beyond our control; citing Buber (1923/1958: 24): “The Thou meets me through grace – it is not found by seeking”. Similarly, ‘presence’ cannot be legislated for.

(iv) Gestalt therapists describe boundary loss between people (as in infant, sexual, or therapeutic contexts) as “confluence”; it is considered problematic if it occurs inappropriately or too often, but at times can also be beneficial (as sometimes in therapy’s final phase, although pathological confluence is also possible at that point) (Clarkson, 1989: 34-5, 55-7, 77-8, 135-43; Parlett & Hemming, 1996: 201). Whilst personal/psychological boundaries are mostly referred to, Clarkson (1989: 56) also alludes to transpersonal possibilities, and (1989: 66, 76-7, 90, 144-5) to the importance of professional/ethical boundaries.

Hycner and Jacobs (1995; 7, 57-9, 92-3) note the possibility of merger and a “softening” of the individual’s boundaries in I-Thou meeting, and recognise the danger through confluence of becoming totally absorbed and engulfed. However, Hycner suggests that I-Thou encounter is simultaneously a moment of both union and separateness.

He argues that this involves not even positive confluence (a merging two separate beings), since dialogue entails not loss of self, but recognition of our interrelational nature. Consequently,

Even the moment of I-Thou connectedness recognises separateness and relatedness in the same moment.

Similarly, Williams (2006: 12-3) refers to individual identity being both experienced and transcended in the I-Thou moment. Meanwhile, Friedman (2003: 57-61) refers to Buber’s reflections on distance and relation, noting for example that “inclusion is not synonymous with being symbiotically joined”.

Thus, whilst boundary loss or ‘confluence’ may be negative or positive, I-Thou relating is conceived more in terms of being both connected and separate.
(v) Yontef (1998: 82) refers to the three cornerstones of Gestalt framework as being field theory, phenomenology, and dialogue, all of which, awareness of the relational field, attention to moment by moment experience, and a dialogical, I-Thou emphasis, may have engendered contexts in which deep moments could occur.

More generally, Gestalt therapy interconnects in various ways with other approaches. Clarkson (1989: 15) suggests that Gestalt therapy’s roots are in psychoanalysis and character analysis, its trunk is phenomenology and existentialism, its landscape holism and field theory, whilst its branches reach towards eastern philosophy and transpersonal understandings. Thus there are a number of connecting points with other approaches. The therapeutic value of transference is both appreciated and considered to distort the relationship (Hycner & Jacobs, 1995: 110-2; Grant & Crawley, 2002: 83-5). Wheway (1999) and Hycner and Jacobs (1995: 108-120, 168) explore connections between the dialogical field and the creation of the psychodynamic intersubjective field. Williams (2006: 6-17) argues for a transpersonal Gestalt therapy, for turning transient peak experiences into more permanent states of awareness and experience by using the relational field as the basis for spiritual development for both parties.

(vi) Three possible deep-moment interpretations arise. Firstly, as completion of a ‘Gestalt cycle’, and/or expression of ‘final contact’. Greenberg (1984; Mahrer, 1986: 11) reported some research that was relevant for this possibility, being a series of studies regarding ‘good moments’ that resulted from the resolution of Gestalt conflict splits, in which clients experienced a sense of completion, feeling that something had shifted and the problem had ceased to exist.

Secondly, deep moments might be ‘I-Thou moments’, particularly in intense, culminating form, resulting from dialogic encounter, with some (e.g. Hycner) understanding this to involve a spiritual element.

Thirdly, moments of deep encounter may result from a spiritual element occurring during therapy in a peak spiritual experience.
5.1.4 Experiential approaches

Experiential therapy draws on Person-Centred, Existential, and Gestalt roots, but also uses Psychodynamic, Cognitive or other elements according to the strand of Experiential therapy involved (Gendlin, 1996; Mahrer, 1996: ix; Watson et.al. 1998; Sanders, 2007).

(i) Mahrer (1979: 412-4) refers to Rogers’ ‘moments of movement’ when significant change occurs, being significant phenomena where the patient is filled with spontaneous insights and new-found understandings. ... peaks of intense experiencing in which the patient seems to undergo a dramatically altered state of consciousness.

Mahrer (1985: 87-140) also refers to “significant moments” (which sometimes may only be identified by the patient themself) in which the patient ‘works through’ something, realizes something, feels an inner change in something, makes an inner connection, has a sense of easing, comes to accept that part of herself, undergoes a meaningful silence (p.95).

With colleagues (Mahrer et.al, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1992) has researched such “good” and “very good moments” in therapy, defining a good moment when the material was meaningful and significant, indicating good movement, progress, improvement, process, or change [and] a very good moment when the material was outstanding and exceptional, indicating very good movement, progress, improvement, process, or change (Mahrer et.al., 1987: 8; their italics).

Mahrer (et.al., 1987; 1992: 255-60) identifies 12 categories of good moments, whilst ‘very good moments’ are a “peak, highly valued, critical, pivotal, turning point”, and may include a sense of “oneness”.

I am not proposing that all such moments qualify as ‘deep moments’ since they are recorded as occurring more frequently than appears to be the pattern for deep moments elsewhere (‘good moments’ occur between 2 and 30 times a session (Mahrer, 1985: 88), and in one study even 21% of client statements (though often involving bursts of 5-10 consecutive statements) were judged to comprise ‘very good moments’ (Mahrer, 1987: 13). However, similar to the Boston Group’s ‘moments of meeting’, my sense is that in particular more acute instances of ‘very good moments’ could qualify as deep moments.
(rather than as moments of deep encounter, since a transpersonal aspect is generally not evident).

I similarly assess Gendlin’s (1978/2003: 7-11; 2003: 111) ‘body’ or ‘felt shifts’, which involve a distinct physical sensation of change that can occur when moving through the six steps that Gendlin identifies as part of process of ‘focusing’, whereby a client passes through already-known feelings to reach a sense of “what is there, but not yet known”. These ‘shifts’ may not always but may sometimes contribute to a ‘deep moment’, given that:

the felt shift, or referent movement, is the ‘peak’ moment when change and growth are possible. ... The referent is then easier to stay with and is experienced differently than before. Part of the client’s new felt understanding is his or her grasp of positive tendencies and possibilities and appreciation of his or her own richness and authenticity. Even if the new experience does not ‘solve’ anything for the client, the sense of authenticity and autonomy is gratifying. (Mathieu-Coughlan & Klein, 1984: 240-1).

(ii) Gendlin (2003: 110) suggests that

Interpersonal closeness and deep self-responding go together. We become more continuous inside as we become more relational.

Nonetheless, for Gendlin (Watson et.al., 1998: 16), and Mahrer (1985: 13-4), change is effected more through a client’s intrapsychic process than through the therapeutic relationship. The intrapersonal element includes a bodily dimension (Gendlin, 1996: 9). A transpersonal aspect is not apparent, save for references to ‘felt sense’ being on the border between ordinary and altered states (Gendlin, 1996: 68), and to an “expanded sense of consciousness experienced as a kind of awe” and a “state of integrative contact” involving

... dilating out beyond the integrating person’s physical body [and] encompassing portions of the external world (Mahrer, 1978a: 501, 523).

Any spiritual characterisation is, however, absent (although Clarkson (1990: 160) interprets Gendlin (1967) as affirming a spiritual dimension); indeed, Mahrer (1978a: 540) is negative about religion.

(iii) The key to experiential therapy is a client’s inward focusing of attention to articulate their experience (Watson et.al., 1998: 15).
For Gendlin (1978/2003: 10-11, 66-70, 165; 2003: 110-3) ‘focusing’ involves making contact with an internal bodily awareness or ‘felt sense’ (being more than a bodily sensation or emotion, but rather “body and mind before they are split apart”, occupying a zone between conscious and unconscious), to reach a “direct sense of what is there, but not yet known”. This requires a ‘real relationship’ and safe and steady therapeutic presence that focuses on each moment’s experience and bodily effect; stays with and pursues whatever comes up; and waits (including in silence) for the felt sense to open up and unfold (Gendlin, 1996; Mathieu-Coughlan & Klein, 1984: 242).

Mahrer (1978a: 517-24; 1983; 1985; 1989; 1993; 1996) advocates respect, an I-Thou quality of equality, and transparency in the therapeutic relationship, and an “experiential listening” that goes well beyond empathy; however, more than the relationship, therapeutic method is required through four steps enabling an accessing, integrating, revisiting, and present being, of ‘inner experiencing’; which earlier (1979: 416-7) he emphasised as requiring the patient to let go and attend to internal images and felt meanings, surrendering self to the alien, anxiety-loaded deeper personality process, and incrementally risking opening up and ‘dilating’ the self to interpersonal rejection or acceptance, akin to a “so-called mystical death and rebirth” to become a “newer self”.

Additionally, Mahrer (1978b: 209-212; 1978c: 387; 1993) advocates in effect a lowering of personal/psychological boundaries: by reflecting the patient’s body position, emptying their own heads, and focusing attention on what the patient is attending to, the therapist aims to be “virtually melded”, “fused”, or “wholly plugged into the client”. This enables the therapist to assimilate the patient’s interior world and to share in their momentary experiences and feelings, and thus to overcome resistance by being “the voice of the client’s inner experiencing”.

Whilst Mahrer (1985: 175) recognised the difficulty of determining causal links between therapist methods and change in the patient, Mahrer’s (et.al., 1992) research suggested that therapist sensitivity towards the patient’s immediate state; skill in methods geared towards accomplishing ‘very good moments’; and willingness by the patient to respond, tended to facilitate ‘very good moments’. Gendlin (1978/2003: 45) likewise suggests the therapist can help facilitate focusing, leading if successful to a client’s felt body-shift when each step is accomplished; however, he is clear that a shift cannot be engineered or controlled: “It comes on its own”.

(iv) For Gendlin (1996: 289-91) the therapeutic frame provides safety, although Mahrer (1978c: 382-3; 1983: 74-9, 99-133) cedes some responsibility for it to the patient, with longer sessions and a looser frame, and possibly some verbal interventions that might not
be employed in other approaches, perhaps indicating weaker professional/ethical boundaries, but not to a significant degree since their place is also asserted.

Mahrer (1978a: 498-503, 519-25, 562) identifies a lowering of personal/psychological and transpersonal (but in non-spiritual terms (West, 2000: 68)) boundaries through a ‘dilation of self’ and expansion of consciousness leading to “integrating fusion” with people (or objects). Mahrer seems to imply it extends the I-thou relationship into a “being-one-with the other individual”. It involves losing identity and becoming self-less; becoming assimilated into or fused with the other in a non-dualist mode of relating (he cites Buddhist and infantile experience); a “sense of oceanic unity – without conscious awareness of it” (which contrasts with those who identify a ‘both/and’ joined yet separate quality); and he argues it leads to significant change.

(v) As noted above, Experiential Therapy draws on several strands, but its central theoretical perspective is that a deeper exploration and opening up of an internal felt-sense leads to cognitive and perceptual reorganisation, to acceptance of one’s inner being and potential, and to behaving in accordance with this (Watson et.al., 1998: 16). Change is possible even through single therapeutic moments, and can be facilitated through a sequence of helpful therapist actions (McLeod, 2003a: 343).

Within this Mahrer (1983: 138) asserts that:

Experiential therapy rests on the assumption that altered states are available where the therapist and patient can integrate with one another. The personhood or identity of one can assimilate or fuse with that of the other.

Mahrer (1979: 413) suggests that, by placing themselves in the patient’s split internal world and feeling and gaining the allegiance of the dissociated elements within the patient, “reunion” of those elements becomes possible. Thus, the therapist can powerfully assist the patient to go deeper, enabling “massive changes within the very nucleus of the personality structure” (Mahrer, 1978b: 212).

Greenberg (1988), however, is dubious that Mahrer’s approach can succeed in overcoming resistance as claimed (indeed is more likely to evoke anxiety and be experienced as confrontational); is sceptical that one can actually become another’s experience, or that expression of it will necessarily lead to its acceptance; considers
Mahrer’s approach risky and provocative for some clients, especially if becoming a client’s “deeper potential” leads to a criticising or attacking of them; and argues the approach violates the non-interpretive listening at the heart of Rogers’ and Gendlin’s approaches. This may help to explain why Mahrer’s emphasis on fusion appears not to be commonly adopted by other experiential therapists. Mahrer himself emphasises fusion more in the earlier cited works, whilst his later research into ‘good’ and ‘very good moments’ does not appear to offer the same emphasis.

Mahrer’s (1983: 138; 1978b) contention, that the parties “are not assumed to be two fundamentally separated entities”, nonetheless reflects a postmodern perspective on the interconnection between people, and some experiential therapists also adopt a constructivist emphasis (Watson et.al., 1998: 16-8). However, Gendlin (2003) challenges postmodernism and social construction by arguing that we can have direct access to experiencing through our bodies, and that bodily experience cannot be reduced to language and culture, since “with focusing we discover that we are much more organized from the inside out”.

(vi) Applying Gendlin’s perspective, a ‘felt sense’ and a ‘felt shift’ may contribute towards or help to explain deep moments. From Mahrer’s perspective, where a deep moment involves an experience of merger, it may represent a beneficial fusion, or integrating contact, between therapist and patient. More broadly, deep moments might represent acute instances of beneficial processes (such as when previously defended material more freely emerges (Mahrer, 1985: 102-5)), through ‘moments of movement’, ‘significant moments’, or ‘very good moments’.
Chapter 6: Thematic Findings for the Eclectic and Integrative, and the Transpersonal, Spiritual and Pastoral Approaches

This chapter presents the principal findings for the remaining areas analysed thematically, again in the form of a Summary Table with subsequent explanations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROACH &amp; CATEGORY</th>
<th>(i) INDICATORS</th>
<th>(ii) ASPECTS</th>
<th>(iii) CAUSE &amp; FACILITATION</th>
<th>(iv) BOUNDARIES</th>
<th>(v) THEORETICAL FRAME</th>
<th>(vi) INTERPRETATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 ECLECTIC &amp; INTEGRATIVE</td>
<td>mde - Moments of inexplicable connection (Fish); dm - crucial moments of closeness (Paul &amp; Pelham), helpful significant events (Timulak)</td>
<td>Intra- &amp; interpersonal (with therapeutic relationship often emphasised); sometimes transpersonal</td>
<td>General relational factors; can’t plan or intentionally use transpersonal element, but potentially vital (Lapworth, Sills &amp; Fish)</td>
<td>P/E frame; P/P – parties separate &amp; overlapping (Clarkson &amp; Lapworth)</td>
<td>Various perspectives &amp; frameworks (eclectic, integrative, common factors &amp; pluralistic)</td>
<td>mde as moments acutely expressing general beneficial process, or inexplicable connection (Lapworth, Sills &amp; Fish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.1 General</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.2 Budgell</td>
<td>mde - Linking</td>
<td>All three</td>
<td>Going beyond empathy, mutual openness &amp; trust, risking deep work, therapist discipline; lowered self boundaries facilitates (if not, blocks) linking; but mde outside control &amp; spontaneous</td>
<td>P/E frame; lowered P/P &amp; transpersonal boundaries necessary, but not fused &amp; still separate; linking occurs at Wilber’s prepersonal or transpersonal stages</td>
<td>Various influences, especially Jungian; early life &amp; transpersonal awareness; suggests that different assumptions affect interpretation</td>
<td>Different mde possibilities &amp; cause unknown: not projection, not just regression, Jungian possibilities, etc.; involves transpersonal connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROACH &amp; CATEGORY</td>
<td>(i) INDICATORS</td>
<td>(ii) ASPECTS</td>
<td>(iii) CAUSE &amp; FACILITATION</td>
<td>(iv) BOUNDARIES</td>
<td>(v) THEORETICAL FRAME</td>
<td>(vi) INTERPRETATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.3 Clarkson</td>
<td>mde - moments of inspiration &amp; profundity; mde? - I/You moments; dm - reparative experiences</td>
<td>All three; inter- &amp; trans-personal can connect</td>
<td>General factors plus holding environment, appropriate self-disclosure &amp; bndry adjustment, empty container &amp; silent being with; prepare for but can’t make transpersonal happen</td>
<td>P/E stressed but not rigid; some references to P/P or transpersonal boundaries being lowered</td>
<td>Integrating framework, through five relational facets, that also help explain Differences; ‘found’ rather than constructed</td>
<td>mde as a breaking-through of the transpersonal, an I-You moment, or ?a reparative experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.4 Hobson</td>
<td>mde – Moment of meeting (at the heart of, but not confined to, therapy)</td>
<td>Intra- and inter-, possibly transpersonal</td>
<td>Waiting in silence, trust &amp; staying with; happen rather than engineered</td>
<td>Respect for P/E &amp; P/P implied</td>
<td>Integrative (including Psychodynamic &amp; ’Conversational Model’)</td>
<td>mde as ‘a meeting in the space between lonely persons’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.5 Rowan</td>
<td>mde – ‘Ah’ moments, peak experiences in therapy, linking</td>
<td>Emphasis on the intra- and transpersonal, but also interpersonal, which can offer a bridge into the spiritual</td>
<td>Integrating regressive, existential &amp; transpersonal; peak experiences etc. can be facilitated rather than engineered</td>
<td>P/E retained whilst P/P &amp; transpersonal boundaries are lowered in unitive experiences that may be developmental &amp; therapeutic; instrumental, authentic &amp; transpersonal levels</td>
<td>Humanistic &amp; Transpersonal (especially Wilber, but also Jungian etc.) framework; emphasises psychospiritual development</td>
<td>mde as instances of linking and/or breakthrough, including psychospiritually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROACH &amp; CATEGORY</td>
<td>(i) INDICATORS</td>
<td>(ii) ASPECTS</td>
<td>(iii) CAUSE &amp; FACILITATION</td>
<td>(iv) BOUNDARIES</td>
<td>(v) THEORETICAL FRAME</td>
<td>(vi) INTERPRETATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 TRANSPERSONAL/ SPIRITUAL/PASTORAL</td>
<td>Few mde – ‘ah, ha’ moments (Davies), presence-between-us (Heron), healing moments (McCormick), momentary connection to ground of being (Wellings &amp; McCormick)</td>
<td>All three, but primary focus on intra- and trans-personal development; some though limited interest in transpersonal’s interaction within the interpersonal</td>
<td>Being fully present, staying with feelings, P/E boundaries enabling facilitative environment; mostly facilitate rather than engineer</td>
<td>Some P/E emphasis; P/P &amp; transpersonal boundaries lowered in beneficial unitive experiences; Wilber distinguishes pre- &amp; trans-personal; Heron suggests simultaneous unity &amp; separateness</td>
<td>Range of sources (especially Jung &amp; Buddhism) and positions re: ‘transpersonal’ &amp; ‘spiritual’; Wilber’s developmental model &amp; pre/trans issue are influential but open to critique; some imply spiritual is constructed</td>
<td>mde as altered state of consciousness, momentary connection to ground of being, expression of participatory spirituality, breakthrough/no boundary moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.1 Transpersonal approaches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.2 Spiritual approaches</td>
<td>mde - moments of spiritual love &amp; empathic resonance (Gubi); mystical, relational happenings (Lines); deep moments (Scott); special, spiritual healing moments (West); etc.</td>
<td>Highlights spiritual, but all three important, and interconnection emphasised, including possibility of transpersonal in &amp; through interpersonal</td>
<td>Spiritual discipline, respect, presence, risking holding the silence, staying with not knowing &amp; aloneness, prayer &amp; tapping into spiritual energy; deciding to recognise a transp’l aspect may make mde more likely to be noticed or occur; facilitate rather than engineer</td>
<td>P/E respected (Lines wary re professional distancing); lowered P/P but I-Thou encounter is not ‘confluence’, since parties are merged &amp; separate, plus implied lowered transpersonal boundaries (West)</td>
<td>Various humanistic, integrative &amp; spiritual frameworks; mde occur more when psychological &amp; spiritual integrated in ‘secular’ context (Scott); Lines adopts a constructed &amp; found attitude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mde involves a spiritual element (e.g. involving a numinous phenomenon of human-divine relating (Lines), or grace (West)); akin to I-Thou relating, presence, tenderness, or relational depth.
6.2.3 Pastoral approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROACH &amp; CATEGORY</th>
<th>(i) INDICATORS</th>
<th>(ii) ASPECTS</th>
<th>(iii) CAUSE &amp; FACILITATION</th>
<th>(iv) BOUNDARIES</th>
<th>(v) THEORETICAL FRAME</th>
<th>(vi) INTERPRETATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Few mde - I/Thou encounters (Campbell, Cooper-White), reverential experiences (Deeks); participating in a shared reality (Rose); special moments (Tillich)</td>
<td>All three, but primary focus on intra- and trans-personal, with some but limited focus on trans- within inter-personal</td>
<td>Relational, I-thou approach, silent waiting, negative capability, disciplined prayerful attention, openness to Spirit’s presence</td>
<td>P/E to protect P/P boundaries; Lake links primal and mystical in unitive experiences, implying lowered P/P &amp; transpersonal boundaries</td>
<td>‘Secular’ counselling perspectives within a spiritual framework; some constructivist references</td>
<td>mde (inter alia) as instances of healing &amp; presence of God</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.1 Eclectic and Integrative Approaches

Many of the authors referred to in my thematic findings have eclectic or integrative elements, but their predominant emphases mean that I have referred to them elsewhere. Here I concentrate on authors whose predominant approach is to combine elements from different therapeutic approaches through ‘technical eclecticism’, ‘theoretical integration’, or the ‘use of common factors’ (Norcross & Grencavage, 1990: 8); or through a ‘pluralistic approach’ (Cooper & McLeod, 2007). Whilst potentially these different strategies for combination have significant implications (Palmer & Woolfe, 2000; Hollanders, 1999, 2003), these were not material in this research. Consequently, in this section I cluster together various eclectic or integrative approaches, initially recording some general insights, before summarising four authors with significance for my subject.

6.1.1 General

(i) As potential indicators:

- **Fish** (in Lapworth, Sills and Fish, 2001: 64) suggests that:
  
  the spiritual aspects of the self manifest in a counselling session when the work which the client is doing at that moment seems to be accompanied by some phenomenon which belies the usual scientific explanations. This may involve an inexplicable connection or knowingness between therapist and client or between therapist, client and environment, all of which have a transcendental ‘feel’ to them.

- **Paul & Pelham** (2000: 122) refer to crucial moments of closeness in therapy, but without any transpersonal reference.

- **Timulak’s** (2007: 308-12) qualitative meta-analysis of client-identified helpful significant events during therapy refers to some possible deep moments in various therapeutic approaches, although without obvious transpersonal aspects.

(ii) Clarkson and Lapworth (1992: 52), for example, recognise the parties have both internal and interpersonal worlds. The interpersonal, represented through the therapeutic relationship, is frequently emphasised in eclectic or integrative approaches (Hollanders, 1999: 489 & 2003: 292; Lapworth, Sills & Fish, 2001: 99-109; Paul & Pelham, 2000). Some, such as Lapworth, Sills & Fish (2001: 61-5, 108-9), also acknowledge a transpersonal element. They suggest that this is difficult to describe, but is “an aspect which occasionally emerges out of the personal relationship”.

168
(iii) Paul and Pelham (2000: 117-8), for example, cite Rogers’ core conditions for their general facilitative effect. Regarding any transpersonal aspect, Lapworth, Sills and Fish (2001: 109) suggest that:

Therapists cannot plan for or use it intentionally in their work. ... It may be that the transpersonal element of the therapeutic encounter is a vital part of the potential healing.


(v) By definition eclectic and integrative therapists utilise various sources and perspectives, weaving them into their own theoretical frameworks, several examples of which are provided by Palmer & Woolfe (2000) and Lapworth, Sills & Fish (2001).

(vi) This section reinforces some general interpretive insights, that deep moments may be acute beneficial expressions of general therapeutic process (Paul & Pelham, 2000; Timulak, 2009), and that an inexplicable transpersonal connection may contribute to moments of deep encounter (Lapworth, Sills & Fish, 2001).

6.1.2 Budgell

Budgell’s (1995) phenomenological research offers further empirical research into deep moments.

(i) Budgell surveyed twenty therapists or ‘co-researchers’ regarding what she terms as ‘linking’, being

a connection, or ‘felt link’, that can arise between therapist and client (Budgell, 1995: Abstract).

An impressive fifty-percent were familiar with linking (albeit from a small sample, but one that Budgell asserted was not “atypical”, for example, they were not “members of an institution with any spiritual bias”), whilst the other ten therapists had no awareness of it (“Either you know”, or it is “outside your knowledge”, “there is no in-between”) (Budgell, 1995: 103). Although the co-researchers reported their experiences of linking as therapists (and occasionally their experiences as clients), “everyone understood it as mutually experienced by both client and therapist” (1995: 34).
Budgell (1995: 21-32, 105) noted a “common core” to the co-researchers’ experiences of linking, involving: a deep understanding, even when communicating non-verbally; an openness to facing pain, leading to healing and deeper and quicker work (“because more risks can be taken”, echoing Mearns & Cooper’s similar observation); an indescribable quality, and a sensed connection to the transpersonal. Budgell (1995: 34, 101-105) concluded that ‘linking’ is healing, leading to multi-faceted feelings of acceptance and a lessening of feelings of aloneness, and that probably it both aided and resulted from deeper work.

(ii) With one exception (who considered it to be “transverbal”), all those identifying linking considered it to involve spiritual or transpersonal experience (Budgell, 1995: 34). Consequently, all three aspects were generally indicated, with Budgell (1995: 106) suggesting that:

‘Linking’ is a phenomenon that happens within the mystical aspect of [a] single reality.

The nature of ‘spiritual’ or ‘transpersonal’ was diversely understood and difficult to describe, and, like linking, rarely considered suitable for discussion, leading the co-researchers often to believe that linking was experienced by them alone (Budgell, 1995: 5-6, 104, 108).

(iii) Facilitative factors included (Budgell, 1995: 21-34, 101-7):

- going “beyond empathy”, and “not just holding, accepting and intuition”: “It is on a plain above the natural plain”;

- a reaching out and openness from the therapist, and willingness to trust the client:

  Therapists have to feel strong enough to be with the client whatever that may demand. They have to allow themselves to be emotionally open and vulnerable and to seek to deeply understand the client both verbally and psychically.

  (This this echoes similar observations by Thorne and Mearns, although Budgell was writing before their relevant publications, with them equally unfamiliar with Budgell’s work. This lack of mutual awareness perhaps strengthens the similar observations);
• the client, in response, trusting and being open to the therapist, and being willing to work deeply, including through transference; and

• therapists working on themselves to aid the transition into the transpersonal (citing Wilber), since she implies that more spiritually developed therapists may be more facilitative (i.e. a ‘spiritual discipline’ type point).

• (Linking may involve words or silence, and visual contact is unnecessary, since a kind of energy is involved.)

As for whether linking can be ‘facilitated’ or ‘engineered’, Budgell (1995: 16, 32, 101-2) notes disagreements as to the frequency and timing of linking, and regarding whether it occurs only with particular people, yet concludes that linking is spontaneous:

This is a phenomenon that takes place outside human control although it can be both blocked and encouraged. We do not know what makes it happen.

Regarding blocking or encouraging, Budgell (1995: 106-7) refers to the need to lower “self boundaries” (which I sense covers both personal/psychological and transpersonal boundaries), to increase openness and trust, and thus leading to greater linking:

the essence of the mystical and transpersonal is surrender and allowing rather than controlling. Therefore, the more people can be open, trust and allow themselves to be unprotected because of lowered self boundaries, the more it will happen. ... Some therapists will be able to risk more of their vulnerability than others.

Whilst she does not discuss the possible risks in being “unprotected” and vulnerable, Budgell (1995: 26, 33) also asserts the need for a safe environment and secure frame (in other words, professional/ethical boundaries also play a facilitative role), which presumably provides the parameters for self-boundary lowering, implying it should only occur in appropriate ways.

(iv) Budgell (1995: 16, 25, 33, 104-5) emphasises the connection between lowered self boundaries and linking:

there are no absolute boundaries between people. It is this fact that allows ‘linking’ to take place.

Yet if blurring is needed, separateness also continues, Budgell noting:
The experience is described as near fusion, a communion of souls or spirits and a blurring of personal boundaries. In order to achieve this, both parties have to give up something of themselves whilst still remaining separate.

One co-researcher explained:

I am as close to another person as it is possible to be without fusion.

Budgell (1995: 103) finds Wilber’s model to be helpful (see later), suggesting that separateness is greatest in the middle stages. Linking is therefore more likely to occur in Wilber’s prepersonal or transpersonal stages.

(v) The main influences on Budgell and her co-researchers appear to be Psychodynamic (especially Jungian) and Transpersonal, with some Person-Centred allusions. Budgell (1995: 7, 105-6) acknowledges that interpretations often result from different existing assumptions, or personality or experience (with linking unlikely to be interpreted spiritually when a spiritual dimension is not affirmed). Budgell is alert to psychodynamic and early life issues, but also has a regard to transpersonal levels and development. Thus she recognises that profound healing may be of early trauma, yet also lead to spiritual development. This balance may reflect Budgell’s apparent attraction to Jungian authors (which may also have led, although this is my speculation, to her adoption of her term ‘linking’ from Schwartz-Salant’s use of that word).

(vi) Budgell (1995: 21-26, 33, 66f., 105-6) acknowledges different interpretive possibilities, including references to Rogerian ‘mutuality or resonance’, Maslow’s ‘peak experiences’, Buber’s ‘I-Thou’, and Sullivan’s ‘participant observer’. Psychodynamically, whilst acknowledging that the connectedness involved shares similarities with transference, countertransference and projective identification, Budgell rejects these explanations. She is more sympathetic to a regressive interpretation, since she perceives the mother-infant bond as a possible example of linking and refers to Winnicott’s third area; however, she also argues that linking “is not a phenomenon that operates only in regression work”. She also acknowledges the possible pertinence of Jungian ideas about the collective unconscious, mundus imaginalis, coniunctio, and rebirth.

However, whilst allowing for these possibilities, and therefore not going so far as the co-researcher who claimed that linking “is the other end of the spectrum from symbiosis”
Budgell’s interpretive emphasis and that of her co-researchers would nevertheless fall at the transpersonal end of Wilber’s spectrum. For Budgell (1995: Abstract; 24-5), linking “shares some common ground with mystical experience”, reflecting her co-researchers’ understandings that:

It always has some transpersonal connection...reaching beyond what happens between two people and connecting to everything else. It is a sacred experience but you do not have to be religious in an orthodox way. ... It is a spiritual connectedness.

It is a communion of souls or spirits.

Thus whilst linking’s cause might ultimately be unknown (see again (iii) above), Budgell asserts a mystical element to this boundary-lowered interpersonal connection.

6.1.3 Clarkson

Earlier I referred to Clarkson’s work concerning Gestalt therapy, but here I refer to her influential (McLeod, 2003a: 305-7) systemic integrative model involving five facets of the therapeutic relationship, and seven levels of experiencing the self.

(i) Clarkson refers:

- in the ‘developmentally needed relationship’, to a reparative experience (reported by the patient) (2003: 134-5);

- in the ‘I-You’ or ‘person-to-person relationship’, to an unforgettable moment of bonding, and to ‘I-You moments’ (which she prefers to ‘I-Thou’) (1990: 155; 2003: 16-7, 154, 248); and

- in the ‘transpersonal relationship’, to “moments of inspiration, intuition, silence, experiment or laughter” involving a sense of timelessness and increased wonder, joy, serenity, empathy, energy, and/or intensity, and alignment “like a perfectly tuned chord” of Clarkson’s seven identified levels of experience (2002: 90-1, 101-2, 197); and to a “breaking-through of the divine or the soul into the consulting room...into a moment of such profundity” (2003: 200, 227-8).

(ii) All three aspects are present in Clarkson’s work, with the therapeutic relationship central, and the transpersonal or spiritual identified as one of its facets (and additionally as one level of experience or the self), which, if difficult to describe, unprovable and open to dispute, is also, she suggests, gaining increased acceptance (Clarkson, 1990; 2002; 2003: 3-23, 187-9; etc.).
Different facets and aspects predominate at different times. Although the reparative experience cited in (i) above did not involve a transpersonal aspect, but the third group of indicators clearly did, qualifying them as potential moments of deep encounter. There is more ambiguity around whether the ‘I-You’ deep moment indicators include a transpersonal aspect. Clarkson distinguishes between the ‘I-You’ and ‘transpersonal’ facets, and accordingly the experiences arising from them. Thus, for example, there is no transpersonal aspect indicated in the ‘unforgettable moment of bonding’ cited above. However, at other times she implies that the transpersonal arises from or can be connected to the person-to-person relationship. For example:

- Clarkson refers to “I-Thou moments when we glimpse eternity in the eyes of another human being”, and suggests that Buber’s I-Thou contact, which can happen in the real meeting between people...reaches out beyond them to the sublime or transcendent, however the individual may phrase or understand it. (Clarkson, 2003: 248; see also 1990: 158-60).

- Clarkson (1990: 160; 2003: 248) refers to James’s (a Transactional Analytical author’s) notion of a third self emerging from the “betweenness” in which “the inner core energies of the dialoguing partners merge”; which she then relates to Jungian notions of the Self, which may sometimes be “conceived of as the God within ourselves”.

- Clarkson (2003: 188-200) refers to the grace or mystery that sometimes attends therapeutic work, to a connection in ways that we do not understand, and to a healing, creative life force (or ‘physis’). She indicates that these are factors that help to constitute the transpersonal facet; yet it would seem artificial to suggest that they do not somehow also affect the relationship as a whole.

Collectively this suggests that sometimes various facets of the therapeutic relationship may complement rather than oppose each other rather, and that Clarkson’s person-to-person and transpersonal facets may at times operate in tandem rather than isolation (even if one facet may be predominating).

(iii) Clarkson (2003) describes various skills and factors that generally contribute to the five facets of the therapeutic relationships. Specifically regarding the facets in which I have identified deep moments:

- The ‘developmentally needed relationship’ requires, inter alia, something akin to Winnicott’s holding environment (Clarkson, 1990: 153; 2003: 134).
The ‘I-You relationship’ can be especially difficult to use, but appropriate, authentic, and intentional self-disclosure can assist mutuality (Clarkson, 1990: 155; 2003: 160-3).

To facilitate the ‘transpersonal relationship’ and influenced by a Jungian understanding, Clarkson (1990: 159; 1994: 42-4; 2003: 187-8), emphasises the emptying out of the therapist’s ego and personal unconscious, requiring a letting-go of skills, knowledge, experience, preconceptions, and a desire to heal, in order to create a receptive container or sacred space, enabling a communicative shared silence and being-with (hence a paradoxical emptying and intimacy), in which change may occur and something numinous may be created in the ‘between’ of the relationship. Clarkson also cautions against naively or prematurely focusing on the transpersonal and overlooking or minimising transferential or personal phenomena.

Clarkson’s observations around self-disclosure and in (iv) below suggest that maintenance of professional/ethical boundaries, but also appropriate adjustment, may assist with deep moment facilitation, although this is not a point that she emphasises. However, regarding the transpersonal relationship (and thus regarding a moment of deep encounter), Clarkson does emphasise that:

> It cannot be made to happen, it can only be encouraged in the same way that the inspirational muse of creativity cannot be forced, but needs to have the ground prepared or seized in the serendipitous moment of readiness. What can be prepared are the conditions conducive to the spontaneous or spiritual act. (Clarkson, 1990: 159; see also 2002: 198; 2003: 227.)

**(iv)** Clarkson (1990: 153-9; 2003: 25-8, 51-5, 307-14) frequently stresses the need for professional/ethical boundaries, yet, once there is a strong working alliance, she allows for appropriate variations in order to respond to ‘safe emergencies’, which can lead to therapeutic breakthroughs (“Rules can prevent harm. But taken as true in themselves, they can prevent healing” (Clarkson, 1992: 2)).

Clarkson (1990: 159-60; 2002: 102; Clarkson & Lapworth, 1992: 52) acknowledges (rather than emphasises) the possibility of lowered transpersonal boundaries; and, regarding personal/psychological boundaries, that clients and psychotherapists are separate and overlapping individuals.

**(v)** Clarkson’s five relational facets were independently developed but built on Bordin’s (1979) ‘working alliance’ and Gelso and Carter’s (1985) ‘working alliance’, ‘transferential’
and ‘real’ relationships (Clarkson, 2003: xxii, 9). Clarkson (1990, 1994, 2003) identifies the:

- working alliance;
- transferential/countertransference relationship;
- reparative or developmentally needed relationship;
- person-to-person, I-You, dialogical or ‘real’ relationship; and,
- transpersonal relationship.

From wide research, Clarkson argues that different facets predominate at different stages but that all are present, intentionally or unintentionally, in most psychotherapeutic approaches. They can be used, sequentially or flexibly, in skilful and disciplined ways, but may cause harm if inappropriately confused or substituted for each other. Clarkson also claims the different facets help to explain how different approaches resemble or differ from one another (which later I will apply to help explain the relationship between different deep-moment interpretations).

Although there are occasional hints that deep moment characteristics can be created (see facilitation of the transpersonal relationship under (iii) above), her overriding emphasis, that the transpersonal cannot be made to happen, suggests a perspective that predominantly moments of deep encounter are experienced as ‘found’ rather than ‘constructed’.

(vi) Clarkson’s deep-moment indicators cited above arise in connection with particular facets of the therapeutic relationship, each suggesting particular deep-moment interpretations. Thus deep moments may arise out of, and be interpreted as:

- the developmentally needed relationship, as a **reparative experience**;
- the person-to-person relationship, as an **I-You moment** (Clarkson (2003: 154, 176) acknowledges this facet may occur in particular moments, as well as for longer periods or as a permeating quality); or
- the transpersonal relationship, as a **breaking-through of the transpersonal, ‘soul’ or ‘divine’**.
6.1.4 Hobson

I set out my analysis of Hobson’s data earlier in section 3.3. (The fullness of that analysis emphasises also how the Summary Tables can only record the key and distinguishing points for each subsection and author, and not every point of each analysis.)

6.1.5 Rowan

Rowan is rooted in Humanistic psychology (Rowan, 1976, 1992), but also advocates a Transpersonal approach (Rowan, 1993, 2005).

(i) Rowan’s (1993, 2005) wide surveys of, for example, the Transpersonal approaches do not reveal copious deep-moment indicators, save in three possible areas.

- Rowan (1993: 3) refers to breakthrough or ‘ah’ moments:

  Every time we have a breakthrough in therapy, a point where we say ‘Ah!’ (not ‘Aha!’ which is close but different), it means experiencing something spiritual. Sometimes it may be experienced as inside ourselves: this is the typical experience of contacting the real self. Sometimes it may be experienced as outside ourselves: this is the typical experience of contacting the transpersonal self. Sometimes it may be experienced as a total letting-go: this is the typical experience of contacting the divine, which may be known as energy, as nature, as god or goddess, as pure being, as the void, or whatever.

- Rowan (1992: 12, 134-44) acknowledges his own peak and ecstatic experiences, and more widely identifies seven types of peak or mystical experience, although generally he does not site these in interpersonal contexts. However, in a later discussion, Rowan (1993: 23) suggests that peak experiences can occur in psychotherapy, being usually, but not always, associated with catharsis.

- Rowan (Rowan & Jacobs, 2002: 82-4) refers to Budgell’s concept of ‘linking’ (I would query in some respects his understanding of Budgell, but nonetheless this reference first drew my attention to Budgell).

Rowan (2005: 162-73) subsequently discussed ‘linking’ more fully, referring to several authors whom I have cited (Winnicott, Bion, Samuels, Schwartz-Salant, Field, Mearns, van Deurzen, Bugental, Friedman, Mahrer, Grof; and to some related general concepts). As I indicated earlier in Chapter 1, Rowan’s discussion is the fullest treatment of this type of experience other than my own research, but inevitably I would suggest that his dozen pages cannot provide as deep an analysis, or as extensive a treatment, as my own.
Rowan includes within ‘linking’ some experiences that may not be beneficial: the psychoanalytic understanding of ‘overidentification’ (although he does not distinguish fully between this and projective and introjective forms of ‘identification’), the Gestalt concept of ‘confluence’, and some more general merger experiences. However, if not beneficial, such experiences would not constitute ‘moments of deep encounter’ according to my ‘working definition’; nor would they necessarily accord with Budgell’s own description of ‘linking’; even if they might illustrate unhealthy boundary breaches in connection with code (iv). I also disagree with Rowan and Jacobs’ (2002: 83-4) assertion about the degree to which these phenomena have been “formally researched”; but agree that “a great deal more work” is required (which this research is hopefully contributing towards), and that, regarding these experiences (which again I first noticed in 2000),

Sometimes in the history of psychotherapy a phenomenon arises which occurs to several people at once, like ripe fruit which drops into everyone’s back garden at the same time. (Rowan, 2005: 162)

(ii) Rowan recognises intra-, inter- and trans-personal elements (albeit concentrating most in the intra- and trans-personal), arguing that a transpersonal dimension should be recognised in all therapy (Shiers & Paul, 2008: 128). Rowan (1993: 10-11, 194) understands the ‘transpersonal’ to involve something divine (being distinguished from the ‘extrapersonal’, which is non-divine, although he recognises that this distinction is not always made; for example, Jung’s ‘collective unconscious’ includes both). The transpersonal may connect to the interpersonal, since psychotherapy offers a “bridge into the spiritual realm”, and

we apprehend the numinous through the relationship with another person – a relationship in which both I and the other are transformed (Rowan, 1993: 2; Rowan & Jacobs, 2002: 73).

(iii) Rowan (1976: 48-52; 1993: 2; 2005: 173-194; etc.) draws on many therapeutic approaches, stressing:

- the usual considerations such as being genuinely there for the other, developing rapport within the relationship, and attending to the present experience;
- working at and integrating regressive (including that working with childhood material can lead to the spiritual), existential and transpersonal levels; and
understanding therapy as a **spiritual** exercise, and as an alchemical process (interestingly proposed immediately after his consideration of ‘linking’).

Rowan and Jacobs (2002: 71-2, 84) acknowledge that some consider ‘linking’ experiences to arise spontaneously, whilst for others “there is an element of being able to produce it”. More generally, they suggest that transpersonal experience “cannot be ‘willed’ into existence, but often comes in brief moments, particularly at first”, whilst Rowan (1976: 25) suggests that:

> the attempt to push and hustle for peak experiences is not the way to get them – they are not a commodity to be demanded. It is true that we can set up circumstances in which they are likely to come, but in the end we are surprised by joy – it is never exactly what we expected or wanted.

(iv) Rowan (1992: 124-5, 184-5) cites Mahrer, Samuels and others regarding fusion or ‘dual-unity’ experiences, involving a lowering of personal and/or transpersonal boundaries. Rowan (1976: 106; 1988: 30; 1993: 177) also suggests that such experiences are possible when undertaking ‘primal work’ (the integration of pre and perinatal experience), causing possible confusion between these and transpersonal experiences (Rowan cites Wilber’s ‘pre/trans fallacy’), with Wasdell reducing all mystical experience to reminiscences of the idealised womb, but Rowan upholding Grof’s suggestion that blissful womb-like states can be similar to peak or mystical unity experiences. Rowan (1993: 54f., 111-22) allows for neurotic, but also more positive, experiences of ‘confluence’. Thus at times a lowering of inter- and trans-personal boundaries can be therapeutically helpful, particularly at the ‘higher’, transpersonal, levels of development. Additionally, Rowan notes Heron’s suggestion that an overlapping third is created between the parties’ consciousnesses, and also suggests that, with increasing psychospiritual development, boundaries become less important, ultimately leading to “formless consciousness, boundless radiance”.

Rowan and Jacobs (2002: 5-8, 71-6) identify ‘instrumental’, ‘authentic’, and ‘transpersonal’ uses of the therapist’s self, each having value, and pertinence regarding boundaries. The ‘instrumental position’ involves the ‘working alliance’, an ‘I-It relationship’ (in Buber’s terms), that presumably requires professional and ethical boundaries to maintain. The ‘authentic position’ (the next level up) involves a ‘person-to-person’ relationship, in which “personal involvement is much more acceptable, with the therapist much more closely identified with the client”. Whilst most of the therapeutic
process takes place at the ‘instrumental’ or (to a lesser degree) ‘authentic’ levels, a smaller amount occurs at the ‘transpersonal’ level, where “certain boundaries”, including between therapist and client, might “disappear altogether” (again therefore, at the ‘transpersonal’ level, inter- and trans-personal boundaries might be affected), involving a form of awareness similar to that described by the mystics, with potentially positive effects. This involves entry into the unknown, although still retaining professional/ethical boundaries:

Therapists who work at this level know when they need to put aside conventional responses, and enter into the unknown, while at the same time fully appreciating the need to hold the usual boundaries, albeit for the time being themselves held back from immediate consciousness. It is possible for therapists to function on a number of different levels at once.

(v) Drawing widely on primarily Humanistic and Transpersonal resources, Rowan (1992: 119-20; 2005: 179-80) emphasises integration at regressive, existential and transpersonal levels; and his discussions, including regarding the ‘spiritual’ aspects of primal integration (1992: 177-94), or that contacting the ‘real self’ enables contact with the ‘transpersonal self’ (1988; 23, 31), illustrate that each area (and working with them) can also be interconnected. Consequently, spirituality is not just one part, but encompasses the whole person, since “we are spiritual beings” (1992: 182; 1993: 3, 9). Whilst offering some critiques, Rowan (1993: 100-29) also broadly affirms Wilber’s levels of psychospiritual development, a process we are engaged in whether we want or know it, or not.


Otherwise, the deep-moment interpretation most inferable from Rowan’s work is the notion of ‘breakthrough’, occurring when

we suddenly drop through into a wholly different state...into something wholly other

where previous rules and learning no longer apply, involving a qualitatively higher state of consciousness than the one you are usually in (Rowan, 1993: 27, 149).
‘Breakthrough’ is referred to in the ‘ah moment’ cited in (i) above (a reference that also implies contact with the ‘divine’). Rowan (1992: 144-5) agrees with Wilber “that each breakthrough on the spiritual path gives a new sense of self” requiring time to work through, and that breakthroughs may occur at transitions between Wilber’s psychospiritual stages (Rowan, 1993: 107-17). Additionally, in Alchemical terms, moments of deep encounter may occur with experiences of deeper exploration, breakthrough or integration, sometimes involving coniunctio (Rowan, 2005: 190-4). Interestingly, in both accounts he suggests that accompanying peak experiences are more likely to occur in the middle stages of development or therapy (transitioning from ‘mental ego’ to ‘centaur’ levels, or at a ‘rites of passage’ stage (Rowan, 1993: 101; 2005: 190)).

6.2 Approaches explicitly acknowledging the transpersonal or spiritual

6.2.1 Transpersonal approaches

The Transpersonal approaches were designated by Maslow (1962/1968: iii-iv) and his colleagues as a “fourth force” (a designation still accepted by some (e.g. Shiers & Paul, 2008: 117-9), notwithstanding Pedersen’s (1991) re-categorising it as ‘Multiculturalism’), although ‘transpersonal’ is variously understood (Wellings, 2000a: 203). Transpersonal practitioners utilise theory and practice from various approaches, but perceive transpersonal concerns as underlying many presenting issues, for which transpersonal strategies may at times be appropriate (Fontana, 2000; Gordon-Brown & Somers, 1988).

(i) Notwithstanding an expectancy that, if understood and integrated, altered states of consciousness can have a transformative effect (Shiers & Paul, 2008: 126), I found very few indicators of moments of deep encounter, save possibly for:-

- **Davies** (2000: 208) also refers to ‘felt sense’ leading to ‘felt shift’ and an “‘ah, ha’ moment”, with for Davies the sense of “something spiritual present”.

- **Heron** (2006: 43-4) refers to experiences of mutual ‘presence-between-us’ in both group and dyad contexts, involving dropping down into shared feeling and becoming immersed in “the living spacious reality of the sacred Between”.

- **McCormick** (2000: 21, 28) refers to crucial ‘glimpses of wholeness’, involving healing moments of reflection, a ‘felt sense’ leading to ‘felt shift’, and “moments of being non-identified with the personal contents of consciousness”; and to numinous, spiritual experience being lived between the parties.
• Wellings and McCormick (2000: 8) refer to patients glimpsing “momentary connection to the ground of being”.

Maslow’s (1964/1976) ‘peak-experiences’ are cited by many, but, except between lovers (1962/1968, chps.6-7) or in a passing reference to a group context (1971/1976: 335), Maslow appears not to raise the possibility of peak experiences occurring within relational contexts. Generally, this is similarly the case when others cite peak-experiences. Hence, in the absence of an interpersonal aspect, most citations do not constitute moments of deep encounter.

(ii) Intra-, inter- and trans-personal elements are generally acknowledged (e.g. Whitmore, 1996), with the therapeutic importance of the relationship increasingly affirmed (Shiers & Paul, 2008: 121, 128-9): “Persons become persons in and through relationship with other persons” (Heron, 2006: 35). Moreover, the relationship is understood to be mysterious (McCormick, 2000: 21); with something spiritual present (Davies 2000: 208); so that transpersonal phenomena are participatory, not just intrapersonal, events, with (citing Buber) the spirit experienced between people (Ferrer, 2002: 116-9, 184-5); and a feeling sometimes “that our souls touched in that moment” (Daniels, 2005: 255); because, in Assagioli’s (1965/1993: 31) terms, “all are included in and part of the spiritual super-individual Reality”.

However, notwithstanding this relational spirituality (Heron, 2006: 127) and implicit appreciation that the transpersonal may ‘operate’ within the interpersonal, “the social-interpersonal dimension of mysticism has generally been neglected in mystical scholarship” (Daniels, 2005: 251-2), and, indeed, in the Transpersonal approaches. Predominantly the emphasis is on the intra- and trans-personal elements, often in terms of personal and spiritual development through various stages (Daniels, 2005: 178; Assagioli, 1965/1993; Wilber, 1980/1996). This intra- and trans-personal developmental focus, and consequent more limited interest in spiritual experience between people, may help to explain the lack of deep-moment indicators.

(iii) Facilitative factors include:-

• Heron (2006: 43-4) suggests that mutual presence involves engaging in shared feeling, sometimes in groups with hands linked and eyes closed, or within a dyad
by silently sustaining mutual gazing, whilst letting go of emotional tension and being “fully present to each other”.

• McCormick (2000) suggests that professional/ethical and framework boundaries enable a safe facilitating environment (Winnicott), a developmentally needed relationship (Clarkson), and transformational space (Bolas); requiring respect, empathic resonance, attentiveness, moving into the unknown (as the “darkness...calls to us of its essence”), and enduring fear and suffering.

• Wellings and McCormick (2000: 6-8) and Wellings (2000a: 196-202; 2000b: 213) advocate mindfulness (including inhabiting mindful space in one’s self to help the other do likewise) and focusing; unconditional presence (“the most powerful transmuting power there is”); and allowing the process to unfold, and staying with feelings and suffering to allow and accept whatever occurs.

• (A significant amount of earlier transpersonal (and also primal) work involved the use of LSD and other drugs (Grof, 1976; Rowan, 1976: 11, 100-5). However, as understanding regarding drug use increased, some discovered that other methods could produce similar therapeutic effects (e.g. Lake’s (1981: 7, 35; 1986: x) use of Reichian and bio-energetic deep-breathing techniques).)

Maslow (1962/1968: 87) suggests that: “We cannot command the peak-experience. It happens to us”. Wellings (2000b: 213) similarly implies that profound moments can be facilitated rather than engineered:

As with an experience of grace, we cannot call the unconscious to order but we can offer a space where the numinous may choose to enter.

However, Heron (2006: 127) refers to “co-created...spiritual presence generated when humans interact with each other”, perhaps allowing more for deep moments to be ‘engineered’. Daniels’ (2005: 267) and Ferrer (2002) similarly agree that “transpersonal events are essentially co-created”, but since Daniels speaks of developing forms of relationship in which such events “may emerge”, this suggests a more facilitative understanding.

(iv) Wellings and McCormick (2000: 5-11; also McCormick, 2000: 24-8; Wellings 2000a: 186-8) emphasise professional/ethical boundaries, yet also indicate a beneficial lowering of personal and transpersonal boundaries:-

a healthy ego is one that can...allow its boundaries to expand and dissolve at will and will not experience this as a psychotic breakdown.
a longing for and experience of union with the Other that, if realized creates spiritual wholeness.

Grof and Grof (1989: 16 etc.) link this to spiritual emergency and psychological renewal, and likewise identify lowered personal and transpersonal boundaries:

one experiences dissolution of personal boundaries and has a sense of becoming one with other people, with nature, or with the entire universe. This process has a very sacred quality and feels like one is merging with creative cosmic energy, or God.

Unitive experiences are commonly recognised by Transpersonal authors (including more widely in aesthetic, romantic and sexual contexts (Maslow, 1962/1968: 79, 105; Wilber, 1979/2001: 57; Woodward et al., 2009; Daniels, 2005: 252-3)) as involving a feeling of consciousness expansion “beyond the usual ego boundaries and limitations of time and space” (Grof, 1976: 154), which overcomes subject/object dualism (McCormick: 2000: 21; Wellings, 2000a: 204). Notably Heron (2006: 11, 43-4, 75) asserts that the feeling of unity is “the consummation of personhood”, yet he also indicates that interpersonally and transpersonally the experience affirms, rather than dissolves, individual distinctiveness and uniqueness, implying that ‘unity’ and ‘separateness’ can occur simultaneously.

Heron (1992: 54, 146) and Grof (Daniels, 2005: 190-1; Rowan, 1993: 30) distinguish between, but allow for, both perinatal and transpersonal influences in spiritual and fusion experiences, whilst (Wellings & McCormick, 2000: 4) acknowledge there may be a longing to regress back and merge into an infantile experience of fusion and bliss. However, Wilber (1979/2001), whilst arguing that all boundaries are illusory given the interpenetration of all things, nonetheless sharply distinguishes between ‘prepersonal’ and ‘transpersonal’ levels and experiences, implying that boundaries are less apparent at these ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ stages, but are more evident at the ‘personal’ levels in between.

(v) Transpersonal psychology draws from a wide variety of theoretical perspectives (especially Jung and Buddhism), and in place of delusional self-representations aims for the clarity of transpersonal states (Wellings & McCormick, 2000: 3-8). As examples, Assagioli’s (1965/1993) ‘Psychosynthesis’ aims for synthesis and realisation of the ‘Higher Self’; Wilber’s (1980/1996: xvii) goal is “Atman, or ultimate Unity Consciousness in only God” (although Wilber has also increasingly described his approach as ‘Integral’ rather
than ‘Transpersonal’ (Daniels, 2005: 263-5); Vaughan (in Rowan, 1993: 168) understands a person as “a clearing through which the Absolute can manifest”. Concepts such as ‘the Absolute’, ‘the Self’, and more generally ‘the transpersonal’, are variously understood, and ‘transpersonal’ and ‘spiritual’ are not always coterminous (Daniels, 2005: 216-7, 236-7; Shiers & Paul, 2008: 126-9; Heron, 1998: 8-10; etc.). Within this there is a range of essentialist and constructivist positions (Daniels, 2005: 238-9), including whether the ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’ may or may not represent ‘objective’ entities (Wellings, 2000a: 185), and whether the ‘spiritual’ is co-created (Heron, 2006; Ferrer, 2002).

Different positions regarding ‘transcendent/immanent’, ‘universalism/pluralism’ (i.e. one or many spirits/divines), ‘religious/non-religious’, etc., have been variously mapped, with relational and participatory understandings of spirituality existing amongst a range views (Daniels, 2005; Heron, 1998: 86-100, 245-54; Heron, 2006; Ferrer, 2002). Wilber’s (1980/1996, etc.) attempt to marry the psychological and the spiritual through his ‘spectrum of consciousness’ model of pre-personal, personal and transpersonal levels, with stages within them, has had much influence (Rowan, 2003: 97f.; Parsons, 2001: 244; Shiers & Paul, 2008: 121-2), but Wilbur has also been criticised for over-emphasising Vedanta and Buddhist perspectives, and for being overly metaphysical, transcendent, lineal, hierarchical and patriarchal (Daniels, 2005: 34-5, 205; Heron, 1992: 197f., 1998: 111-2; West, 2008: 200, 2011a: 218-9). In my research Wilber’s ‘pre/trans fallacy’ has been insightful, and questionable, and I will consider it again in section 7.6.2.

(vi) A number of interpretive possibilities are suggested or can be extrapolated from a Transpersonal perspective. Moments of deep encounter may involve:-

- **altered states of consciousness**;

- a possible ‘**peak experience**’ (although the Transpersonal authors generally do not refer to these occurring in therapeutic contexts, but occasionally other authors do);

- “a **momentary connection to the ground of being**” (Welling & McCormick, 2000: 8);

- an **expression of participatory spirituality** (Heron, 2006; Ferrer, 2002); or

- a **breakthrough** (Davies, 2000), **and/or no boundary moment**, gaining deeper unity and integration, especially at the centaur or later transpersonal levels of
development (Wilber, 1979/2001; etc.) (although Wilber himself does not emphasise such experiences in interpersonal contexts).

6.2.2 Spiritual approaches

In this subsection I collate the data from various authors who, in their approach, recognise, employ, or are especially concerned about, spirituality in counselling.

(i) Since for many the focus is again on the spirituality of individuals, rather than on possible spiritual experience within the therapeutic context, some otherwise promising works did not reveal obvious deep-moment indicators (for example, Brothers, 1992; Clark, 2012; Griffith & Griffith, 2002 (save for passing references to ‘I-Thou’ type encounters (2002: 23, 80)); Schreurs, 2002). However, where authors allow more for “spirituality within the therapy session itself, including spiritual experiences” (West, 2011a: 14), indicators were found:

- **Gubi** (2008: 100-1) refers to **moments of spiritual love and empathic resonance**, when God’s presence was felt in the quality of the I-Thou relationship.

- **Lines** (2006: 1, 117) refers to the therapeutic relationship as having “the potential for moments of transcendence”, and emphasises that:

  Every so often something happens...that...can only be described as a **mystical happening**. I feel a powerful bond of love for my client, which I sense is reciprocal, as though we are intuitively relating with each other on a different plane...I will occasionally describe this **relational happening** as a numinous phenomenon or more commonly a spiritual experience.

- **Scott’s** (2011: 119-20) research (regarding integrating Christian faith and counselling practice) revealed some counsellors who reported:

  moments with others when you experience something beyond the self, where perhaps we really meet God.

Scott (2011: 162) then recounts her own “**deep moments**”, being:

an occasional happening in the therapy room. I sit with a client, open and accepting, listening to them and then again I find myself in what feels like a different way of being. I know I am in the Presence of God and I know too that they are there with me. Again, words seem unnecessary. There is a feeling of meeting, of understanding, of sitting soul to soul. Somehow, after a while, again it seems ‘enough’ and we find ourselves back in our therapy chairs.
Such moments include a sense of feeling ‘held’, and lead to new insight, movement out of “stuck-ness”, or increased trust in the therapeutic relationship.


Such moments include: different consciousness levels; healing energies for both client and therapist; a “quantum leap” for the client; a silent, healing, interconnectedness, at-one-ness, or of feeling merged with the client, or of forming a third entity with them; and/or the sense of being part of something larger, or of a third party, grace, or God being present.

- Additionally, **Gorsedene** (2011: 158), who, like Pargament below, suggests that such experiences are widely known, refers to:

  moments when something extra and beneficial emerges from or joins forces with the counsellor-client relationship.

**Pargament** (2007: 6) refers to special or

‘sacred moments’ when immediate realities fade into the background, when time seems to stand still, when it feels as if something larger than life is happening. In these moments, I believe, a meeting of souls is taking place.

**Wardle** (2011: 177) refers to the psychic energy occurring in experiences of “soul-to-soul connection”.

(ii) West (2008, etc.) illustrates that in this category a ‘spiritual’ dimension may be highlighted (even if language is inadequate for describing it (West, 2004: 55; 2005: 45; 2007a: 110; 2011a: 135)). However, all three aspects are usually indicated, and are linked together. West (2000: 1; 2009b: 144-7, 2011a: 223) suggests that spirituality involves connectedness with others, and construes therapy as a spiritual process. **Lines** (2006: 116-7) similarly connects intra-, inter-, and trans-personal elements, envisaging counselling as “a soul journey of relational being through a collaborative style of therapy”, and (drawing on Elkins) affirming the possibility of ‘peak experiences’ occurring within human interaction, including the therapeutic relationship.

(iii) In terms of facilitation, again some general points are made, plus specific points aimed to value or facilitate a spiritual element:
• Drawing on Person-Centred therapy, Lines (2006, 116-7, 159, 180) emphasises a loving relationship that values and regards the other.

• West (1997: 304-5; 1998a, 372-4; 2000: 7, 70-4; 2004: 34, 44, 75-6; 2005: 40; 2009b: 147; 2011a: 223), affirms spiritual practice or discipline (citing Thorne) and the preparing of spiritual space in which healing might take place; respecting the client (including their spirituality), and seeking to be present and engaged (helped if client does likewise, and also accepts a spiritual dimension); and (in a spiritual moment with his client ‘Matthew’ (2003: 207-8)) risking holding the silence in the spiritual intimacy and connection.

• Gubi (2001, 2004) has researched the often discreet use of prayer in counselling (whether Christian or otherwise). Prayer’s facilitating effects are reported as (2011: 65-7, 73) making the counselling work more meaningful at a spiritual level; enabling a deeper level of presence and stillness; strengthening the connection between the counsellor and client and with the ‘here and now’; enabling “the counsellor to stay with the ‘not knowing’ and the ‘aloneness’”; containing, and placing the work in the care of a higher being; tapping into “the forces that become ‘powerfully operative in the transcendent encounter’”, with silence fostering a “connectedness to the sacred”, and intercessory prayer adding an extra healing dimension.

• Lines (2006: 117, 180) suggests that therapist alertness to the possibility of transcendent moments makes it more likely that the client will also experience them: “the possibility exists for the Other to experience them”.

If the counselling relationship is viewed as a transpersonal experience...the potential for healing and growth becomes exponential.

From this perspective, a “decision to view personal and counselling relating within numinous constructs” might make it more likely that moments of deep encounter will be noticed or even occur.

As for whether moments of deep encounter can be engineered, West (2004: 64; 2005: 41; 2007a: 107) is alert to Geller’s contention that ‘presence’ can be taught (although I have argued in section 5.1.1(iii) that this probably refers to a quality, rather than deep moments). Additionally, West (2000: 67) reports a research interviewee’s claim that:

it was his [the therapist’s] skill or craft to bring them [the client] to the point where this [deep moment] could happen, but the energy involved was not his own.

However, the reference to ‘could’ also suggests that deep moments cannot be automatically manufactured. Indeed, West (2007a: 107; 2004: 57) notes that healing moments are usually understood to occur through serendipity; and he proposes that a client’s process should be about spiritual unfolding, rather than actively seeking
supernatural intervention, implying that, instead of being actively sought or created, special moments ‘happen’. Similarly, Scott (2011: 162) implies that, at most, moments of deep encounter can be facilitated:

I can’t engineer their occurrence, but there are common factors running through. Before they happen I am in a state of openness and acceptance to whatever is there.

(iv) There is awareness of professional/ethical boundaries (Gubi, 2008: 61-90; 2009; Lines, 2006: 1, 99 (although he also warns that professional distancing prevents relational depth); Wardle, 2011: 181-3; West, 2000, 69-70; 2002: 90; etc.).

West (2000: 68, 128; also: 2005: 45; 2007a: 110; Moodley & West eds., 2005: 257, 273-7) also recognises that in moments of heightened interconnectedness, the parties personal/psychological boundaries can dissolve in merger, which can be frightening but also healing, and explainable in non-spiritual terms (citing Mahrer), or spiritual terms:

Working with our clients spiritually can result in engaging in something akin to I-Thou relating....It also involves recognizing the reality of the ‘in-between’, that there are ways in which we will experience ourselves as no longer separate from our clients, and in those moments there are often profound possibilities of healing for them and for us. Such spiritual experiencing is life changing.

There is a risk that such interconnectedness may lead to confluence and loss of autonomy, but West (2004: 87-90) suggests that this is not what the I-Thou encounter is about, since (citing an interviewed Gestalt therapist) it can simultaneously involve being absorbed or merged, and separate and grounded, requiring respect for self and other.

Implicitly ‘spiritual’ boundaries are also affected, although West (2003: 207-8) offers balance between the different aspects, explaining that with ‘Matthew’, West avoided going so deep in his own part of the spiritual experience as to lose the interpersonal connection with his client.

(v) In terms of therapeutic perspective, West’s (2000, 3-4; 204: 8-11) position is broadly humanistic, which he claims “is essentially an integrative or eclectic way of working”, but with a spiritual perspective, so that the therapeutic encounter is seen as innately or implicitly spiritual (although West (2000, 2002, 2004) also discerns between healthy and unhealthy forms of spirituality). West’s position appears to be generally representative of
this category: wide sources and perspectives are utilised, often within a humanistic therapeutic frame, but also, implicitly or more explicitly, sensitively integrating a spiritual perspective. For example, Lines (2006) is widely read, employs person-centred principles, yet works within a ‘spiritual paradigm’; Gubi (2001; 2004: 467-8; 2011: 64-7) observes that prayer provides counselling with a ‘frame of reference’, but that awareness of transferential issues, for example, is required.

Within and between such frameworks, spiritual understandings naturally differ. For example, Gorsedene (2011: 159, West ed. 2011: xiii) is person-centred, and ‘agnostic’, but open to a ‘spirit guide’; Scott (2011: 15-7) is broadly person-centred, but with an evangelical Christian background. Notably, despite their different spiritual perspectives, both identify deep-moment type experiences. However, different theoretical frames, even if overlapping, can affect the observation, occurrence, reporting, or interpretation of deep moments. This is reflected in one feature of Scott’s research. Scott (2011: 115, 163-4, 168) divided her interviewees into three groups according to their perspectives and contexts. The first group included:

Practitioners who have a Christian faith but who have largely secular input in their training, work context and support systems.

The training, supervision or work context of the other two groups was increasingly shaped by an often ‘conservative’ Christian perspective. However, the deep-moment indicators, of which overall there were few, perhaps paradoxically, all came from the first group, the counsellors who had faith but who worked within a secular paradigm. Scott speculated on the possible reasons for her finding, without drawing firm conclusions, but hypothesised that those in the first group had spent more time integrating their faith and practice, possibly making them more confident in their position, which in some way may have had a bearing on their experiences or recounting of them.

The possibility of different perspectives and understandings is also acknowledged by Lines (e.g. 2006: 159, 180), reflecting his stated awareness of social constructionism. At the same time, Lines implies that there is more to spirituality or the divine than mere ‘construction’. Accordingly, he appears to employ a ‘constructed and found’ perspective, towards a spiritual dimension, and towards the phenomenon of moments of deep encounter. Lines (2006: 115-7, his italics) argues for believing, and consequently seeing,
that human relating is connected to the divine, which may lead to greater healing and growth:

The central thesis is that the divine may be experienced through the human if the subject views encounter through a lens of believing is seeing.

In the new spiritual paradigm the counsellor views an occasion in the counselling process itself as a captured moment, as a one-off unrepeatable experience, and as a relational encounter of transcendence.

As noted in (iii) above, deciding to recognise a transpersonal aspect might also make it more likely that a moment of deep encounter will occur.

(vi) This category would generally interpret moments of deep encounter as involving a transpersonal or spiritual element, for example:

- Gubi (2008: 101), citing an interviewee: “no therapeutic encounter could take place without the presence of God”.


- Scott (2011: 162-3), speaking for herself: “I am quite clear that this is a transpersonal experience, something beyond me and something beyond others sharing the experience”.

- West (2005: 40; 2009b: 146-7; 2011a: 131-5): the healing “remains something of a mystery”, but the counsellor can act as a channel for healing or spiritual energies (that are not their own), for something outside the parties is involved. Thus in one spiritual moment (West, 2011a: 13-4), although psychodynamic factors had a role, the therapist in question

felt it was more than that. I felt something else had happened, that wasn’t created or facilitated by me or my client.

The therapist speculated that it:

felt like ‘unconditional love’ coming from someone or something other than me. It was difficult to discuss and describe, almost as if we didn’t need to. To have experienced it was enough.
West (1997: 292-3; 1998: 373; 2000: 68-9; 2002: 90-1; 2003: 210-11; 2004: 49-52, 58-64, 89; 2007a: 107; 2009b: 145; 2011a: 4-5, 133-6, 192-3) also repeatedly interprets special moments by referring to Buber’s ‘I-Thou moments’, Rogers’ ‘presence’, and Thorne’s ‘tenderness’ (sometimes also adding Mearns & Cooper’s ‘relational depth’), which he links together, suggesting that they can all be seen as ‘Grace’. West and others also draw on other sources and perspectives, but Buber and the Person-Centred authors are frequently referred to in various attempts to interpret moments of deep encounter (Gubi, 2008: 101; Lines, 2006: 115, 159, 177-81; Scott, 2011: 162-3).

6.2.3 Pastoral approaches

(i) Whilst (as indicated in section 2.3.1) I concentrated on the ‘liberal’ pastoral care and counselling tradition, within Pastoral and Practical theology (the terms are nuanced (Woodward & Pattison, 2000: 1-19)), this tradition has been increasingly overshadowed (at least in the UK) by a balancing emphasis on wider forms of social, political, ecological, ethical, and spiritual care (Leach, 1977, 1981, 1986/1989; Lambourne, 1983/1995; Lartey, 1997; Pattison, 2000; Willows & Swinton, 2000; Swinton, 2000, 2001; Lynch, 2002b; etc.). The resultant limited concern with (in particular) pastoral counselling might partly explain why so few deep-moment indicators were evident. Alternatively, such indicators may be so common as to be undeserving of any comment (given a general expectancy that spiritual aspects might be present in pastoral encounters); but, if so, I would have expected more traces to have been found in the range of literature which I covered. For example, Townsend (2009: 108-10) undertook grounded-theory research into different interpretations of pastoral presence by contemporary pastoral counsellors in North America, but his findings in this related topic revealed no obvious indicators of moments of deep encounter.

Such indicators that were identified included:

- **Campbell’s** (1986: 88-9, 102-6) reference to Buber’s ‘I-Thou’ encounters, and describes the experience of truly meeting and listening to another as “sharing”;

- **Cooper-White’s** (2007: 44, 201-2, 214-6) reference to the “immediacy of genuine encounter between ‘I’ and ‘Thou’” that “transcends or eludes rational, categorical thought”; and indicates two particular breakthrough moments (with a transpersonal element more apparent in the second, but with a spiritual dimension generally presumed);
• **Deeks’** (1987: 116-7) suggestion that counsellors may experience “reverence” when trusted to accompany someone on their private journey, with experiences similar to a scientific discovery:

> One feels that one has touched something central to another person, or subject, and one feels silent and grateful in a sort of way, because one was allowed to penetrate a layer of understanding which remained impenetrable to others.


> as a deep peace filled the empty space between us he said hesitantly, ‘When I look at you it is as if I am in the presence of Christ.’ I did not feel startled, surprised or in need of protesting, but I could only say, ‘It is the Christ in you, who recognises the Christ in me.’ ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘He indeed is in our midst’.

• **Rose’s** (2002: 111) reference to silently participating in a shared reality, without attempting to solve anything or to abandon each other, with a sense of something shared that belongs to neither.

• **Tillich**, in his dialogue with Rogers (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990b: 74), recounted that:

> in a person-to-person encounter...there is something present which transcends the limited reality of the Thou and the Ego of the other one and of myself, and I sometimes called it at special moments the presence of the holy, in a nonreligious conversation.

(ii) Hiltner (1949) illustrates a widespread appreciation for intra-, inter- and transpersonal elements, with both the relationship and appropriate spiritual resources held to be central to the care of troubled persons. Clinebell (1984) in particular revised the insight-oriented model of pastoral counselling towards a stress on exploring feelings and within a healing relationship (Campbell, 1979/2000: 160). Consequently,

> Pastoral theologians have learned that, in the final analysis it is the quality of the relationship that facilitates healing. The grace of God manifest in effective pastoral care...lies not in superior knowledge but rather in the nature of the therapeutic relationship (Lartey, 2006, 116-7).

Some emphasise the transpersonal as functioning within the interpersonal pastoral relationship, including:

• **Cooper-White** (2007: 90-3), who advocates a relational understanding of God and humans, with God in and among us, binding us together:
The Spirit infuses all relationships...with God’s own care, God’s creativity, God’s incarnational presence. ...The pastoral relationship...is no less fundamentally infused with this energy of God to help heal, grow, strengthen...


Nonetheless, there is limited focus on experiencing the trans- within the inter-personal: Clinebell (1984: 110), for example, refers to people’s regular need for “mystical ‘peak-experiences’”, but appears unaware that such moments might occur within the counselling relationship itself. Overall, the predominant emphasis remains on the intrapersonal and/or spiritual (e.g. Lake, 1980, 1981, 1986; Wright, 1980, 1982, 1985, 1996; Sutherland, 2001; Topper, 2003).

(iii) Regarding facilitation:-

- Cooper-White (2007: 185f., 201-2, 239-47) stresses general relational qualities such as listening, empathy and a loving I-thou approach; whilst living with questions, not understanding, and tolerating and revering silence (illustrated in a breakthrough moment); and thus waiting without memory or desire and with a ‘negative capability’ (referring to Bion and Keats); which she also links to the theological concept of ‘kenosis’, so that empathy becomes a self-emptying that relinquishes the need to ‘grasp’ wisdom or show off one’s knowledge, inviting both therapist and patient into an intersubjective realm of exploration in which fantasies and projections can be recognised, and mutual understanding tried out, being internalised as a new psychological, spiritual and ethical ‘habitus’.

- Rose (1996: 15-9; 2002: 67, 111) advocates Winnicott’s being “alone in the presence of another”, allowing space for the client to be, whilst being available for and ‘attending’ to them, including in silence, without abandoning each other or attempting to solve anything, and holding them in prayer including between sessions (Rose refers to Weil’s linking attention with prayer, thus bridging the disciplines of counselling and spirituality).

- As an example of wider practice, Clinebell (1984: 133, quoting Capps) advocates counselling skills to help remove blocks in the client, but also praying silently for openness to the presence of the Holy Spirit, the ‘Great Counsellor’, working in and through our relationships. This Spirit brings healing through our efforts, sometimes more in spite of than because of
what we do. The work of an effective pastoral counsellor “springs from, and is sustained by, a deep and continuous interior transaction with God”.

(iv) Given frequent ‘dual relationships’, boundaries in pastoral contexts can sometimes be more difficult (Jacobs 1982/93: 241-2; Lyall, 1995: 63-4; Lynch, 1999c). Nonetheless, the role of professional/ethical and frame boundaries, to protect personal/psychological boundaries, is stressed (Cooper-White, 2007: 142f.; Lynch, 1995, 2002b: 59-73; Poling, 1991; Rose, 2002: 41, 123-7). There is limited data regarding merged boundaries, save that of Lake (1981; Christian, 1991), who drew on Rank, Winnicott, Janov and others, but also undertook much original research regarding pre- and peri-natal experience and the therapeutic effects of ‘primal integration’. Lake (1981: 15, 62-6, 162-4) suggested a non-attached blastocyst may experience a state of unitive, ‘transcendent’ bliss, and noted parallels between primal and mystical experience, and that infatuation with a human or divine object could be similar. This implies that personal and transpersonal boundaries may be lowered in tandem, and have connections with early life experience.

(v) Many of the ‘liberal’ pastoral approaches draw on ‘secular’ therapeutic approaches (especially, earlier, the psychodynamic: Lake (1986); Lee (1968); etc.), but within a wider spiritual framework:-

- for Campbell (1986: 11, 18), the pastoral relationship has a mysterious nature;
- for Clinebell (1984: 112-7, 133), healing energy, from the counsellor’s relationship with God (“the Source of all healing and growth”), is used in healing; with a client’s reconnection to the spiritual being a means and purpose for their growth towards wholeness;
- Cooper-White (2007: 93 etc.):
  
  The Spirit infuses all relationships...with God’s own care, God’s creativity, God’s incarnational presence. We stand in relationship with this dynamic presence.

- for Lartey (2006: 91), God “is the primary pastoral care-giver”;
- for Lyall (1999: 18-9; 2001, 181), the pastoral relationship has a “parabola character” as “a sign of the kingdom” and “metaphor of grace”, “the grace which transcends and encompasses our striving”;
- for Oden (1978), the Rogerian core conditions implicitly convey the divine acceptance, empathy and congruence revealed in Christ; and
• for Rose (1996: 15-9; 1999; 2002: 37-40), prayer and counselling can share a space in which God reveals the deepest elements of a person’s being; for Rose, prayer posits more than a transpersonal, rather, a transcendent reality beyond the interpersonal process that is containing and good; implying a three-sided relationship between client, counsellor and God.

• for Swinton (2000), we seek in our relationships “to image the type of relationships that lie at the heart of the triune God” (p.155), and

Meaningful connection at the temporal level may well move a person towards the possibility of a reconnection at the level of the transcendent (p.128).

Rose (1996: 31-2) also argues that counselling is not value free, so that both theistic and atheistic beliefs affect the counselling relationship. Others recognise hermeneutic, postmodern and constructivist possibilities; for example: “Interpretation is always prior to acting and speaking” (Willows & Swinton, 2000: 58); and, “All descriptions of God...are human fabrications”, and

meaning is co-constructed, not on either ‘pole’ of the I-Thou duality, but in the third space that exists...between them” (Cooper-White, 2007: 36, 93).

(vi) Whether a transpersonal or spiritual element is explicit or not, deep moments are likely to be interpreted by the Pastoral approaches as instances of the healing activity and presence of God (albeit that God may be differently understood). This is not to exclude other possible interpretations: Cooper-White (2007: 94), for example, refers to Bollas’ ‘unthought known’, opening up the possibility that psychodynamic processes may also help to explain a deep moment. However, alongside and underpinning any such other interpretation, a Pastoral perspective would expect ‘God’ to be a part of any beneficial encounter.
PART III: META-ANALYSIS

Chapter 7: Comparison and Critique of Thematic Findings

My meta-analysis used the methods of the second stage of my methodology (section 2.3.2), and principles of (in particular) the second element of my theoretical framework (2.2.2), to analyse the findings from my first methodological stage, the data identification and thematic analysis (recorded in Chapters 4 to 6 and Tables 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1). In this chapter I therefore collate and compare, and contrast and critique, the principal thematic findings for each of the subcodes (set out in Table 3.1), highlighting the commonalities and differences.

Initially I summarise the principal meta-analytic findings in Table 7.1 by providing summaries for the main categories of approach, and for particular subcodes via a final concluding row, according to the nature of the findings. I then comment on these meta-analytic findings, citing in support the relevant authors, approaches and section numbers from the thematic findings (although, if the relevant thematic findings can be found by straightforwardly cross-referring authors, approaches and section numbers via the Summary Tables, sometimes I rely on that, to avoid unnecessarily burdening the text with excessive referencing). Given the detailed nature of much of the supporting analyses, to assimilate my findings, the reader may choose to read them through steadily, or prefer first to gain a sense of overview, before then reviewing the supporting details (being mostly contained in the bullet points).
Table 7.1  Summary Table of principal meta-analytic findings for the thematic codes

Key: ‘dm’ = deep moment(s); ‘mde’ = moment(s) of deep encounter; ‘P/E’ = professional/ethical boundaries; ‘P/P’ = personal/psychological boundaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROACHES</th>
<th>(i) INDICATORS:</th>
<th>(ii) ASPECTS</th>
<th>(iii) CAUSE &amp; FACILIT’N</th>
<th>(iv) BOUNDARIES</th>
<th>(v) THEORET’L FRAME</th>
<th>(vi) INTERPRETATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychodynamic</td>
<td>(a) Pattern (b) Perspective (c) Nature/Role</td>
<td>(a) Emphasis (b) Attitude (c) Function</td>
<td>(a) Factors (b) Aspects/Bound’rs (c) Engin’rd/Facilitated</td>
<td>(a) Significance (b) Understanding (c) Role</td>
<td>(a) Type (b) Effect (c) Partic’lr Paradigms</td>
<td>(a) Understanding (b) Relationship (c) Cogency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Few mde, confined to Relational or Jungian approaches (b)&amp;(c) See summary below</td>
<td>(a) Intra- emphasised, Relational &amp; Jungian approaches also highlight inter- &amp;/or trans-personal</td>
<td>(a),(b)&amp;(c) See summary for all approaches</td>
<td>(a),(b)&amp;(c) See summary for all approaches</td>
<td>(a) Emphasises interior, unconscious &amp; earlier life (b)&amp;(c) See summary below</td>
<td>(a) Earlier Life (see Table 7.2 for types) (b)&amp;(c) See summary below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROACHES</td>
<td>(i) INDICATORS:</td>
<td>(ii) ASPECTS</td>
<td>(iii) CAUSE &amp; FACILIT’N</td>
<td>(iv) BOUNDARIES</td>
<td>(v) THEORET’L FRAME</td>
<td>(vi) INTERPRETATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Pattern</td>
<td>(a) Emphasis</td>
<td>(a) Factors</td>
<td>(a) Significance</td>
<td>(a) Type</td>
<td>(a) Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Perspective</td>
<td>(b) Attitude</td>
<td>(b) Aspects/Bound’rs</td>
<td>(b) Understanding</td>
<td>(b) Effect</td>
<td>(b) Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanistic</td>
<td>(c) Nature/Role</td>
<td>(c) Function</td>
<td>(c) Engin’rd/Facilitated</td>
<td>(c) Role</td>
<td>(c) Partic’Ir Paradigms</td>
<td>(c) Cogency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) More mde, in Person-Centred, Dialogical, &amp; possibly other approaches</td>
<td>(a) Inter- emphasised, trans-personal sometimes present</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Emphasises self-actualisation through relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) &amp; (c) See summary</td>
<td>(b) Present relationship is key; spiritual &amp; non-spirit’l interpretations of transpersonal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) &amp; (c) See summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eclectic &amp; Integrative</td>
<td>(a) Various mde</td>
<td>(a) &amp; (b) Often as for Humanistic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Often partly as for Humanistic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) &amp; (c) See summary</td>
<td></td>
<td>(c) See summary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) &amp; (c) See summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transpersonal, Spiritual &amp; Pastoral</td>
<td>(a) More mde in Spiritual than Transpersonal or Pastoral approaches</td>
<td>(a) All three present; Transpersonal &amp; Pastoral emphasise intra &amp; trans-personal, Spiritual emphasise all including interpersonal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Explicitly recognises a spiritual dimension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) &amp; (c) See summary</td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Transpersonal prioritise intra- &amp; trans-personal development; Spiritual value interconnection, including trans-in/through inter-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) &amp; (c) See summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) See summary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) &amp; (c) See summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROACHES</td>
<td>(i) INDICATORS:</td>
<td>(ii) ASPECTS</td>
<td>(iii) CAUSE &amp; FACILIT’N</td>
<td>(iv) BOUNDARIES</td>
<td>(v) THEORET’L FRAME</td>
<td>(vi) INTERPRETATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Pattern</td>
<td>(a) Emphasis</td>
<td>(a) Factors</td>
<td>(a) Significance</td>
<td>(a) Type</td>
<td>(a) Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Perspective</td>
<td>(b) Attitude</td>
<td>(b) Aspects/Bound’rs</td>
<td>(b) Understanding</td>
<td>(b) Effect</td>
<td>(b) Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Nature/Role</td>
<td>(c) Function</td>
<td>(c) Engin’rd/Facilitated</td>
<td>(c) Role</td>
<td>(c) Partic’lr Paradigms</td>
<td>(c) Cogency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>(a) Others but not all experience mde, yet limited overall numbers (&amp; see Box 7.1)</td>
<td>(a) Accepting/recogising; deep empathy; presence; risking staying with; waiting in the not-knowing, silence &amp;/or aloneness; plus sometimes: holding environment, spiritual awareness/discipline</td>
<td>(a) Boundaries often have significance in dm, to varying degrees</td>
<td>(a) No overriding theoretical framework; varying, criss-crossing perspectives; code-related correlations</td>
<td>(a) Three main categories contain different, &amp; overlapping, types of interpretation</td>
<td>(a) Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Perspectives largely that of authors &amp;/or listeners, but talkers’ perspectives indicate that they also experience mde</td>
<td>(b) Re Aspects - see (iii)(c). Re Boundaries - respecting P/E &amp; P/P is facilitative; plus, for some, appropriate lowering of P/E, P/P, &amp;/or transpersonal boundaries</td>
<td>(b) See understandings in (iii)(b) re facilitation; lowered boundaries may be pathological or therapeutic; some identify merger, others separate &amp; joined; some connect to earlier life &amp;/or transpersonal factors</td>
<td>(b) Different frames affect dm; emphasis on factors identified by codes more important than particular frames or approaches per se</td>
<td>(b) Underlying tensions (see Fig.7.3) contribute to competing interpretations, yet some complementary balancing possible</td>
<td>(b) Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) mde beneficial, transforming + other shared features (re. time, insight &amp; deep working; at heart of &amp; focuses therapeutic process)</td>
<td>(c) Generally, at most facilitated, rather than engineered</td>
<td>(c) See (iii)(b)</td>
<td>(c) Application or rejection of positivist, constructionist, &amp; (more so) relational, paradigms, contribute to frames and affect dm occurrence or interpretation</td>
<td>(c) Cogency varies; Relational interpretations often cogent; but each category &amp; type cogent or not depending on applicability to particular mde (thus requiring reflexivity)</td>
<td>(c) Cogency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.1 Indicators of existence and role

7.1.1 Patterns of occurrence and recognition

The thematic findings endorsed my MPhil’s provisional conclusion that others also experience moments of deep encounter, but not universally so. However, the greater breadth and depth of this research revealed a greater complexity to the patterns involved, to caution against over generalising or simplifying them.

The **Psychodynamic** approaches initially appeared to lack deep-moment indicators, but, post-Freud, various indicators were now identified. However, these still comprised relatively few moments of deep encounter indicating all three aspects, being confined to:

- **Relational Psychodynamic** approaches emphasising transitional experience (Rubin, Jones, 4.2.3(i)), the analytic field (Di Chiara, 4.2.4c(i)), transformations in ‘O’ (Bion, Sullivan, Grothstein, 4.2.6(i)), a psychospiritual paradigm (Schermer, 4.2.7(i)), and possibly regression (Bollas, 4.2.2b(i)&(ii)); and to

- **Analytical psychology** as practised by various Post-Jungians (Carter, Field, MacKenna, Schwartz-Salant, etc., 4.3.2(i)), and possibly by Jung (4.3.1(i)).

The **Humanistic** approaches again revealed more moments of deep encounter, in:

- especially the **Person-Centred** (Rogers, Mearns & Cooper, Thorne, etc., 5.1.1(i)) and **Gestalt & Dialogical** (Hycner, and possibly Clarkson, L. Jacobs, Williams, 5.1.3(i)); and

- possibly **Existential** (Cooper, van Deurzen-Smith, 5.1.2(i)&(ii)) and **Experiential** (Mahrer, Gendlin, 5.1.4(i)&(ii)), approaches.

In other examined approaches, moments of deep encounter were also indicated:

- in various **Eclectic & Integrative** (Fish (6.1.1(i)), Budgell (6.1.2(i)), Clarkson (6.1.3(i)), Hobson (3.3(i)(a)), Rowan (6.1.5(i))), and **Spiritual** approaches that allowed for possible spiritual experience within therapy (Gubi, Lines, Scott, West, etc., 6.2.2(i)); but

- with fewer than might have been expected in the **Transpersonal** (save for Davies, Heron, McCormick, Wellings & McCormick, 6.2.1(i)) and **Pastoral** (save for Campbell, Cooper-White, Deeks, Rose, 6.2.3(i)) approaches.

(Later, Figure 8.2. summarises these findings.)
The difficulty of determining patterns partly arose from the difficulty sometimes in determining whether the data were indicating moments of deep encounter, or simply broader deep moments. This arose from a lack of clarity and confidence in some instances regarding particular aspects, and/or regarding the varying degrees of significance that different moments possessed, making it difficult to be sure of comparing like with like, and to assess the relative numbers and frequency of indicators in any particular approach. Accordingly, I considered whether to add the issue of significance to the working definition (in Box 1.4). However, I rejected this, because:

- more than with general deep moments, indicators of moments of deep encounter routinely conveyed significance, and the working definition implicitly conveys this; and,
- whilst limiting the research to more significant deep moments would have been convenient, this could have arbitrarily divided up and skewed the data field, and restricted awareness regarding the range of deep moments existing in the literature and in practice.

Thus, from wide analysis of the data, and using the principles and judgments set out in sections 2.2 and 3.2.2, the findings concerning occurrence are set out in Box 7.1.

**Box 7.1**  
**Meta-analytic findings regarding patterns of occurrence and recognition**

| (1) | Deep moments **occur**, but generally **only in some approaches** (as summarised above); within which |
| (2) | a **range of significance** exists, from more frequent deep moments with less significance, to rarer deep moments with greater significance (see the discussions regarding Stern et.al., relational depth, and Mahrer and Gendlin in 4.2.5(i), 5.1.1(i) and 5.1.4(i)); nevertheless, |
| (3) | many deep moments, and especially moments of deep encounter, have **high significance** for the therapeutic process and parties; although, |
| (4) | overall, reports of (in particular) moments of deep encounter are **relatively infrequent**, probably because the moments themselves occur relatively infrequently (rather than occurring so frequently as not to be recognised or worthy of comment); however, |
| (5) | the dates and quantity of published data suggest that **awareness and/or facilitation** of deep moments is **growing**; and |
| (6) | the **variations in pattern** between different approaches and authors regarding deep-moment occurrence and recognition might be **explained by** different combinations of the practical and theoretical factors |
7.1.2 Perspectives reported

In all approaches, the perspective most frequently reported was that of the author and/or listener. For example, Grotstein (as author) reported the impact on Bion (the therapist) of (what Grotstein describes as) “cosmic moments of intimate contact”, but the patient’s perspective was not reported (4.2.6(i)). Since, as Hycner acknowledges, only one party may feel that they have been part of an ‘I-Thou moment’ (5.1.3(i)), it invited a degree of circumspection wherever deep-moment accounts and insights were not matched by client versions of the same (or vice versa). At the same time, it was unlikely that, collectively, all therapists and authors would be entirely deluded in their observations about client deep-moment experiences (especially given therapists’ required abilities to listen and observe), suggesting that appropriate attention could still be paid to data generated by authors and/or therapists.

In any event, the research data included balancing client perspectives, in each of the major approaches:

- in the Psychodynamic approaches, Stern et.al. researched both patients’ and therapists’ perspectives (4.2.5(i)), whilst Field noted that patients not therapists sometimes recognise a moment’s significance (4.3.2(i));

- in the Humanistic approaches, the Person-Centred approach included research from client and therapist perspectives (see the discussion regarding nuanced but possibly reconcilable differences in 5.1.1(i)), and similarly the Experiential approaches (where Mahrer also notes that some moments are only identified by patients: 5.1.4(i));

- in the Eclectic/Integrative approaches, Budgell encompassed some client as well as therapist perspectives (6.1.2(i)), as

- likewise West from the Spiritual approaches (6.2.2(i)).

Cumulatively, this offers strong indication that both therapists and clients experience deep moments, including moments of deep encounter, even if more research into both sides’ experience of such interactions would be beneficial (Haugh & Paul, 2008: 250).

As for the question of when perspectives may have arisen in relation to the experiences described, Mearns and Cooper (2005) illustrate that much data was subsequently
reported, but that some was contemporaneously recorded, including verbatim. Deep-moment accounts and insights that were recalled and recorded at various times subsequent to their original occurrence may inevitably have been subject to inaccurate recall or distorted transcription. However, although contemporaneously recorded data may potentially have represented a more immediate and ‘accurate’ reporting of deep moments, as with all events and the language used to describe them, interpretation would still unavoidably have been required and involved. Consequently, the issue of whether contemporaneous or later recorded perspectives had any significance, was difficult to grapple with, or to assess regarding pertinence. Yet whilst I formed no firm conclusion, I sensed the issue was not particularly material to the overall analysis.

7.1.3 Nature and role
Given that my ‘working definition’ proposed that, to qualify as such, moments of deep encounter needed to be ‘beneficial’, there was a degree of circularity in my finding that deep moments were, indeed, beneficial and transforming. However, it is noteworthy that this was apparent across all approaches that reported deep moments (with the qualification in a very small number of cases that an experience could also be disturbing; e.g. see West, 6.2.2(iv)), and that, with moments of deep encounter, often “Profound growth and healing and energy are present” (Rogers, 1990c: 137).

Beyond their beneficial nature, there was (unsurprisingly) variation in the particular characteristics of different moments. However, various features appeared across different approaches, affirming the existence of a similar group of deep-moment phenomena. Three non-exhaustive but particular characteristics would be:

- an “outside-of-ordinary time” (Wright, 4.2.2(i)), “caesura in time” (Bollas, 4.2.2c)), “timelessness” (Jones, 4.2.3(i)); “moments...outside time” (Thorne, 5.1.1(i)); “timelessness” (Clarkson, 6.1.3(i)), or “meeting in and out of time” (Hobson, 3.3(i)(a)); characteristic in Relational Psychodynamic, Person-Centred and Eclectic/Integrative approaches;

- a ‘penny-dropping’ insight involving cognitive and affective or experiential qualities, indicated in Post Freud (Bateman & Holmes, 4.2.1(i)), Relational Psychodynamic (Bion, 4.2.6(v)), Existential (Sterling & Bugental, 5.1.2(ii)), Gestalt/Dialectical (Clarkson, Jacobs, 5.1.3(i)), and Experiential (Mahrer, 5.1.4(i)), approaches reflecting to some degree Gadamer’s ‘fusion of horizons’, here between the talker’s past and present, and between the talker and listener (and any ‘divine’), “where we expand knowledge of
ourselves through engagement with the other” (Langdridge, 1997: 49; although see also McLeod, 2011: 29);

- enabling or reflecting the possibility of safely risking deeper and quicker work, indicated in Person-Centred (Mearns & Cooper, Thorne, 5.1.1(iv)) and Eclectic/Integrative (Budgell, 6.1.2(i), Hobson, 3.3(iii)(a)) approaches.

The ‘out-of-time’ characteristic could almost be another defining quality, certainly for more acute moments of deep encounter. It involves a decontextualisation whereby the parties are lifted out of the immediate into perceiving and experiencing something in a different way, enabling something to be (re-)learnt or understood according to a different schema. Perhaps not surprisingly therefore, a ‘penny-dropping’ feature is also often involved. The breaking out of ordinary time might also help to explain how such moments can embody, yet also, as Budgell suggests, lead into and enable, or result from, deeper work. Although not exclusively and to a degree overlapping, the three characteristics have a transpersonal (or at least something of an altered sense of consciousness), intrapersonal, and interpersonal, emphasis or quality.

Additionally in terms of the role of deep moments, in particular the Humanistic approaches claim that they relate to and express, but also heighten and focus, wider therapeutic qualities and processes, including the:

- Person-Centred (Rogers, Thorne, Mearns & Cooper, 5.1.1(i),(iii),(vi)),
- Existential (Binswanger, 5.1.2(i)), and
- Dialogical (Jacobs, Wheway, Clarkson, 5.1.3(ii)), approaches.

This was also reflected in descriptions of moments of deep encounter in the:

- Post-Jungian: “‘peak experiences’ in therapy” (Field, 4.3.2(i)),
- Dialogical: “culminating points” (Jacobs, 5.1.3(i)),
- Integrative: “The heart of psychotherapy” (Hobson, 3.3(i)(a)), and
- Spiritual: a “quantum leap” (West, 6.2.2(i)), approaches.
7.2 Aspects

7.2.1 Present and emphasised

Again, given my working definition, there was a degree of circularity in that whenever ‘moments of deep encounter’ were identified, all three aspects could explicitly or implicitly be discerned; and, with the broader class of ‘deep moments’, a transpersonal aspect could not always be identified with the same confidence as the intra- and interpersonal aspects. Beyond this, general patterns of emphasis could be discerned (albeit with variations between authors: see again references to code (ii) in the Summary Tables and accompanying thematic analysis).

In the Psychodynamic approaches:

- the first two aspects were present, although the Freudian intrapersonal emphasis changed in the Relational Psychodynamic and Post-Jungian approaches towards a ‘two-person psychology’ that also emphasised the interpersonal.
- The Freudian absence and hostility towards a transpersonal aspect also gave way to its presence and appreciation in the Jungian and some Relational Psychodynamic (especially Bion and Schermer) approaches.

The Humanistic approaches:

- included and valued the intrapersonal, but
- emphasised the interpersonal, and
- sometimes, but not always, indicated a transpersonal aspect.

In other approaches:

- the Eclectic/Integrative sometimes indicated all three aspects, with the interpersonal important;
- the Transpersonal and Pastoral indicated all three, but mostly emphasised the intra- and trans-personal, and focused less in practice than theory on trans-/inter-personal connection;
- the Spiritual indicated all three and emphasised their interconnection, including (relatively more than the Transpersonal and Pastoral approaches) that of the transpersonal and the interpersonal.
7.2.2 Attitudes and understandings

Historically the Psychodynamic approaches emphasised intrapersonal analysis as the route to psychological health, and subordinated the interpersonal relationship to acting as a vehicle for analysing transference in order to understand past influence on the patient. Latterly, ‘two-person psychology’ has led many to reappraise the wider and present therapeutic value of the interpersonal. Whilst many followed Freud in ignoring or reducing transpersonal possibilities to projective or regressive intrapersonal signs of pathology, others resisted this and valued the transpersonal, especially Analytical Psychology and some Relational Psychodynamic approaches. The transpersonal aspect was explained:

- by most in spiritual terms (e.g. regarding the analytic third: Spero, Grotstein, Schermer, 4.2.4b)(ii)&(v)); but
- by others in intra- and/or inter-personal and non-spiritual terms (regarding the analytic third: Silverstone, 4.2.4b)(v); or Tronick et.al. regarding the intersubjective field, 4.2.5(ii)).

Whilst Humanistic approaches valued the intrapersonal through cultivating a ‘self-actualising tendency’, they emphasised the present (rather than past) interpersonal as the means for healing and growth (“significant positive personality change does not occur except in a relationship” (Rogers, 1957: 96)). As for transpersonal possibilities:

- an atheistic strand within Humanism generally interpreted these in interpersonal and non-spiritual terms (Mears etc., 5.1.1(ii); Lynne Jacobs, 5.1.3(ii); Mahrer, 5.1.4(ii)); but,
- others allowed for beneficial and contributory spiritual factors (e.g.’s Rogers, Thorne, 5.1.1(ii)&(v); Hycner, 5.1.3(ii); etc.); consequently,

    Within the humanistic tradition the issue of spirituality and how it is worked with therapeutically varies between therapists and between schools. (West, 2000, 27.)

(A contemporary survey of German psychotherapists is worth noting: whilst Psychodynamic and CBT therapists place less emphasis on spiritual issues than Humanistic and Integrative therapists, commonalities in spiritual outlook and experience are more significant than the differences (Hofmann & Walach, 2011).)
The underpinning humanistic influence within many Eclectic and Integrative approaches meant that they largely shared the attitudes and understandings of the Humanistic approaches; as likewise the Spiritual approaches, although here the transpersonal aspect was generally more valued, and understood in spiritual terms to have a healing or guiding role, including in and through the interpersonal.

The Transpersonal approaches similarly identified and valued a transpersonal element, but instead of privileging the interpersonal, they prioritised intra- and (more explicitly than the Spiritual and Pastoral approaches) trans-personal development. Similar observations apply to the Pastoral approaches, although they were not always as focused on spiritual development, and their understanding of the transpersonal usually involved a more conventional Christian perspective than that of many Spiritual and most Transpersonal approaches.

7.2.3 Function
Analysis of ‘direct’ (indicating a deep moment), ‘indirect’ (without a deep-moment reference but still relevant), ‘positive’ (indicating a transpersonal aspect), and ‘negative’ (with an absent or unclear transpersonal aspect) data, produced the findings in Box 7.2.

**Box 7.2 Meta-analytic findings regarding the function of different aspects**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>Freud’s approach, which emphasised the intrapersonal, envisaged the interpersonal’s function as being for the examination of past transference influence, and reduced transpersonal possibilities to intrapersonal factors, produced no apparent deep moments; whereas,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>when the present relationship (the ‘present interpersonal’ as it might be described) was emphasised as functioning to enable healing and growth (as to a degree with some Post-Freudian, Jungian, and Transpersonal; to a greater degree with some Relational Psychodynamic, Post-Jungian, and Pastoral; and to the greatest degree with some Humanistic, Eclectic/Integrative and Spiritual, approaches), deep moments occurred; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>where additionally there was openness to a transpersonal aspect (whether interpreted spiritually or non-spiritually) as also functioning to enable healing and growth, including through interaction with inter- as well as intra-personal aspects, moments of deep encounter occurred (as especially in some Post-Jungian, Humanistic, Eclectic/Integrative, and Spiritual, and in some of the Relational Psychodynamic and Pastoral,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The consequent correlation between aspects present and emphasised, and deep-moment occurrence, is illustrated in Figure 7.1.

**Figure 7.1  Correlation of aspect-emphases and deep moments**

Thus the *intrapersonal* is inherent in all profound moments and affected by them, but, without sufficient emphasis on the *present interpersonal*, a deep moment seems unlikely to occur. The *present interpersonal*, rather than a particular attitude (whether openness or hostility) towards *transpersonal* possibilities, appears to function as the key aspect for determining whether deep moments occur. This was a highly significant finding.

To illustrate, Michael Jacobs (1988) was aware of transpersonal possibilities (Jacobs, 1982/83, 1985, 1985/1986, 1987), but his *Post-Freudian* focus on the *intra-* and *past inter-personal* produced no clear deep moments, until his later collaboration with Rowan’s greater humanistic and interpersonal emphasis produced references to ‘linking’ etc. (Rowan & Jacobs, 2002: 82-4). Similarly, Symington’s (1994/1998, 1999, 2006) *intrapersonal* and *past interpersonal* focus produced a lack of deep moments, notwithstanding his *transpersonal* awareness; whilst Segal’s (2011) review of
psychoanalysis and mysticism lacked emphasis on the present interpersonal or awareness of transpersonal possibilities within it, and no apparent deep moments. As a contrasting example from the Relational Psychodynamic approaches, Stern et.al. (4.2.5(i)&(ii)) indicate little awareness of a transpersonal aspect, but emphasise the interpersonal (including the present interpersonal), and report numerous deep moments.

Similarly, notwithstanding their spiritual concerns, the Transpersonal and Pastoral approaches’ focus on intra- and trans-personal development, rather than on the present interpersonal, produced few deep moments; whereas the Spiritual approaches, which emphasised the present interpersonal, and an openness to transpersonal possibilities within that interpersonal, reported proportionately more moments of deep encounter.

The function of a transpersonal aspect appears to be to turn a deep moment into a moment of deep encounter, and (in both spiritual and non-spiritual understandings) to contribute towards or even increase the degree of healing and growth:

It may be that the transpersonal element of the therapeutic encounter is a vital part of the potential healing. (Lapworth, Sills and Fish, 2001: 109.)

When the transpersonal is understood in spiritual terms, an ‘immanent’, and not just ‘transcendent’, conceptualisation of the transpersonal is usually involved (albeit with the relative emphases sometimes varying between authors): i.e., rather than being remote or removed, the transpersonal is understood to function in the here and now, including in the present interpersonal relationship. For examples, see Box 7.3.

**Box 7.3 Illustrative understandings of transpersonal/interpersonal connection**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>Bion’s Relational Psychodynamic understanding of ‘O’ as internally and externally located, and the relationship as a pathway into the mystical (4.2.6(ii));</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>the Jungian understanding of “a transcendent dimension...that can and needs be experienced within a human relationship” (4.3.1(ii));</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>Field’s Post-Jungian understanding that healing results from accessing “some ever-present, mysterious agency” through “the numinosity of the therapeutic relationship”, or Sullivan’s understanding (shaped by Jung and Bion) of the spiritual working in the relating to the other and “between the two, in the couple” (4.3.2(v));</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>Thorne’s Person-Centred understanding of the therapeutic relationship as</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“the ultimate I-Thou encounter where the liberating mystery of being is experienced”, “where ‘something larger’ enters in and potent healing forces are released”, and of being “swept up into the divine relationship” (5.1.1(v)&(vi));

(5) Hycner’s and Williams’ Dialogical understanding that ‘I-Thou moments’ connect to the ‘Eternal Thou’, and that the relationship can embody spiritual experience (5.1.3(i)&(ii));

(6) Rowan’s Eclectic understanding that the interpersonal offers a “bridge into the spiritual realm” (6.1.5(ii)); and

(7) those Spiritual, but also Transpersonal and Pastoral, understandings that connect the inter- and trans-personal (6.2.1(ii), 6.2.2(ii), 6.2.3(ii)).

To summarise, the intrapersonal (and sometimes past interpersonal) is involved, but the present interpersonal functions as the precondition and contributory means by which deep moments occur; any attendant transpersonal aspect, especially when connected to the interpersonal, enables deep moments to become moments of deep encounter. Three observations follow:

(1) general statements always risk being open to question in particular instances, which may inevitably occur; however, from my meta-analysis of this subcode, these are the overall findings that emerged (and similar observations can be made about my meta-analysis of every subcode);

(2) beyond these broad functions, individual authors conceptualised the detailed function and interaction of each aspect in particular ways (see the thematic analysis);

(3) the possibility arises that, the more the present interpersonal is focused on and a transpersonal aspect allowed for, the more likely a moment of deep encounter may occur; this possibility is worth noting, but only as one of several potential factors next considered and within the matrix of the thematic codes, rather than as a sole predictive correlation.

7.3 Causation and facilitation

7.3.1 Factors

General relational factors for cultivating a listening, supportive environment were indicated throughout, implying that these may be a necessary precondition for the occurrence of most deep moments. (The relationship is frequently cited as being a, even
‘the’, key therapeutic factor (Cooper (2008b: 98-126) summarises various research findings).

More especially, some **particular attitudes and qualities** were identified across a range of approaches, to suggest that, individually, or in various combinations, they were common facilitative factors. The first three are more generic (to follow up references, see code (iii) in the Summary Tables and accompanying thematic findings):

(1) **accepting** and **recognising** the individual:

- Cox (**Post Freud**); Garfield, Benjamin, Balint, Winnicott, Ogden, Sopena, Stern et.al., Schermer (**Relational Psychodynamic**); Jung, McKenna, etc. (**Analytical Psychology**);
- Rogers, Mearns and Cooper, Wilkins (who stresses communicating ‘unconditional positive regard’) (**Person-Centred**); Yalom, Cooper (both citing Buber’s ‘confirmation’) (**Existential**); Clarkson (suggesting, like Rogers, that accepting individuals as they are paradoxically leads to change) (**Gestalt**); Mahrer (**Experiential**);
- West (including respecting the client’s spirituality) (**Spiritual**);

(2) profound **empathic connectedness**, and **being in tune with**:

- Kainer, Balint, Bollas (‘symbiotic knowing’), Ogden (including at conscious and unconscious levels), Stern et.al. (‘implicit relational knowing’) (**Relational Psychodynamic**);
- Mahrer (‘experiential listening’) (**Experiential**);
- Budgell, Clarkson (**Eclectic/Integrative**);

(3) **presence**, a concept with wide currency (including in fields such as nursing (Fredriksson, 1999)), albeit with different nuances for different authors:

- Kahn (**Post Freud**); Rubin, Stern et.al., Bion, Sullivan (including being fully present to ‘O’) (**Relational Psychodynamic**);
- Rogers, Mearns and Cooper (who also stress ‘co-presence’), Geller and Greenberg (who similarly require client openness to therapist presence) (**Person-Centred**); Friedman, Hycner and Jacobs (**Dialogical**); Gendlin (**Experiential**);
- Heron, Wellings (**Transpersonal**); West, Gubi (**Spiritual**).

Two factors involve going the extra step:
(4) **risking staying with** and **going deeper** (being requirements for both listener and talker):

- Stern et.al. (**Psychodynamic Relational**);
- Thorne, Mearns and Cooper (**Person-Centred**); van Deurzen-Smith (the “pursuit of truth”) (**Existential**); Clarkson (**Gestalt**); Hycner and Jacobs (**Dialogical**); Mahrer (**Experiential**);
- Budgell, Hobson (including clients risking intrapersonal disclosure) (**Eclectic/Integrative**);
- McCormick, Wellings (**Transpersonal**); West (including risking holding the silence in the spiritual connection) (**Spiritual**);

(5) **waiting** in the **not-knowing, silence, and/or aloneness**:

- Casement, Bateman and Holmes (**Post Freud**); Winnicott (waiting and refraining from interpretations, and being alone in the presence of another), Stern et.al., Bion (‘negative capability’ without memory or desire), Sullivan, Schermer (both stressing ‘negative capability’) (**Psychodynamic Relational**); Jung, Field, MacKenna (again ‘negative capability’), Schwartz-Salant (**Analytical Psychology**);
- Mearns and Cooper (letting go of aims, expectations, techniques), Thorne (accepting powerlessness to wait without hope or despair) (**Person-Centred**); Spinelli, van Deurzen-Smith (**Existential**); Hycner and Jacobs (**Dialogical**); Gendlin, Mahrer (Experiential);
- Budgell, Clarkson (emptying out/letting go, receptive container, communicative shared silence), Hobson (not fighting or withdrawing into the silence) (**Eclectic/Integrative**);
- Gubi (**Spiritual**); Cooper-White (negative capability and kenotic self-emptying), Rose (**Pastoral**).

Additionally, two factors depended more on the approach of particular authors, but were nonetheless relatively common:

(6) **a mothering, holding environment, and** (sometimes) **facilitating regression**:

- (from a negative perspective, **Freud**); Balint, Bollas, Winnicott, Bion (**Relational Psychodynamic**); Jung;
- McMillan and McLeod (**Person-Centred**);
- Clarkson, Rowan (enabling work at regressive, not just existential and transpersonal, levels) (**Eclectic/Integrative**);

(7) **spiritual awareness and discipline**:
Rubin, Bion (preparing for ‘at-one-ment with ‘O’’), Sullivan, Symington and Symington, Schermer (Relational Psychodynamic); Schwartz-Salant (including focusing on the ‘third area’, and on the ‘numinosum’), McKenna etc. (Analytical Psychology);

Thorne (including in the waiting being open to mysterious power), van Kalmthout, Worsley, Wiggins (Person-Centred); Williams (Gestalt); Freidman (Dialogical);

Budgell, Clarkson (letting go to create sacred space), Rowan (Eclectic/Integrative);

West, Gubi (in prayer and silence tapping into transcendent forces), Lines (being alert to transcendent moments, and viewing the relationship through numinous constructs as transpersonal experience) (Spiritual); Rose (holding in prayer and attention (cp. Weil)) (Pastoral).

These various factors represent some heightened and specific therapeutic qualities that facilitate moments of deep encounter (it could also be said ‘cause’ such moments, but not in an ‘engineered’ sense, given the findings in 7.3.3 below; hence I came to prefer ‘facilitate’). Identifying these common factors, such as the need sometimes to wait silently in ‘not-knowing’ ‘aloneness’, is a significant meta-analytic finding.

7.3.2 Aspects and boundaries
This subcode, (iii)(b), allowed for two other facilitative factors arising from two other subcodes, (ii)(c) and (iv)(c). The central facilitative function of the present interpersonal aspect (which is partly expressed through the relational factors set out in 7.3.1), and the additional function of the transpersonal aspect, were considered earlier in 7.2.3, inviting encouragement, not discouragement, of those aspects, if deep moments or moments of deep encounter are to occur. Here, I summarise the facilitative role of boundaries (although, equally, these meta-analytic findings could have been set out in 7.4.3 below).

The necessity of professional and ethical boundaries was widely emphasised:

- to prevent abuse (see also Bond (2000); Gabriel and Casemore (2009); Garrett (1994); Rutter (1989/1990); and Hartmann (1997) (who tellingly summarises that, whether consciously or unconsciously, “a boundary violation occurs whenever the therapist acts on the basis of his or her own needs or desires rather than the client’s needs and best interests” (p.155))); and, more positively,
to facilitate a therapeutic context or frame (especially in the Psychodynamic approaches but not limited to them (Warburton (1999), for example see McCormick (6.2.1(iii), Transpersonal)); which also

helps to support personal/psychological boundaries (e.g. Sopena, etc. (4.2.4(c)(iv), Relational Psychodynamic); Cooper-White etc. (6.2.3(iv), Pastoral)).

However, some also advocated a partial lowering of professional/ethical boundaries, including:-

Balint warned against pathological boundary loss or violation, but also against harsh or rigid boundaries (4.2.2b)(iii); Stern et.al. advocated mild risks to the therapeutic frame (4.2.5(iv)) (Relational Psychodynamic); Jung risked boundaries, attracting criticism for going too far (4.3.1(iv), Analytical Psychology);

Person-Centred therapists warn against professional facades and unnecessary structural rather than functional boundaries that prevent meeting clients at depth, and encourage accompanying the client “in whichever way he is and in whatever direction he wants to go” (Mears & Cooper) (thus connecting to the ‘staying with and going deeper’ theme identified in 7.3.1 above), with Thorne’s Sally case study focusing the issue of how far to go; however, if ‘under involvement’ with clients is challenged, so too is ‘over involvement’, with the dangers of personal/psychological merger and weak or abusive professional/ethical boundaries acknowledged, and supported by Knox’s research findings that risk-taking should be appropriate and limited, rather than ‘severe’. (See again 5.1.1(iv) for the fullest treatment of professional/ethical boundaries and the requirement for balance);

Clarkson advocates appropriate variations to allow therapeutic breakthrough (6.1.3(iii)&(iv)); Cooper (2008b: 114-7), for example, reports research findings to suggest that moderate self disclosure can be helpful (Eclectic/Integrative);

Lines advocates professional/ethical boundaries, but also warns that professional distancing prevents relational depth (6.2.2(iv), Spiritual).

Thus professional/ethical boundaries might sometimes be risked or stretched to allow therapeutic breakthrough, yet there is also wide agreement that lowering professional/ethical boundaries should be limited and appropriate, given their importance for providing a secure and facilitative environment.

As for personal and psychological boundaries, Hobson (3.1(iv)(b)) illustrates a fundamental recognition of, and respect for, personal/psychological boundaries, which is widely reflected and conveyed in the ‘acceptance and recognition’ factor cited in 7.3.1 above.
However, many also indicate that temporarily lowering personal/psychological boundaries might help to facilitate deep moments, including:-

- Balint (4.2.2b)(iii)); Winnicott, Ogden, the Barangers, etc. (who conceptualise such lowering to involve a third area: Transitional or Potential Space, or an Analytic Third or Field) (4.2.3(iv), 4.2.4b(iv), 4.2.4c(iv)); Stern et.al. (4.2.5(iv)) (Relational Psychodynamic);

- Sterling and Bugental (5.1.2(iii)&(iv), Existential).

Others indicate that lowering personal/psychological and transpersonal boundaries can help facilitate, or at least may be factors in, moments of deep encounter, including:-

- Fromm (4.1.2(iv), Post Freud); Kohut, Kristeva, Meissner & Milner (if these authors’ merger references count as deep moments) (4.2.2(c)), Bion (4.2.6(iv)), Schermer (4.2.7(iv)) (Relational Psychodynamic); Jung (4.3.1(iv)), Redfearn (provided it involves self-integration and not just autistic demand for oneness), Samuels etc. (4.3.2(iii)&(iv)) (Analytical Psychology);

- Thorne (5.1.1(iv), Person-Centred); van Deurzen-Smith (who stresses the “catalytic” effect of merger), Sterling and Bugental (5.1.2(iv), Existential); Hycner (5.1.3(i)&(iv), Dialogical); Mahrer (who argues that merger leads to significant change) (5.1.4(iii), Experiential);

- Budgell (6.1.2(iii)), Rowan (lowered personal/psychological and transpersonal boundaries can assist psychospiritual development when working at the ‘transpersonal level’) (6.1.5(iv)) (Eclectic/Integrative);

- Wellings and McCormick, Grof and Grof (6.2.1(iv), Transpersonal); West (6.2.2(iv), Spiritual).

Nevertheless, notwithstanding this lowering of boundaries,

- the balancing importance of professional/ethical boundaries is frequently also stressed (Thorne, van Deurzen-Smith, Budgell, etc.);

- West also implies the importance of balancing transpersonal and interpersonal boundaries (thus avoiding becoming so spiritual as to lose interpersonal connection with a client) (6.2.2(iv)); and

- Rowan and Jacobs indicate that therapists might appropriately use ‘instrumental’, ‘authentic’, and ‘transpersonal’ levels (with implied professional/ethical, personal/psychological, and transpersonal boundaries), since therapists are capable of functioning at several levels at once (6.1.5(iv)).

Hence McLeod’s (2003a: 313) question is pertinent: “what is the optimal set of boundaries for each specific counsellor-client relationship?”. 
Finally, a qualification needs to be made regarding the lowering of boundaries, in that the data is frequently unclear as to whether lowering helps to cause, or in effect results from, the deep moment. My best sense would be that:

1. regarding professional/ethical boundaries, where mild lowering occurs, it probably helps to facilitate and lead into deep moments, more than resulting from them;
2. regarding personal/psychological boundaries, it could be either way;
3. regarding transpersonal boundaries, when something of a spiritual discipline or awareness is operating, lowering might lead into a deep moment, but on more spontaneous occasions, lowering might be more likely to result from the moment of deep encounter.

Thus, whilst fundamentally respecting boundaries can generally be assumed to be facilitative and necessary, sometimes boundary lowering may help to facilitate a deep moment, but, at other times, it might simply be a resulting or attendant characteristic.

7.3.3 Engineered or facilitated

Although some approaches initially seem to suggest that deep moments can be engineered, this is less so on closer examination:

- Geller and Greenberg suggest ‘presence’ can be engineered, and Mearns and Cooper that ‘Thou-I encounter’ is achievable at will; however I argued (supported by Mearns and Cooper’s balancing comments) that these observations related to the facilitation of underlying qualities, rather than to manufacturing deep moments themselves (5.1.1(iii)) (Person-Centred);
- Heron, Ferrer, and Daniels allow for co-creation of transpersonal events, but Daniels also implies a facilitative understanding (6.2.1(iii)) (Transpersonal);
- West reports some hints at engineering deep moments, but overall offers a facilitative understanding (6.2.2(iii)) (Spiritual).

Certainly, expressed or implied, the prevailing view is that deep moments can at most be facilitated, rather than engineered:

- Wright (Relational Psychodynamic); Jung, Sedgwick, Carter (Analytical Psychology);
- Rogers, Thorne, Mearns and Cooper (Person-Centred); van Deurzen-Smith, Cooper (citing Buber) (Existential); Gendlin (Experiential); Clarkson, Wheway, Hycner and Jacobs (citing Buber) (Gestalt, Dialogical);
• Lapworth, Sills and Fish, Budgell, Clarkson, Hobson, Rowan (Eclectic/Integrative);
• Wellings (Transpersonal); West, Scott (Spiritual).

7.4 Boundaries
7.4.1 Significance
The significance of boundaries within particular data units inevitably varied, with insights extracted as the analysis proceeded.

As for the general significance of boundaries in deep moments, the findings are summarised in Box 7.3.

Box 7.4 Meta-analytic findings regarding boundary significance

(1) whilst not always so, boundaries are often significant in deep-moment data, to varying degrees, from mildly to highly significant (see the illustrations referred to in 7.3.2 and 7.4.2); with

(2) a broad respect for boundaries (professional/ethical and personal/psychological) being a significant underlying factor in deep-moment occurrence, ensuring a fundamentally safe place in which deep moments can unfold (see 7.3.2); yet,

(3) in a significant proportion of instances, appropriately lowered boundaries (professional/ethical, personal/psychological, and/or transpersonal) are also a factor in deep moments (see the illustrations in 7.3.2 and 7.4.2); raising,

(4) particular issues, also present, about the degree to which lowered deep-moment boundaries:
   a) are pathological or beneficial;
   b) involve psychological merger or retained distinction; and
   c) are influenced by earlier life, transpersonal, and/or other issues (see 7.4.2).

7.4.2 Understanding
I have already referred to understandings of the facilitative nature of different boundaries and their lowering in 7.3.2, so here I will concentrate on the understandings of the particular issues identified in Box 7.4(4) above.
a) The **pathological or beneficial** characterisation of boundary loss concerned each type, but especially lowered personal/psychological boundaries. **Freud’s** concern that weak boundaries indicated pathology (4.1.1(iv)) was adopted by many, or similar concerns arose in different approaches: for example, Yalom warns against inappropriate merger or fusion as undermining the need for clients to face their fundamental aloneness (5.1.2(iv), **Existential**). However, many therapists now understand personal/psychological boundaries to be permeable, and that lowering boundaries might be pathological, but might also at times be therapeutic, including:

- Searles (4.1.2(iv)), **Post Freud**; Garfield (4.2.1(iv)), Balint (4.2.2(b)(iii)), Sopena etc. (4.2.4(c)(iv)), Stern (4.2.2(a)) (**Relational Psychodynamic**); Jung (4.3.1(iv)&(v)), Samuels (4.3.2(iv)) (**Analytical Psychology**);
- Clarkson, Parlett and Hemming (5.1.3(iv), **Gestalt**);
- Rowan (6.1.5(iv), **Eclectic/Integrative**);
- West (6.2.2(iv), **Spiritual**).

Indeed, 7.3.2 provided illustrations of various lowered boundaries that were considered beneficial and facilitative of, or at least factors in, deep moments. Such experiences led West (2000: 16, 128) to suggest that denying interconnectedness (with people or “creation”) might be “a prime cause of our neurosis”; and to challenge Freud’s view that boundary loss is pathological save when adults fall in love:

> This points us to the crux of the matter: can we as adults lose our separateness from each other in non-pathological ways other than falling in love? Spiritual experiences may be just that, that is, a non-pathological loss of boundary.

Whether or not accepting West’s spiritual characterisation, many authors allow for pathological possibilities, yet, as seen, also report deep-moment experiences involving a beneficial lessening of boundaries.

b) This then raises the question as to whether, when boundaries are affected, personal/psychological (or sometimes transpersonal) **merger** occurs, or whether **separateness** is retained? My meta-analysis suggested that descriptions and understandings could be placed into two principal categories:-
(1) those who feel more comfortable referring to temporary **merger or a merger-like experiences** in which individuality is lost and unity gained (either/or experiences), including:

- Garfield (4.2.1(i)), Mahler (who refers to oscillation between fusion and separation) (4.2.2(a)), Rayner (4.2.2(b)(iv) (*Relational Psychodynamic*);

- Rogers (sometimes), Mearns and Cooper (who suggest that separateness goes un-noticed because the parties are so close, but boundaries become clear on stepping back), Thorne, etc. (5.1.1(iv), *Person-Centred*); van Deurzen-Smith, Sterling and Bugental (who suggest that a continuum exists from separate to merged) (5.1.2(iv), *Existential*); Mahrer (5.1.4(iv), *Experiential*); or

(2) those who refer to being **simultaneously separate and joined**, involving great closeness but also a retained sense of individuality (both/and experiences), including:

- Balint (who likens it the interpenetration of water within a fish’s mouth and gills, being part of both fish and sea) (4.2.2b(iii)), Winnicott etc. (‘transitional space’ can involve being “joined and separate”) (4.2.3(iv)), Ogden etc. (projective identification involves “being simultaneously within and outside of the intersubjectivity of the analyst-analysand”), Grotstein (simultaneous separateness and fusion likened to ‘siamese twins’) (4.2.4b(iv)), Stern (et.al.) (intense sharing but retained distinction) (4.2.2(a), 4.2.5(iv)), Schermer (spiritual union involves “joyful interplay of self and other”, not loss of distinctiveness) (4.2.7(iv)) (*Relational Psychodynamic*); Field (“simultaneous union and separation of self and other”) (4.3.2(iv), *Post-Jungian*);

- Rogers (sometimes, referring to “oneness” and “separateness”), Schmid (“unity without fusion”) (5.1.1(iv), *Person-Centred*); Cooper (suggests that Buber refers to balanced ‘independence-in-relation’, not merger) (5.1.2(iv), *Existential*); Hycner (I-Thou encounter involves simultaneous “union and separateness”, interrelational recognition, not confluence, merger, or loss of self), Williams, Friedman (5.1.3(iv), *Dialogical*);

- Budgell (as close as possible without fusion) (6.1.2(iv)), Clarkson and Lapworth (overlapping and separate) (6.1.3(iv)) (*Eclectic/Integrative*);

- Heron (6.2.1(iv), *Transpersonal*); West (simultaneously merged and separate) (6.2.2(iv), *Spiritual*).

It only became apparent through the meta-analysis that most understandings fell into these two broad categories. The second category accords with my own experience of strong connectedness but continuing distinction, rather than merger or boundary confusion, enabling greater clarity (3.1.2(iv)). I have cited more examples in this second
category, but that might have resulted from my earlier sense that first category understandings generally prevailed, causing me to look out more for contrary voices, eventually discovering much support for my own position.

Whichever understanding is preferred, two other variables apply:

- progression through pre-‘merger’, ‘merged’, and post-‘merger’ stages are sometimes described (see the Barangers’ account in 4.2.4(c)(iv) (Relational Psychodynamic), or Sterling and Bugental’s in 5.1.2(iv) (Existential)), which might generate different descriptions or insights according to which stage is being alluded to; and,

- each party might experience boundary loss to differing degrees (for example, the analyst becoming less absorbed than the patient: Rayner (4.2.2(b)(iv), Relational Psychodynamic), again producing variable accounts.

These factors, together with the two categories of understanding, make it unsurprising that different boundary-loss accounts are indicated in the literature (and in my conversations about deep-moments, which similarly involved a range of views).

c) Some authors connect or attribute boundary loss to other factors or influences, including:-

- **earlier life influence** (again, I refer to ‘earlier’ rather than ‘early’ life, to encompass early life, but also to include earlier life influences that may have arisen post infancy):
  
  o Freud (lowered boundaries result from projective or regressive processes, a desire for fusion indicating regression to infantile narcissism) (4.1.1(iv)); Mahler (merged personal/psychological boundaries represent a desired return to symbiotic fusion (refuted by Stern)) (4.2.2(a)), Balint (“harmonious interpenetrating mix-up” is reminiscent of the primary infant relationship) (4.2.2b(iii)) (Relational Psychodynamic);

- **transpersonal experiences**:
  
  o Maslow etc. (6.2.1(iv), Transpersonal); or

- either **earlier life** (often regressive) and/or **transpersonal factors**:
  
  o Garfield (4.2.1(i)), Kohut, Kristeva, Meissner, Milner (4.2.2c)), Bion (4.2.6(iv), Schermer (4.2.7(iv)) (Relational Psychodynamic); Analytical Psychology (4.3.1(iv), 4.3.2(iv));
o Mahrer (5.1.4(iv), Experiential);

o Budgell (cites Wilber that separateness is greatest in the middle stages, with ‘linking’ and lowered boundaries more likely in prepersonal or transpersonal stages) (6.1.2(iv)), Rowan (‘primal’ or ‘transpersonal’ experiences may be involved, with possible confusion between them reflecting Wilber’s ‘pre/trans fallacy’) (6.1.5(iv)) (Eclectic/Integrative);

o Heron, Grof, Wellings, McCormick, Wilber (6.2.1(iv), Transpersonal); Lake (noting parallels between even pre-natal and mystical experience) (6.2.3(iv), Pastoral).

Attributing boundary loss to earlier life or transpersonal factors also relates to the interpretation code, where not only boundary loss but deep moments more generally are sometimes explained as resulting from earlier life or transpersonal factors. Thus the degree to which these factors may or may not be relevant will be further assessed in 7.6.1 and 7.6.2, including whether:

- pursuant to Wilber, experiences may be ‘prepersonal’ or ‘transpersonal’, but not both,
- the ‘transpersonal’ should always be reduced to the ‘prepersonal’ (Freud), or
- early life experience may also be genuinely spiritual (Meissner (4.2.2c), Rizutto etc. (4.2.3(ii)) (Relational Psychodynamic)).

Additionally, lowered boundaries were sometimes also connected to romantic, sexual and/or aesthetic experiences, including by:

- Freud (1930[1929]: 253); Garfield (4.2.1(i)), Bollas (4.2.2b)(i)), Milner (4.2.2c) (Relational Psychodynamic); Corbett (2006: 64, Post-Jungian);
- van Deurzen–Smith (1988: 208, Existential);
- Daniels, Maslow, Wilber, Woodward et.al. (6.2.1(iv), Transpersonal).

Sometimes these references were simply involving analogies. At other times, romantic or sexual factors may have had causative roles in lowering boundaries. These factors could again be part of a client’s (and/or sometimes the therapist’s) earlier life issues; or, if distinguishable, did not appear to have the same relevance for deep moments as the ‘earlier life’ and ‘transpersonal’ factors identified above.
7.4.3 Role

The relevance of this subcode became focused on whether different boundaries and/or their lowering had any facilitative effect on deep moments, and, as noted, this was set out in 7.3.2.

At the end of that section, I noted that it was not always clear whether lowered boundaries were a cause, or consequence, of deep moments. From the perspective of this subcode, it could therefore be said that boundaries (and their lowering) may sometimes have a facilitative role, and/or function in various ways as a reasonably common characteristic of deep moments.

7.5 Theoretical frame

7.5.1 Types

The thematic analysis revealed that a wide range of theoretical frameworks underpinned the data. Within this, wherever authors shared an overall therapeutic approach, elements of a common framework were also shared. Thus, as commonly recognised:

- the Psychodynamic emphasised the importance of interior, unconscious, and earlier life influences;
- the Humanistic stressed self-actualisation within relationship as the means to growth (as also, frequently, the Eclectic and Integrative); whilst,
- inter alia the Transpersonal, Spiritual and Pastoral approaches emphasised a spiritual dimension.

Within these categories, particular approaches then shared further theoretical emphases or perspectives, as referred to in the thematic analysis.

However, even within specific approaches largely sharing common frames, individual theoretical emphases and perspectives could still vary markedly between different authors, for example concerning boundaries, or regarding the nature of the transpersonal. Consequently, my meta-analysis concluded that:-

(1) there was no single overriding theoretical framework involved in, or leading to, moments of deep encounter; rather,
(2) a variety and criss-crossing of theoretical perspectives was involved, with each author’s particular combination of theoretical perspectives influencing their
engagement with, or expression of, the various factors referred to in the thematic codes; although,

(3) whilst there was no single overriding theoretical frame, the inter-connection of this code with the other thematic codes meant that some limited correlations could be identified in the occurrence and explanation of deep moments, as explained below.

7.5.2 Effect
Several authors endorsed the premise behind this subcode, that different theoretical frames might affect the observation, occurrence, reporting, and/or interpretation of deep moments:

- Balint (Gomez, 1997: 123): specific frameworks affect patient experience and expression; Ogden (4.2.4b)(v)): each party experiences the analytic third according to their own personality and meaning system; Silverstone (4.3.2(v): therapists’ frameworks may influence deep-moment experiences (the “healing power, may be...a quality that resides in the therapist who contains this dimension as a system of belief”) (Relational Psychodynamic);

- Frie (2003a: 7): regardless of clinical persuasion, therapists “are always relying on underlying, often hidden philosophical assumptions about human nature” (Eclectic/Integrative);

- Scott (6.2.2(v), Spiritual): deep moments only occurred, or were reported, in one of three interview groups, each of which had partly differing perspectives and paradigms;

- Rose (6.2.3(v), Pastoral): counselling is not value free, and both theistic and atheistic beliefs affect the relationship; and

Thus different theoretical frames may affect the occurrence and understanding of deep moments. In particular, it became apparent that correlations existed in relation to the other thematic codes. Inter-connections and correlations existed between all the codes, but here I am emphasising the correlations between the theoretical frame and the aspects, facilitation, boundaries and interpretation codes, in the occurrence (as indicated by the first code), and understanding, of deep moments.

In terms of aspects, section 7.2.3 noted that the approaches which emphasised the present interpersonal, tended also to exhibit deep moments, whilst approaches which additionally identified a transpersonal aspect, also tended to produce moments of deep encounter; it was these emphases that were critical, rather than, for example, sympathy
or hostility towards transpersonal possibilities. Considering these emphases again, but now from the angle of different theoretical frameworks, the following correlations became apparent:

(1) where frameworks emphasise the present interpersonal, deep moments are more likely to occur; and,

(2) where frameworks additionally allow for a transpersonal aspect, moments of deep encounter may also occur; so that,

(3) since these aspects receive greater emphasis in the frameworks of some Humanistic, Eclectic/Integrative, and Spiritual approaches (although also in some later Psychodynamic approaches, etc.), a greater incidence of moments of deep encounter occur in these approaches than in those whose frameworks do not emphasise such aspects.

The findings for the second and third codes indicated that, where theoretical frames encourage the facilitative and boundary factors identified in 7.3 and 7.4, deep moments are also more likely to occur. However, the variability and criss-crossing of theoretical perspectives behind those factors, as between different authors and approaches, meant that (unlike with aspects or interpretations) it was difficult to delineate any general correlations. Nevertheless, individual correlations could still exist wherever individual frameworks emphasise or apply the identified facilitative and boundary factors, resulting in deep-moment occurrence.

Different theoretical frames also generally express or imply deep-moment interpretations that accorded with, or were couched in, the terms of the particular framework. It was evident through the thematic analysis that correlations often existed between particular theoretical approaches and their consequent interpretations (for example, see the Post-Jungians, 4.3.2(v)&(vi)); and that, more generally, Psychodynamic interpretations usually included psychodynamic elements; Humanistic and Eclectic/Integrative included relational elements; and Transpersonal, Spiritual and Pastoral included spiritual elements. Whilst the interpretive-code meta-analysis in 7.6.1 will reveal that interpretations sometimes reach beyond the standard elements of their particular approaches, nonetheless, natural correlations between different frameworks, and their interpretations, were generally apparent.
Thus, general or individual correlations can be identified to reveal that particular frames may influence the occurrence and understanding of deep moments. With the aspects and interpretation codes, these correlations can be extended to suggest that certain therapeutic approaches might be more encouraging of deep moments. However, it is important to stress that strictly this results from the relevant perspectives and emphases contained within those approaches’ theoretical frameworks, rather than necessarily from the approaches or their overall frames as a whole. This is because the different theoretical details and combinations in each individual’s theoretical approach makes it simplistic to suggest that an individual from one particular approach will always be more, or less, likely to enable a deep moment to occur. Nonetheless, some general correlative trends are observable, such as regarding aspects and interpretations.

7.5.3 Particular paradigms
The frameworks referred to in subcodes (v)(a)&(b) (and in 7.5.1 & 7.5.2) often related to particular therapeutic approaches and/or the perspectives underpinning the various factors involved in the thematic codes. As explained in 3.1.2, subcode (v)(c) allowed for some particular theoretical paradigms to be identified, which influenced various authors or cut across several approaches. These paradigms could be described as a) ‘positivist’, b) ‘constructionist or constructivist’, and c) ‘relational’. They were expressed in multiple, rather than single, ways; equally, they were ignored, balanced, or reacted against, in various ways. They influenced deep-moment occurrence and interpretation, not as separate or discrete influences, but by contributing to the theoretical frames and perspectives of different authors or approaches.

a) Freud’s (and many Freidians’) modernist, positivist paradigm, with its preference for cause and effect and ‘provable’ reality, frequently also possessed a sceptical attitude towards transpersonal possibilities (4.1.1(v), 4.1.2(v)). From this perspective,

The mystical nature of many experiences in nonordinary states of consciousness puts them automatically into the category of pathology, since spirituality is not seen as a legitimate dimension in the exclusively material universe of traditional science. (Grof & Grof, 1989: 5.)

Others however balanced (again see 4.1.1(v), 4.1.2(v)) or questioned this negativity to spirituality from various perspectives, for example:
Bion was neither a positivist nor religious but allowed for the transpersonal, being widely influenced, including by Eastern thought (4.2.6(v)); Roland’s (1996, 146f.) psychoanalysis of Asian clients suggested that Asian understandings of the self were more open to “invisible spheres and influences” than Western understandings; Stein (1999) and Blass (2006: 29) similarly noted that where therapists are interested in spiritual possibilities, it is often with Eastern or ‘natural’ religious, rather than conventional Western, type understandings (Psychodynamic);

more generally, Allman’s (et.al., 1992) research reported that not all therapists viewed clients’ mystical experiences as necessarily pathological, but that (again) professional and personal characteristics influenced their clinical judgements of clients who reported mystical experiences, with Psychodynamic and Behavioural therapists (both of whom I suggest are more likely to employ a positivist paradigm) attributing significantly more pathology to such clients than did Humanistic therapists.

Thus a positivist paradigm, whether applied - or not - like Freud to transpersonal possibilities, might influence the discouragement or encouragement of the transpersonal aspect of moments of deep encounter, and its understanding (I discuss further pathological and healthy understandings in 7.6.2).

b) Whether from contemporary influences, or from similar principles espoused at earlier stages, a constructionist or constructivist paradigm was widely referred to, albeit that some of the following references also allowed for more realist and ‘found’ possibilities:-

- Bromberg (meaningful moments are co-constructed, 4.1.2(v), Post Freud); Winnicott (implication that deep moments, and any transpersonal aspect, are constructed & found, 4.2.3(v)), Ogden, Momigliano etc. (analytic third and bipersonal field are co-constructed), Grotstein (God is constructed, but possibly also found) (4.2.4b(v), 4.2.4c(v)), Stern et.al. (relationship and moments of meeting are co-created, 4.2.5(v)) (Relational Psychodynamic); Jung (‘God’ is constructed & found, 4.3.1(v)), Samuels (‘mundus imaginalis’ is constructed & found, 4.3.2(v)) (Analytical Psychology);

- Knox (co-creation of “something larger between them”), Cox (co-creation of relational depth’s intersubjectivity) (5.1.1(v), Person-Centred); Sterling and Bugental (co-creation of joining & separateness), van Deurzen (“in-between” is co-created, but deep moments also have a ‘found’ quality) (5.1.2(v), Existential); Watson et.al. (adopt constructivist approach; Gendlin disagrees) (5.1.4(v), Experiential);

- Daniels, Wellings, Heron, Ferrer (refer to a range of constructivist and/or essentialist positions (6.2.1(v), Transpersonal); Lines (advocates in effect a constructivist perspective, but implies the spiritual is more than constructed) (6.2.2(v), Spiritual); Cooper-White (allows for some constructivist elements, 6.2.3(v), Pastoral).
It is difficult to assess the degree to which constructivist or realist influences (as noted above or more widely present) affected the overall occurrence and understanding of deep moments. Clearly such influences might affect individual interpretations, by contributing constructivist or realist strands to them (rather than, judging from the thematic analysis, by generating separate or distinct interpretive positions). As for occurrence, since relational factors per se appear to be key (as expressed through the present interpersonal and relational facilitative factors), it appears less significant as to whether such factors and aspects are understood in realist or constructivist terms (and, as a critical realist, maybe sometimes both apply). Thus, whilst a transpersonal aspect is a prerequisite for constituting a moment of deep encounter, it matters much less whether the aspect is understood in realist or constructivist terms (although, either way, an affirming rather than hostile attitude towards its possibility is likely to be more facilitative; see 7.3.2).

Consequently, my assessment regarding **constructivist and realist influence** would be that:

1. *both types* exist in the data, inviting recognition of ‘constructed and/or found’ possibilities; but this,
2. as with any deep-moment *interpretations* that incorporate realist or constructivist elements, is a matter for individual preference; and,
3. their influence is not especially material in deep-moment occurrence.

**c)** Cutting across positivist, constructivist and other paradigms, a relational paradigm had great significance:-

- Freud’s modernist, positivist emphasis on biological drives was replaced for many by a more **Relational Psychodynamic** approach (4.2), whilst **Analytical Psychology** also developed with an increasing relational emphasis (4.3.2(iii));
- Rogers shared a modernist perspective, but emphasised the present interpersonal, which had a foundational influence on **Humanistic, Eclectic/Integrative, Spiritual** and other approaches (5.1.1(ii)&(v), etc.).

This emphasis on a relational paradigm arose from:-

- the clinical observations and reflections of the practitioner theorists themselves;
- the postmodern emphasis on intersubjectivity (2.1.2), which itself partly arose from
the philosophical influence of:-

- **Martin Buber**, whose ‘I-Thou’ understanding of human and ‘divine’ relating was widely referred to (remembering that ‘Thou’ translates what is the personal ‘you’ in German, the intimate form in which a mother addresses her child (Klein, 2003: 186-7; Black, 1999: 9-10)):

  ...the I...exists only through the relation to the Thou.

  ...in each Thou we address the eternal Thou.

  Spirit is not in the I, but between I and Thou. (Buber, 1947/1979: 246; 1923/1958: 19, 57; his italics);


  ...the Self is constituted by its relation to the Other; that it has its being in its relationship; and that this relationship is necessarily personal.

  I can know another person as a person only by entering into personal relation with him.

  The unit of the personal is not the ‘I’, but the ‘You and I’ (MacMurray, 1961: 17, 28 (his italics), 61); and

- **Emmanuel Levinas**, who, in criticising emphasis on ‘self’ to the neglect of ‘Other’, insisted the Other should not be reduced or suppressed, nor can it be fully known (thus challenging Buber) (Hand, 1989; Davis, 1996)); which, inter alia, influenced Person-Centred reversals of ‘I-Thou’ into a ‘Thou-I’ attitude (5.1.1(v)).

The relational paradigm’s wide influence was apparent in the meta-analysis of both the previous codes, and of the interpretation code.

### 7.6 Interpretation

#### 7.6.1 Different understandings

In addition to understanding deep moments as acute expressions of a beneficial therapeutic process, the meta-analysis of different interpretations suggested that, notwithstanding significant individual differences (for which see again the thematic analysis), and regardless of whether interpretations were express or extrapolated, deep-moment interpretations, or rather the elements within them, could be divided into three principal categories. These were distinguishable according to their predominant
emphases, either within particular interpretations, or relative to those of the other categories. (Although some explanations were derived from data that did not recognise moments of deep encounter or which questioned a transpersonal aspect, through the ‘interpretive move’ described in 2.3.1, these explanations could also be included as potential interpretations of moments of deep encounter.)

The three categories identified tended to reflect the basic tenets and aspect-emphases of the major categories of approach that I have been studying (the Psychodynamic, Humanistic and often the Eclectic/Integrative, and Transpersonal/Spiritual/Pastoral). However, to have labelled the interpretive categories according to their principal sponsoring approaches would have been misleading: it would have suggested that correlations always existed between the major approaches and the main categories of interpretation, whereas it was more complex and nuanced than that. As Gelso and Carter (1985: 192) suggest, different approaches bring to the fore particular features (by attending to or fostering them), which may actually occur in all relationships (for example, transference and the ‘real relationship’ may occur in Psychoanalysis, or in Humanistic therapy, rather than exclusively in either, etc.). Consequently, whilst particular features and resultant interpretations may occur more frequently in some rather than other approaches, some features and interpretations may arise across various approaches. Accordingly, my descriptions for the main interpretive categories reflect, not their principle sponsoring approaches, but rather the predominant emphases involved within them (although, I have still reused ‘Spiritual’ for the third category, as being the best option available). The categories are:-

a) **Earlier life** interpretations, which emphasise early or subsequent life influences, and generally also:

- recognise the importance of psychodynamic and unconscious factors (although Clarkson’s ‘transferential’ and ‘reparative’ relationships (6.1.3(vi)) illustrate that non-Psychodynamic approaches can also generate ‘Earlier life’ interpretations); and

- are concerned with the *intrapersonal* aspect, but not exclusively so, since to varying degrees *interpersonal* and/or *transpersonal* elements are also included and may be equally emphasised (so labelling these interpretations as ‘intrapersonal’ would also have been misleading);

b) **Relational** interpretations are especially influenced by the relational paradigm referred to in 7.5.3c), and accordingly stress the therapeutic benefits of the
heightened *interpersonal* experience, even if *intrapersonal* and *transpersonal* concerns may also be present; whilst,

c) **Spiritual** interpretations usually stress the involvement of a *transpersonal* element, which they explain in spiritual terms, even if *intrapersonal* and *interpersonal* concerns may also be present (so that moments of deep encounter could be viewed as encounters with self, other, and Other).

Within these categories, further types could then be distinguished, with some interpretations drawing from more than one type (indeed, it will also become apparent that since some of the ‘types’ also occurred in similar form in different categories, some individual interpretations can also be understood to draw from more than one category, even if, for the purposes of classification, they can on balance be placed in one principal category rather than another). I set out the types below, and stress that, whilst there are overlaps and interconnections with (in particular) the deep-moment aspects emphasised, or the theoretical frames underlying particular interpretations (i.e. with codes (ii) and (v)), I am focussing here on the different types of interpretation within the three main categories.

a) The **Earlier life** interpretations were predominantly generated by the **Psychodynamic** approaches. Within **Psychoanalysis**, the projective and regressive interpretations that could be extrapolated for Freud and his followers were somewhat negative in character, but nonetheless offered opportunities for self-reconciliation and growth; other interpretations were also possible from other psychodynamic principles (e.g. Bateman and Holmes’ suggestion of unconscious to conscious breakthrough, 4.1.2(vi), although contradicted by Stern et.al.’s understanding of change in ‘nonconcious’ ‘implicit knowing’, 4.2.5(vi)); and some spiritual possibilities were also hinted at (Cox, 4.1.2(vi)). The **Relational Psychodynamic** authors developed the regressive and projective interpretations in more positive directions, including through notions of interpersonal or intersubjective fields; sometimes they also incorporated spiritual understandings; as likewise the interpretations generated by **Analytical Psychology**. Ultimately, five principal types of Earlier Life interpretation were identified, as indicated in Table 7.2. In this, I also collate the different types of unconscious relational field into one place, and summarise again the main aspect-emphases, to help track the developments involved.
Table 7.2  Types of Earlier Life interpretations

Key:  ✓ = principle type(s) employed in approach or author(s)’s interpretation(s)
✓ = type also employed or combined in interpretation(s)
(✓) = type hinted at or also employed or combined in interpretation(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROACH &amp;/or Principal Authors</th>
<th>TYPES OF INTERPRETATION</th>
<th>ASPECTS Emphasised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Projective</td>
<td>Relational Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freud 4.1.1(vi)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Freud 4.1.2(vi)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Psychodynamic General 4.2.1(vi)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regression (Balint, Bollas) 4.2.2b(vi)&amp;c)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eclectic/Integ’tve (Clarkson) 6.1.3(v)&amp;(vi)</td>
<td>✓ Trans-ferential rel’shp)</td>
<td>✓ (Reparative rel’shp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Experience (Winnicott) 4.2.3(vi)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ (Trans-itional space)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projective Identification (Ogden, Barangers) 4.2.4b(vi)&amp;c(vi)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ (Analytic third or field)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Implicit Relationship (Stern, Boston Group) 4.2.5(vi)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>(Inter-subjective field)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jung 4.3.1(vi)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformations in ‘O’ (Bion) 4.2.6(v)&amp;(vi)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychospiritual Paradigm (Schermer) 4.2.7(v)&amp;(vi)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ Analytic third)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Jungians</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ (Inter-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

232
(N.B. It was especially difficult to classify:–

- the ‘Transcendent Function’ interpretive strand within Analytical Psychology, since that concept’s concern with self-reconciliation makes it arguably an extension to Jung’s general awareness of projective processes; or it constitutes another type of psychodynamic interpretation; or (e.g. for Ulanov, 4.3.2(v)) it possesses a Spiritual quality in its own right (in addition to other, Jungian, spiritual interpretive strands); and also

- Schermer, given his ‘I-Thou’ and general spiritual emphasis, making it also possible to classify him under Relational or Spiritual interpretations; however, given his greater emphasis relative to those categories on the relevance of earlier life factors, I have included him here.)

b) The **Relational** interpretations emerged especially from the **Humanistic** and **Eclectic/Integrative** approaches. A relational element was central to them all, albeit understood in various ways, with other interpretive elements sometimes also added, as identified in Table 7.3. These sometimes hinted at or included earlier life and/or psychodynamic factors or explanations, which I have clustered together; sometimes, although the idea of breakthrough or resolution was inherent in virtually all interpretive types (for example, in the idea of unconscious material becoming conscious as expressed by Bateman and Holmes above; it also linked to the ‘penny dropping’ nature of deep moments, 7.1.3), this was stressed to such an extent that it needed to be acknowledged as a distinct interpretive element; sometimes, spiritual understandings were also included. In most cases, individual differences were involved, according to the precepts of different authors.

**Table 7.3 Types of Relational interpretations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROACH &amp;/or Principal Authors</th>
<th>TYPES OF INTERPRETATION</th>
<th>ASPECTS Emphasised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person-Centred 5.1.1(v)&amp;(vi)</td>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Inter-personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early Life/</td>
<td>(✓) Rogers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychodynamic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>✓(Rogers, Thorne)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>✓Lapworth et.al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eclectic/Integrative General</td>
<td>✓(✓Thorne, Mearns &amp;Cooper)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: As for Table 7.2 above
c) The different types of Spiritual interpretations identified in Table 7.4 were similar to those in the Relational category (again with individual types varying according to approach and author). These were derived from the Transpersonal, Spiritual and Pastoral approaches, with Rowan (Eclectic/Integrative) also best belonging here.

**Table 7.4  Types of Spiritual interpretations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROACH &amp;/or Principal Authors</th>
<th>TYPES OF INTERPRETATION</th>
<th>ASPECTS Emphasised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Earlier Life/Psychodynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowan 6.1.5(ii),(v)&amp;(vi)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transpersonal</td>
<td>✓ (Heron)</td>
<td>✓ (Davies, Wilber)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral 6.2.1(i),(ii)&amp;(vi)</td>
<td>✓ (Campbell, Cooper-White Deeks, Rose)</td>
<td>✓ (Cooper-White)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual 6.2.2(i)&amp;(vi)</td>
<td>✓ (Gubi, Lines, West, etc.)</td>
<td>✓ (West reference)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus the three principal categories included different types that, singly or combined, constituted the different understandings of moments of deep encounter that are
expressed or implied within the data. As already mentioned, since some types occurred in similar form but in different categories, some individual interpretations could also be understood to draw from or overlap with more than one category (even if, for classification purposes they can be assigned to a main category, as in the tables above). The relative nature and positions of different interpretations could therefore be mapped according to their distinct or overlapping elements, as in Figure 8.7, which is set out in the meta-synthesis, since it also appropriately belongs there. However, an early glance if desired will reveal that the different interpretations can be distributed in the distinct Earlier Life, Relational, and Spiritual categories; or in the Earlier Life/Spiritual, Earlier Life/Relational, Relational/Spiritual, or even Earlier Life/Relational/Spiritual, intersections and overlaps, as suggested in principle in Figure 7.2.

**Figure 7.2 Overlapping categories of interpretation**

Clarkson might challenge the possibility of hybrid or overlapping types of interpretation, in that she cautions against confusing the five relationships or facets that she identifies (6.1.3(v)). Her ‘transferential’ and ‘reparative’ facets relate to the Earlier Life category; the ‘person-to-person’ to the Relational; the ‘transpersonal’ to the Spiritual; whilst the ‘working alliance’ relates to facilitation and boundaries. Yet Clarkson also permits flexible or sequential use of different facets. Different facets might be present in some deep moments, in a (perhaps rapidly) sequential manner, or be capable of being mixed flexibly
(or in other legitimate ways not envisaged by Clarkson), so that the possibility of overlapping or hybrid interpretations might still be reconcilable with Clarkson’s analysis. In any event, my analysis supports the possibility of complementary, and sometimes overlapping or hybrid, rather than necessarily competing, interpretations, as further explained in 7.6.2.

7.6.2 Relationship

Whilst Tables 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, and Figures 7.2 and 8.7, map the relationships between different interpretations, the disagreements and tensions between different interpretive positions and categories were also meta-analysed. Many differences could largely be explained by the different theoretical frameworks underpinning the various interpretive positions (as recognised in section 7.5), but some issues cut across several authors and approaches, as indicated by the triangle in Figure 7.3.

**Figure 7.3** Particular tensions between different interpretive positions
Using a triangle to highlight these issues enables the inevitable tensions, as between the points of any triangle, to be recognised. Some of the tensions are not solely confined to the sides of the triangle indicated (for example, ‘Aloneness/togetherness’ also arises between Earlier Life and Spiritual interpretation: see Gargiulo (2004: 25-7)), but they predominantly operate between the points indicated. The immediate force of these tensions is to imply that the different interpretive categories are in opposition and conflict. However, consideration of the various tensions involved, raises the possibility instead of a purposeful co-existence, whereby each position or pole might examine any deep moment to test the applicability and appropriateness of each interpretive possibility for that particular deep moment. In other words, rather than automatically or prescriptively collapsing the tensions towards one point or other of the triangle to favour particular interpretations (which might destructively ignore other interpretive possibilities and inappropriately skew practice), by creatively maintaining the tensions through openness towards different interpretive possibilities, all interpretive options become available in every situation, enhancing the possibility of practice that is appropriate and helpful.

This reflects the reasoned pragmatism of the third element of my theoretical framework (see 2.2.3 and Box 2.3), and was an insight that emerged from the critical dialogue element of the meta-analysis, for use in my meta-synthesis. I introduce the conclusion and recommendation here, before discussing the tensions below, to make clear the trend of the findings and argument that emerged.

(1a) As seen, projective or regressive processes might explain the generation of deep moments in general, and any ‘transpersonal’ aspect in particular, which from Freud’s perspective would be treated as indicators of defensive, pathological processes (4.1.1(vi)). In contrast, others might consider the spiritual to be ontologically or essentially ‘real’, and a sign or expression of health. These dichotomies were much debated in general terms through the middle of the 20th Century (Beit-Hallahmi, 1996). If such dichotomies truly existed, additionally:

- the presence in any deep moment of projective or regressive processes might undermine the possibility of a Spiritual interpretation (as well as a Relational interpretation, as discussed in (2)a below); whereas
• if deep moments and any transpersonal aspect are found to be therapeutic and not pathological, any Earlier Life projective or regressive interpretations would instead be undermined.

However, the implied connections (between ‘projection’ and ‘pathology’, and between what may be ‘real’ and ‘healthy’), and dichotomies (between ‘projection’ and ‘real’, and ‘pathology’ and ‘spiritual’), may not always apply. Regardless of any ultimate ‘truth’ regarding the spiritual or divine, projected and ‘real’ (however understood) spirituality may not be mutually exclusive (see 4.2.3(vi)); whilst there can also be healthier and less healthy forms of spirituality (Allport, 1950; Allport & Ross, 1967; etc.). Accordingly, discernment, regarding the nature of any transpersonal aspect, is required, in every instance.

This possibility is supported and recognised from many angles, including the projective and regressive interpretations (cited in 7.6.1) that allow for growth even when pathology is present. Interestingly, the additional illustrations below almost entirely come from the Psychodynamic or Transpersonal/Spiritual/Pastoral approaches, confirming the side of the triangle on which the tension arises:-

• Fromm (1951) and Roland (1996: 148-51) distinguish healthy and unhealthy forms of spirituality; Issroff (1999) (citing Winnicott) and Palmer (1997: 81) imply that even if projection and regression occur, ‘God’ might still independently ‘exist’ (and correspond, or not, with any projection); Parsons (1999: 146, 168-9) rejects reducing mystical experience to the mother-infant relationship, but notes that “pathological and transformative elements” sometimes co-exist (Psychoanalysis);

• Kohut (Jones, 2002) suggests that idealisation of a divine object may have healthy, rather than unhealthy, purposes; McDargh (1993: 180) (similarly Gómez, 2001) advocates discerning “when an individual’s religious experience is genuinely ‘of God’ and when it reflects analyzable projective dynamics”; Meissner (1984: 150-4) distinguishes psychotic regression from authentic mystical experience; Rubin (2006) affirms healthy spirituality, whilst “blissful oneness” can sometimes be evasive and irresponsible, so that:

If it is anti-analytic to treat spiritual experiences as inherently psychopathological, as some psychoanalysts have done, it is unanalytic to take spiritual claims at face value, without inquiring into the complex and multidimensional meanings and functions they uniquely possess in the mind and heart of a particular person in psychoanalytic treatment (pp.145-6) (Relational Psychodynamic);
Jacoby (1984: 113) and MacKenna (2009: 173-5) distinguish mature and immature spirituality; Field (2004: 13) suggests that “transcendent glimpses” can occur during breakdown (even if sometimes pathologised as delusional); Schwartz-Salant (1989: 197-200) contends that even psychotic, regressive fusion might be a link to the numinosum, and that, “When the numinosum incarnates, healing is nearby” (Analytical Psychology);

Rowan (1992a: 146, 192) seeks elimination of the projections that “plague spiritual life”, to enable a “clean mysticism” that “can relate to the Deity” beyond “just a projection of our parents” (Eclectic/Integrative);

Wellings and McCormick (2000: 4, Wellings, 2000a: 182) contrast immature (that longs to regress/merge back, or where projections need to be withdrawn) and mature spirituality; Maslow (1962/1968: 96) and Washburn (Daniels, 2005: 207-9) argue that regression can serve developmental and transpersonal possibilities; Shiers and Paul (2008: 125-6) reject pathologising, but also challenge spiritual beliefs that seek escape from pain (Transpersonal);

Swinton (2001: 18, 24) suggests that spirituality might be distorted by pathology, but can be more than that, as similarly Izzard (2003) and Thompson & Williams (2008: ix) (Pastoral).

Thus, rather than automatically connecting and dichotomising projection/pathology and ‘real’/healthy, any transpersonal aspect might involve a variety of possibilities and configurations, requiring a discerning approach that allows for different possible explanations, including sometimes, as noted above, hybrid or overlapping interpretations.

(1)b The above analysis applies similarly to the related issue of Wilber’s ‘pre/trans fallacy’ (6.2.1(v)), whereby he argues that pre- and trans-personal issues are substantively different, so that transpersonal experiences should not be reduced to prepersonal dynamics, or prepersonal phenomena wrongly elevated to the status of transpersonal states of consciousness (Simanowitz & Pearce, 2003: 123). Again, such an understanding would tend to dichotomise Earlier Life and Spiritual interpretations, by suggesting that projective or regressive processes, and the ‘real’ transpersonal, cannot both be present.

However:
• Jung’s willingness to link the primitive and sublime (Field, 2004: 16; Jones, 1991: 47) (notwithstanding Wilber’s criticism (Simanowitz & Pearce, 2003: 123)); and, more especially,

• object-relational reflections on the origin of spirituality (Rizutto, 1979; Meissner, 1984; Jones, 1991; Wright, 2005, 2006) (Relational Psychodynamic); and

• similar reflections linking spirituality and pre- or peri-natal experience (Ridgway & House, 2006: 83f., 187f.; Rowan, 1992: 177-94 (Eclectic/Integrative); Lake, 1981, 1986 (Pastoral)), suggested to me that (without once again ultimately determining what essentially and ontologically might be ‘real’) genuine spirituality that is potentially healthy and beneficial might occur in, and arise from, infant experience as much as, what Wilber describes as, the later transpersonal stages. For me, this questions whether Wilber’s ‘fallacy’ always applies, or always needs to dichotomise Earlier Life and Spiritual interpretations, if both projective or regressive, and spiritual, processes can sometimes both be present. This, therefore, again invites openness, always, to considering Earlier Life and Spiritual interpretive possibilities in any given moment, in order to discern the nature and dynamics of any transpersonal aspect involved, before applying whichever is the more appropriate interpretation, or a combination of them.

(2)a) The Earlier Life interpretation’s focus on the past, rather than the present, is a tension with the Relational interpretation, recognised not least by the Relational Psychodynamic approaches:-

• Stern (2004: 137): notes a “general neglect of the present moment from psychoanalysis and psychodynamic psychotherapies”;

• Sullivan (2010: 221, 258): “The practitioner’s goal must be to immerse herself in the intensity of this moment’s experience”;

• Schermer (2003: 105) notes “an increasing focus upon awareness of the moment with lessened emphasis on historical inferences and reconstructions”.

This tension is sharpened whenever the present relationship is viewed as a transferential filter for understanding past influence, more than as a ‘real’ relationship in the present (although both may be understood to be transformative) (‘real’ is used here to describe a genuine, ‘I-You’ type, relationship, rather than to convey an essentialist or ontological contrast with projection, as in (1)(a)). If Freud’s influence emphasised the transference
(and invited greater exploration of the transferential or regressive possibilities than was undertaken by Thorne in 5.1.1(v), for example), the **Person-Centred** approach in particular emphasised present relating:-

- Rogers argued that focusing on transference prevented involvement in true relationship, and Mearns et.al. discounted its presence from ‘relational depth’ (5.1.1(v)); moreover,

- Rogers (1990c: 136) insisted that change comes, not from analysing transference, but from unconditionally accepting “whatever the client is at that moment”; so, considering and evaluating the possibility of projection or regression would contradict Rogers’ approach and his understanding of what might bring about the change involved in a deep moment (Tebbutt, 2008: 57-8); and,

- analysing transference would also undermine person-centred principles about the locus of evaluation belonging to the client, and avoiding counsellor ‘expertise’ (see Mearns & Thorne, 1988: 5-21).

All this suggested that Freud’s and Rogers’ approaches, and, potentially, Earlier Life and Relational interpretations, were mutually exclusive. This **either/or** scenario was supported by:-

- Robutti’s understanding of an unconscious bipersonal field constructed through projective identifications but oscillating between ‘Transference↔Relationship’, the former involving repetitive moments, but in the latter, creative moments of genuine meeting (4.2.4c(v)); Stern et.al.’s recognition of transference, yet distinction and emphasis on the ‘real relationship’: “transference and countertransference aspects are at a minimum in a moment of meeting” (4.2.5(vi)) (Relational Psychodynamic);

- **Existential** and **Gestalt/Dialogical** appreciation of the therapeutic value of transference, but also that it distorts relationship (5.1.2(v), 5.1.3(v));

- Budgell’s rejection of transferential explanations (6.1.2(vi), Eclectic/Integrative).

Yet whilst cumulatively these insights suggested that, much of the time, transference and I-You present relationship are **mutually exclusive**, this may **not always**, or necessarily, be the case. Whilst sometimes transferential or similar processes may simply not be present, legitimately ruling out an Earlier Life interpretation, at other times such processes may be present, with the issue being about how then to respond:-

- given that Clarkson distinguishes transferential/countertransferential, reparative/developmentally needed, and person-to-person/I-You/‘real’ relationships, and cautions against substituting or confusing them (6.1.3(v),
Eclectic/Integrative), to avoid any such confusion or substitution, it may be necessary to conduct an initial consideration regarding whether any earlier life processes might be present;

- whilst this might contradict Rogers’ cautions against analysing transference, even he allowed for the general possibility of transference, and had an approach towards it, suggesting that accepting the underlying feelings would tend to dissolve it (5.1.1(v), Person-Centred); and,

- if analysing or initially considering transference is to some extent necessary, Jung, who also distinguished transference from the real relationship, implied that both could be held together when suggesting that discussing transference could still have an ‘I-Thou’ quality (4.3.1(v)); Beebe (1998: 335, Relational Psychodynamic) supports this, suggesting that, in Buber’s view:

  confirmation and meeting do not replace transference, but they change the meaning and dynamic of transference.

This undermines the notion that, if transference is present or discussed, it automatically excludes the possibility, also, of an ‘I-You’ relationship.

Thus three principal findings emerged:-

(1) both transference and a ‘real’ relationship may be present in such way as to allow for different or overlapping interpretive possibilities, and to invite openness towards that possibility (rather than automatically closing out the tension in one direction or another); although,

(2) by themselves, transferential (or regressive) processes are unlikely to generate deep moments, if merely repeating past process, without additionally involving:

  - a grasped opportunity to address or experience the earlier process differently (see again 4.2.4c)(v)) (in which case an Earlier Life interpretation may possibly be justified on its own, or in combination if also justified), and/or
  - a ‘real’/‘I-You’ relational quality in experiencing or discussing the earlier process (see Jung above) (justifying a combined Earlier Life/Relational interpretation); nonetheless,

(3) the cited references suggest that a ‘real’/‘I-You’ relationship is involved more often than transference (making a Relational interpretation, whether combined or alone, more frequently justified in those instances).

(2)b) ‘Aloneness or togetherness’ reflects a tension that cuts across all the codes. Earlier Life interpretations focus more on the individual and the intrapersonal; Relational
interpretations concentrate more on the therapeutic couple and the interpersonal; albeit with a range of positions. However, experiences and perceptions of boundary distinctions and mergers are less easy to correlate, since they vary between proponents of Earlier Life and Relational interpretations. Nonetheless, within the complexities involved, two findings apply:

(1) many positions variously focus on, or are concerned about, ‘aloneness’, or ‘togetherness’, often treating them as alternatives,

- although both the “extreme individualism of post-Enlightenment Western culture” (Hay, 2002: 8), and the postmodernism and social constructionism that “collapses the subject into intersubjective” and undermines the sense of an individual self (Frie, 2003a: 3; McLeod, 2011: 53), have been criticised; whereas,

(2) a smaller number of findings allowed for experiences of aloneness and togetherness, including:

- the facilitating factor of being present, but waiting in the not-knowing, aloneness (3.4; 7.3.1);

- perceiving personal/psychological (and sometimes transpersonal) boundaries as being simultaneously separate and joined (7.4.2b)(2));

- theoretical perspectives that emphasise:
  - the emergence of agency in and through relationship (Fredrikson, 2003, Psychoanalysis),
  - being “in the intersect without any loss of his sense of self” (referring to Buber) (Klein, 2003: 186, Relational Psychodynamic); indeed,
    - Buber advocates entering relationship yet confirming the other’s uniqueness, and that knower and known can be distinct but not separate beings (Buber, 1965); and that human existence is neither the individual nor the aggregate but “man with man” (Buber, 1947/1979: 244);
  - it is (the other’s response within) the relationship that “makes possible the realization of agency in a tangible way” (Frie, 2003a: 18, Eclectic/Integrative); and,
  - more widely, “a complementary dialectic of self and other” (as emphasised by Ricoeur’s Critical Hermeneutics (Kearney, 2004: 33));

- interpretations that involve:
  - recognising aloneness and togetherness: Thorne (5.1.1(vi), Person-Centred); Hobson (3.3(vi)(a), Eclectic/Integrative); also, Garguilio’s
(2004: 21, 94, 110) general application of Winnicott to suggest that ‘aloneness’ can only be known through relationship, thereby enabling growth (Relational Psychodynamic);

- those I-Thou interpretations that confirm a sense of separateness and connectedness (e.g. Hycner, 5.1.3(iv)&(vi), Dialogical).

The different responses to this tension mitigates against permanently collapsing it, and instead invites maintaining an initial openness to the possibilities of ‘aloneness’ and/or ‘togetherness’ in various ways, as potentially contributing to the applicability or otherwise of Earlier Life and/or Relational interpretations, in any given deep moment.

(3)a) The ‘dyadic’/‘triadic’ tension reflects the distinction that, for example, Clarkson (6.1.3(v)) draws between the ‘person-to-person/I-You/real’, and the ‘transpersonal’, relationships or facets. If Figure 1.2 is referred to again, various possible configurations of non-spiritual and spiritual, but also ‘dyadic’ or ‘triadic’, interpretations, are set out. To clarify:

- some Relational (and Earlier Life) interpretations are dyadic: they only identify intra- and inter-personal aspects, or interpret any additional transpersonal aspect in intra- and/or inter-personal and non-spiritual terms (see again 7.2.2 for examples);

- some Relational (and Earlier Life) interpretations are triadic: they identify intra-, inter- and trans-personal aspects, and interpret any or all in spiritual terms (see 7.2.2 and Table 7.3 for examples);

- Spiritual interpretations may, theoretically, only identify intra- and inter-personal aspects, and could therefore be dyadic, interpreting such aspects in spiritual terms;

- However, usually, Spiritual interpretations additionally identify a transpersonal aspect, making them triadic, and then interpreting any or all of these aspects in spiritual terms (see Table 7.4).

Given that Relational Interpretations may be dyadic or triadic, as also Spiritual interpretations (even if in practice usually triadic), the tension between dyadic and triadic does not correlate exactly with the Relational and Spiritual interpretive poles at that side of the triangle. Nevertheless, there is clearly a pull on that side between ‘pure’ Relational interpretations, that conceptualise in dyadic terms, and hybrid or Spiritual interpretations, that conceptualise in triadic terms. For example:-
• this is apparent in the way that Buber is appropriated to emphasise an I-Thou quality of relating, by those who nonetheless suggest that dyadic principles are sufficient for understanding a deep moment (Mearns, Lynne Jacobs, etc.), and by those who additionally identify a triadic element in connection with the ‘I-Thou’ experience, which for them points to the spiritual (Thorne, Hycner, etc.) (5.1.1(v)), Person-Centred; 5.1.3(i)&(ii), Dialogical).

However, the very fact that there are hybrid interpretations (i.e. Relational interpretations with a spiritual element, or Spiritual interpretations with a strong relational element), indicates that, in terms of combining different complementary understandings, the tension does not need to collapse, thus allowing interpretations to have both dyadic and triadic emphases (that also influence the ‘Relational theologies’ referred to below); even if, semantically, interpretations can only be dyadic or triadic, as indeed many are in practice.

The exact nature of dyadic and triadic interpretations also vary greatly, including regarding the final highlighted tension.

(3)b) A further tension arises regarding immanent or transcendent understandings of the spiritual, which, whilst again not directly correlating with the poles on one side of the triangle, also reflects something of the tensions between inter- and trans-personal emphases, and dyadic and triadic interpretations, with the potential to generate competing understandings of the spiritual or divine within Relational and Spiritual interpretations.

Section 6.2.1(v) referred to some wider attempts to map (inter alia) different transcendent or immanent understandings, and such either/or tensions were apparent in the data. For example:-

• notwithstanding Buber’s relational understanding, Lartey (2006: 117) suggests that “God, in Martin Buber, remains the transcendent Other”, although others challenge transcendence (for example, for being dualist: Kirkpatrick, in Jones (1996: 78-9)); yet

• Buber (1952/1957: 78f., 133-7; Wehr, 1985/2001: 471-4) criticised Jung for reducing religious experience “from transcendence to immanence” (Sayers 2003: 90), although many contemporary understandings of spirituality indeed emphasise immanence (Reason, 1993, Humanistic/Eclectic/Integrative; Heron, 2006, Transpersonal; etc.); however, in a critique of Jung that may apply more widely, Palmer (1997: 185, 196) asserts that, whilst Jung may have been correct to argue that
God’s transcendence should not be conceived as complete ‘apartness’ from the world...

[Jung] so radicalized the notion of God’s immanence as an exclusively psychic reality that it becomes equally questionable whether anything has been left of God at all.

As an alternative, understandings that encompassed immanence and transcendence were also evident, for example, in the Relational Psychodynamic approaches:

- Grotstein (1997: 85-7) emphasises that Bion’s understanding of ‘O’ involves immanent and transcendent elements, and that Bion’s Unconscious involves the:

  inner presence of the ‘Immanent or Incarnate God’, one who is in direct connection with the ineffable and inscrutable ‘Godhead’.

- Ulanov (reflecting Jung’s and Winnicott’s influence) also expresses an almost incarnational understanding:

  Transcendence is not something up in the sky, far away from us, abstract ... It wants to be lived, housed in our body, in our society, in different forms (1997: 137).

  The numinous does not reside in either the immanent or the transcendent God but locates itself in the mysterious space between them (2001a: 10).

Furthermore, various authors encompass immanent and transcendent understandings through various forms of ‘relational theology’, which they allude to or develop implicitly or explicitly, and which, in effect, also seek to contain, rather than collapse, dyadic/triadic tensions. These theologies are broadly of three types, being:

(1) those heavily influenced by Buber, including:

- Jones (1991: 129-135; 1996: 69-94): “only in the midst of I-you meetings can God be encountered”, being “the third partner in every dialogue” (Jones is also influenced by Macmurray, Frank Kirkpatrick, and relational Feminist theology); Schermer (4.2.7(v)) (Relational Psychodynamic); West (6.2.2(vi), Spiritual);

- Buber’s (1947/1979: 246) own relational theology, applied to moments of deep encounter, might be identified as follows:

  In the understanding of such fleeting and yet consistent happenings... what happens here cannot be reached by psychological concepts, it is something ontic. ... But it is not to be grasped on the basis of the ontic of personal existence, or of that of two personal existences, but of that which has its being between them, and transcends both. In the most
powerful moments of dialogic, where in truth “deep calls unto deep”, it becomes unmistakably clear that it is not the wand of the individual or of the social, but of a third which draws the circle round the happening. On the far side of the subjective, on this side of the objective, on the narrow ridge, where I and Thou meet, there is the realm of “between”...the knowledge of which will help to bring about the genuine person again and to establish genuine community.

(2) those who develop or allude to other relational theologies, including:

- Klein (2003: 155) compares processes in the intersect to Paul’s ‘participation in Christ’ (for which, see for example Dunn, 1998: 390-412) (Relational Psychodynamic);
- Jung (1929/1968: 52) also refers to Paul when discussing ‘participation mystique’; MacKenna (2009) identifies the sacred in accepting, affirming relatedness to self and other, that lives with separation and loss (Analytical Psychology);
- Thorne (see again 5.1.1(v)&(vi)), Prüller-Jagenteufel (2006) (Person-Centred);
- Hobson’s reference to Donne’s poem (3.3(ii)(a), Eclectic/Integrative); or
- see several Pastoral understandings in 6.2.3(v), some of which extend to:

(3) those which, from a Christian Pastoral perspective, emphasise the Trinity as a model or resource for caring practice, including:


These nascent or developed ‘theologies’ contain immanent and transcendent elements, as well as dyadic and triadic emphases; since additionally they arise from some of the authors proposing Relational or Spiritual (or indeed Earlier Life) interpretations, or a combination of them, this further indicated that underlying tensions could be held together and navigated. Again, this encourages the possibility that, in theory and in practice, rather than collapsing tensions and pre-judging what might be suitable, different interpretations can be applied according to what might be most appropriate in the particular circumstances of any given deep moment.

Thus I have mapped the relationships between different interpretations, by categorising them into principal types (7.6.1), and by examining some of the underlying tensions between them (7.6.2). This has revealed that different types of interpretation do not
always, or automatically, have to stand in opposition to each other. This allows for the pragmatic possibility of determining, with each deep moment, which particular type, or overlapping and hybrid type, of interpretation is most appropriate.

7.6.3 Cogency

If permitting different interpretations (or their combination) is appropriate, this would also suggest that, in any instance, the most cogent interpretation will always be the one best fitting that particular moment of deep encounter. This would temper any claim that particular categories or types of interpretation are always more, or less, cogent (thus reflecting a pragmatic relativism). Nevertheless, some general principles concerning cogency, and the strengths or weaknesses of different interpretive categories, could also be recognised (reflecting a critical realism).

Allowing for, rather than presumptively excluding, each interpretative category (on their own or in combination), means that:-

a) Earlier Life interpretations:

(1) are likely to investigate and identify (rather than miss) any pertinent past influences or intrapersonal issues regarding the genesis, process, and/or understanding of moments of deep encounter; so that, when such influences or issues are present, Earlier Life interpretations may be particularly cogent; however,

(2) if Earlier life interpretations only consider earlier life factors and ignore any factors that might (instead or in combination) justify a Relational or Spiritual interpretation, an Earlier Life interpretation would be less cogent; overall,

(3) given the precondition of a present interpersonal aspect for deep moments to occur, whereas earlier life factors may occur less frequently, Earlier Life interpretations may be cogent less often than Relational interpretations;

b) Relational interpretations:

(1) are likely to recognise and respect any (especially heightened) present interpersonal factors; so that, if such factors are present, a Relational interpretation may be particularly cogent; however,
(2) if Relational interpretations only consider present interpersonal factors and insufficiently take into account any earlier life or spiritual factors that are also present, a Relational interpretation would become less cogent; overall,

(3) the necessity for a present interpersonal aspect, and the type of relational factors frequently indicated in the deep-moment data, suggest that Relational interpretations may be frequently cogent;

c) Spiritual interpretations:

(1) will identify any transpersonal or spiritual features, and interpret them spiritually, not as an optional extra, but on the premise that “what it means to be human cannot be contained solely within psychological models” (Lyall, 1995: 80); if such a premise is valid, and a deep moment’s presenting features justify it, a Spiritual interpretation may be particularly cogent; however,

(2) if Spiritual interpretations insufficiently take into account any indicated earlier life or relational factors, a Spiritual interpretation will be less cogent; overall,

(3) given the precondition of a present interpersonal aspect for deep moments to occur, whereas spiritual factors may occur or be evident less frequently, Spiritual interpretations may be cogent less often than Relational interpretations.

I summarise these principles in Box 7.5 below. However, there is also a qualification. The principles assume that a neutral approach towards interpretation is possible, and that the nature and circumstances of any deep moment will be capable of examination on their own merits, with whatever factors that might be found to be present then determining the resultant interpretation. Yet, firstly, the interpreter (listener, talker, author) will already be in a hermeneutical circle, unavoidably bringing to bear the deposits from their previous cycles of reflexive praxis, offering an initial bias towards a preferred interpretation. Secondly, the context in which the moment occurs will also not be neutral: as explained in 7.6.1 above (when citing Gelso and Carter), practitioners of approaches most likely to generate Earlier Life, Relational, or Spiritual interpretations, will be cultivating the very therapeutic contexts and conditions that will bring to the fore the particular features that would justify, as the case may be, Earlier Life, Relational or Spiritual interpretations of any deep moments arising. Thus, again, a form of a hermeneutical circle, between the individual’s theoretical frame, its application in practice, and the consequent interpretation, will be applying. Thirdly, the criteria for
evaluating cogency will also vary according to the interpreter’s theoretical frame and preferred paradigm (cogency might be determined according to what is perceived to be ‘true’, or ‘most useful’, etc.).

Thus the proposition that each case should be interpreted on its merits, affecting the cogency each time of different possible interpretations, is a counsel of perfection, given the impossibility of ‘neutrality’ or complete ‘bracketing’ (see again 2.2.1). Nevertheless, I would argue that interpretation and practice would still be more distorted if a proper attempt to examine the contributing factors in every deep moment were not to be made, or if the possibility of all interpretations is not left initially open. Secondly, given that every interpreter will have their own preferred frames, practices, and resultant types of interpretation, it invites all interpreters to reflect reflexively on the nature and influence of their own frames, practices and interpretations, so as to help cultivate an open-minded, attentive and respecting attitude towards the individual circumstances and interpretive possibilities of every deep moment (these are implications for practice that I repeat in the meta-synthesis). Hence, I added a fourth principle to Box 7.5 (reflecting, it will be apparent, a principle that can apply more generally in both therapeutic practice and qualitative research).

**Box 7.5 Proposed principles regarding interpretive cogency**

Generally, the most cogent interpretation will be the one best fitting the nature and circumstances of any particular moment of deep encounter; consequently:-

1. Earlier Life, Relational, or Spiritual interpretations may all at times be especially cogent, by themselves or in combination;

2. any interpretation will be less cogent if other factors justify a different type of interpretation, instead or in combination;

3. given the importance of the present interpersonal, a Relational Interpretation may often be cogent, by itself or in combination (yet without excluding the other possibilities under (1) above); and,

4. since interpretation can never be neutral but always reflects something of the influences of preferred frameworks, practices and interpretations, reflexivity on the interpreter’s part might enhance an open-minded, attentive and respecting attitude towards the individual circumstances and interpretive possibilities of each deep moment, so as to identify the most cogent interpretation on every occasion.
In terms of my own interpretive preferences, resulting from my (hopefully reflexive) cycles of practice and research to date, I acknowledge these in the meta-synthesis; for, having now compared and critiqued the thematic findings for every sub-code, and having identified commonalities, differences, and partly reconcilable differences, to reveal something of the nature, limits, and merits of different positions, the meta-analyses are ready for meta-synthesis.
PART IV: META-SYNTHESIS

Chapter 8: Critique and Synthesis of Meta-Analytic Findings

The meta-synthesis emerged from the meta-analysis, and drew together the insights and findings that arose from the research, to provide a focused conclusion, further theoretical interpretation, and clear implications (Timulak, 2009: 598). Firstly, drawing from Summary Table 7.1 and the subsequent analyses, I identified and connected the key insights for each code, to provide below, through text and diagrams, a provisional framework for describing, explaining, and understanding moments of deep encounter. Secondly, I assessed the research, by considering its implications, achievements, limitations, and possible future directions. The meta-synthesis:-

- reflects the methodological principles set out in 2.3.3 (including Paterson’s features of a meta-synthesis, and the notion of an ‘interpretive bricolage’);
- offers the ‘emergent, overarching understanding’ envisaged by the third element of my theoretical framework (2.2.3, employing the criteria in Box 2.3); and,
- addresses the second and third research questions set out in Box 1.2 (the first, regarding the understanding of moments of deep encounter, having been addressed throughout the thematic and meta-analysis), concerning whether an explanatory framework could be devised to relate different accounts and understandings, with any implications identified.

8.1 An explanatory framework

In the subsections below, I identify, collate and connect the principal meta-analytic findings from across all the thematic codes and subcodes. I use the ‘indicator’, ‘aspects’ and ‘boundary’ codes to describe the patterns and nature of moments of deep encounter; the ‘aspects’, ‘facilitation’, ‘boundaries’ and ‘theoretical frame’ codes to explain how they may occur; and the ‘theoretical frame’ and ‘interpretation’ codes to suggest how they might be understood; as illustrated in Figure 8.1.
8.1.1 Description

A simple description of moments of deep encounter is provided in the working definition in Box 1.4. This continued to prove helpful and withstood the scrutiny of the research. For example, Section 7.2 confirmed the presence of intra-, inter-, and trans-personal aspects within moments of deep encounter, and as helping to constitute them (albeit with their nature and function being variously understood). When possibilities for amending the working definition did arise (e.g., as discussed in 7.1.1 concerning the variable significance of deep moments), I decided they were unnecessary. Likewise, I have resisted expanding the definition to include later insights, since providing a more comprehensive summary belongs to the explanatory framework, leaving the working definition as a concise, fundamentally accurate, summary of the principle features of moments of deep encounter.

In providing an amplified description for the explanatory framework, I need additionally to recount the: a) patterns of occurrence; b) perspectives from which they are reported; c) general nature and role; and d) boundary characteristics, of moments of deep encounter.
a) Section 7.1.1 confirmed that others also report often significant moments of deep encounter, but not universally so, and only in relatively small numbers (see the summary in Box 7.1). Overall, patterns of occurrence are complex, rather than clear-cut, because occurrence depends on the presence, or absence, of the interconnected factors recognised in section 8.1.2. Nevertheless, those approaches that more frequently indicate moments of deep encounter can be identified, as in Figure 8.2 (but see 7.1.1 for details).

Figure 8.2  Principal approaches indicating moments of deep encounter

b) Most data was derived from the author’s and/or listener’s perspective, but there was also sufficient data from the talker’s perspective to conclude that either, and frequently both, parties experience the phenomenon. Whether perspectives were contemporaneously or later recorded, seemed to be largely immaterial (7.1.2).

c) Section 7.1.3 confirmed the fundamentally beneficial and at times profoundly transforming nature and role of moments of deep encounter, and that they focus wider therapeutic processes and qualities. Additionally, they often shared some of the
characteristics indicated in Figure 8.3 (which also connect to and help emphasise intra-, inter-, and trans-personal perspectives on moments of deep encounter).

**Figure 8.3  Some recurring characteristics of moments of deep encounter**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Out of ordinary time</th>
<th>Safely risking deeper working</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PENNY DROPPING insight</td>
<td>TRANSFORMING focusing of process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**d)** The presence and role of **boundaries** connects to the issue and characteristic of safely risking deeper working. Section 7.4 analysed the significance, understanding and function of professional/ethical, personal/psychological, and transpersonal boundaries. Some of this relates to facilitation in 8.1.2, but, as 7.4.3 acknowledged, boundary factors are also a common characteristic of moments of deep encounter. Box 7.4 confirmed that boundaries are often **significant**; are broadly **respected**, although boundary **lowering** often occurs (being facilitative factors described below in Box 8.2); and (section 7.4.2) that differences regarding the resulting issues can be, to some extent, reconciled:

- whether lowered boundaries are in themselves **pathological or beneficial** can be explored in each instance, and, either way, treated as an opportunity for growth;
- whether boundaries **merge or not** may be variously understood: as reflecting pre-‘merger’, temporarily ‘merged’, and post-‘merger’ stages; or as sometimes
involving a simultaneously being joined and separate; or as the different parties sometimes experiencing boundary loss to differing degrees;

- whether earlier life or transpersonal (or other) factors are involved can be explored open-mindedly, rather than pre-assuming that such factors will be involved, or will always be mutually exclusive.

Thus boundary issues contribute to the nature and characteristics of moments of deep encounter, as illustrated in Figure 8.4.

**Figure 8.4  Boundary characteristics and issues**

![Boundary Characteristics Diagram]

**8.1.2 Explanation**

The different combinations of practical and theoretical factors identified in codes (ii) to (v) (Table 3.1) explain, I suggest, the variations in pattern between different approaches and authors regarding deep-moment occurrence and recognition. Four categories of factors are apparent.

a) The *aspects* findings set out in 7.2.3, Box 7.2, Figure 7.1 (all of which are worth revisiting, including for the difference between moments of deep encounter and wider
deep moments), and 7.3.2, were highly significant. For moments of deep encounter to occur, they require the presence, and preferably encouragement rather than discouragement, of present interpersonal and transpersonal aspects (and potentially an understanding that trans- and inter-personal aspects interconnect, as illustrated in Box 7.3). These key findings cut through the various competing understandings of each aspect (summarised in 7.2.2) (although these understandings are important in themselves, and relate to issues of interpretation). Additionally, Box 7.2 records the various approaches’ different aspect-emphases (as described in 7.2.1), to help indicate why deep moments occur more in some approaches than others.

b) Encouraging and not discouraging the relevant aspects partly occurs through the facilitative relational factors identified in 7.3.1. In addition to applying general relational qualities, Box 8.1 summarises the particular factors which the meta-analysis revealed as being present in, and potentially therefore contributing to, deep-moment occurrence, whether individually or in combinations. This represents a significant finding. At heart is a respect for the other person; a willingness to be present and to risk staying with them through the difficult stuff, waiting in the not knowing and aloneness; and, an openness to earlier life factors, and to spiritual possibilities.

**Box 8.1 Seven specific facilitative factors**

In addition to general relational qualities, specifically:

(1) accepting and recognising the individual;
(2) profound empathic connectedness/being in tune with;
(3) presence;

plus two involving going further:

(4) risking staying with and going deeper;
(5) waiting in the not-knowing, silence, and/or aloneness;

plus two that are more specific to particular perspectives:

(6) a mothering, holding environment, and (sometimes) facilitating regression;
(7) spiritual awareness and discipline.
c) Sections 7.3.2 (and 7.4.3) recognised that, whilst changes to boundaries might at times result from deep moments, they might sometimes lead into and help to facilitate and explain a deep moment, as summarised in Box 8.2.

**Box 8.2  The facilitative role of different boundaries**

| (1) | Professional and ethical boundaries are widely necessary for providing a safe, facilitative environment; so, |
| (2) | any partial lowering of professional/ethical boundaries, which might sometimes allow for and facilitate breakthrough, must be limited and appropriate; |
| (3) | personal and psychological boundaries similarly need recognition and respect; so, |
| (4) | temporarily lowering personal/psychological (and sometimes transpersonal) boundaries, which can be facilitative, needs to be balanced with professional/ethical (or transpersonal balanced with interpersonal) boundaries. |

**d)** There was no general correlation between different approaches’ theoretical frames and deep-moment occurrence (7.5.1). However, those approaches with theoretical perspectives that emphasised and encouraged factors that can facilitate deep-moment occurrence (i.e. concerning aspects, boundaries, and the facilitative relational factors), also contribute to, and help to explain, deep-moment occurrence (for which some limited correlative trends could be identified (7.5.2)). Additionally, the particular paradigms considered in 7.5.3 tended to contribute to and reinforce (rather than contradict) existing theoretical positions (for example the ‘relational’ paradigm encouraged interpersonal emphasis, etc.), rather than to influence deep-moment occurrence (or interpretation) in separate distinctive ways.

In summary, the genesis of deep moments might be explained in terms of the four factors contributing (probably at least partly in combination) to the occurrence and facilitation of deep moments, as illustrated in Figure 8.5. However, whilst some approaches seem initially to suggest that moments of deep encounter might be manufactured or engineered, closer examination suggests that this would be unlikely. Certainly the prevailing view is that, at best, deep moments can only be facilitated (7.3.3). This is also
pertinent regarding the transpersonal aspect (the distinguishing factor that enables deep moments to become moments of deep encounter); as Thorne suggests from within a theological paradigm: we can prepare for grace, but it “cannot be commanded to come down” (5.1.1(iii)).

Working within a critical-realist paradigm, rather than a positivist one that might expect cause and effect to be definitively discoverable, the most that can be provisionally suggested is that, this combination of factors, quarried from detailed thematic and meta-analyses, is presently my best understanding of what helps to explain the occurrence or otherwise of moments of deep encounter, thus also offering guidance for helping to facilitate them.

**Figure 8.5   Factors facilitating the occurrence of moments of deep encounter**

8.1.3 Understanding

Figure 8.6 refers to the three interpretive subcodes, the meta-synthesis for which I then set out, before briefly indicating my own preferred interpretations.
a) Section 7.6.1, and Tables 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3, identified the main categories and types of interpretation, and suggested that, since some interpretive strands cross over between categories and approaches, hybrid and overlapping interpretations are possible. Figure 7.2 illustrated this in principle, and, additionally, Figure 8.7 maps various sample authors or approaches according to their interpretive categories and types. (I have bracketed Freud because, whilst I have argued for including his interpretive insights, he does not himself offer deep-moment indicators.) The positioning is inevitably tentative and subjective, since it attempts to reduce complexity by assessing where authors or approaches might ‘best’ be placed, when other positionings might also be arguable. Nevertheless, the diagram gives an overall picture of various interpretive possibilities and preferences, and their positions relative to each other.
Figure 8.7  An illustrative mapping of different interpretations

It is important to remember that each category of interpretation can (and must) account for each aspect of a moment of deep encounter. For example, it is not that an Earlier Life interpretation will be ignoring or denying a transpersonal aspect: it might account for that aspect in earlier life terms; or, it might account for it in spiritual or relational terms (and thus overlap with other interpretive categories); but an Earlier Life interpretation’s predominant emphasis will be on earlier life factors, justifying its categorisation as an ‘Earlier Life interpretation’. Similarly, just because Spiritual interpretations are described as ‘Spiritual’, does not mean that they are the only ones acknowledging a transpersonal aspect or the possible presence of spiritual factors; rather, the Spiritual interpretive category will give greater weight to them than other categories do; etc..
As recognised in 7.5.2 and 7.6, different underpinning theoretical frames significantly influence the shape and preference for different interpretations, enabling some correlations to be identified. The particular paradigms considered in 7.5.3 could also influence interpretation. The positivist and constructivist paradigms (or reactions and variations to them) appeared to have general contributory and confirmatory, rather than separate and distinct, influences on deep-moment interpretations (but sometimes with particular significance in individual cases); whilst the ‘relational’ paradigm was more significant, and its influence detectable across all the codes.

b) In considering the relationship between different categories (7.6.2), again, different theoretical frames underpinned and influenced their respective interpretive positions, and the disagreements between them. I identified six underlying tensions that helped to explain why the different positions appeared to contradict or compete against each other (see the triangle in Figure 7.3). However, through detailed analysis I argued that the various tensions might be creatively held together, and not always collapsed, if an open-minded attitude was to be brought to each deep moment, so as not to skew interpretation or practice (reflecting the reasoned pragmatism of my theoretical framework). For example, whilst transference was unlikely in itself to generate deep moments, and ‘I-You/real’ relating was more often likely to be pertinent, sometimes both might be involved, so that Earlier Life and Relational interpretations do not always need to be mutually exclusive (7.6.2(2a)).

c) When envisaging the ‘critical dialogue’ element of the Meta-analysis (which applied to all the codes, but especially to interpretation), I anticipated that particular categories of interpretation would be revealed and debated, to determine the most cogent, or at least the most preferred (according to whichever criteria might be being employed). The main interpretive categories were indeed mutually critiqued to reveal their principal characteristics, as recorded in 7.6. However, the overriding insight which emerged was that cogency might depend primarily on whichever interpretation best fits the particular features and circumstances of any deep moment. This would challenge any presumption that Earlier life, Relational, or Spiritual interpretations will automatically apply to any given deep moment, notwithstanding that particular authors and approaches inevitably tend to prefer interpretations that accord with their own precepts and priorities (whilst also often pre-judging the interpretations of others). In its place, an
open-minded, attentive and discerning attitude was called for (or, at least, it reflected my own emerging stance), to determine, with every deep moment or moment of deep encounter, which particular type or overlapping type of interpretation might be most appropriate, on the basis that this would enhance, and not skew, interpretation and practice.

Based on such an attitude, I identified some general principles concerning cogency and the suitability of different understandings (section 7.6.3 and Box 7.5). These recognised that each category might be more or less cogent (alone or in combination) according to the nature and circumstances of each particular moment. I also argued that, whilst initial interpretive biases would always apply given the impossibility of neutrality, a reflexive, respectful attitude would go some way to achieving an open-minded, discerning attitude, for assessing the cogency of different interpretive possibilities in any given moment.

d) Following the cycle of this research and in the light of my own practice and experience, it might be appropriate to indicate my own interpretive biases, as revealed and developed through the research. Figure 8.7 conveys in simple (and inevitably simplistic) diagrammatic terms how I tend to conceptualise the possible parties to a moment of deep encounter (but recognising that the transpersonal might be conceptualised in an infinite variety of ways).

**Figure 8.8**  A simple representation of the possible parties and dynamics involved in a moment of deep encounter

Key:  s = self or talker;  o = other person or listener;  O = ‘Other’, the transpersonal, spiritual or divine;  arrows = possible relationships, influences and/or dynamics.

![Diagram](image)

I then expect any interpretation to allow or account for the possible dynamics involved between the different possible parties. Accordingly, I find interpretations that combine earlier life (which recognise that the intrapersonal is often shaped by past experience),
relational, and spiritual elements to be helpful (but with the combination or emphasis varying according to the particular nature of the moment of deep encounter), so as to address the interconnected intra-, inter-, and trans-personal aspects involved. Consequently, from my perspective:-

• where an **Earlier Life** interpretation is justified,
  
  o various **Relational Psychodynamic** understandings may apply (see summaries in Table 4.1),
  
  o as might some of the transcending and coming-together type understandings of **Analytical Psychology** (4.3.1(vi), 4.3.2(vi); without thereby necessarily subscribing to all Jungian concepts);

• where a **Relational** interpretation is justified,
  
  o Hobson’s (Eclectic/Integrative) understanding of aloneness-togetherness, waiting, and/or not knowing (3.3(vi), as also variously expressed by Thorne (3.4, Person-Centred), McKenna (4.3.2(v), Post-Jungian), and others), accurately reflects some of my experiences of moments of deep encounter, where the talker enters a deep reflective place (even if only for a moment), and is respected and held in the aloneness-togetherness by the listener, whilst often accompanied by a sense of the transpersonal;
  
  o similarly, the ‘I-Thou’ understandings (as expressed, for example, by some Dialogical authors, 5.1.3(vi)) are also attractive;
  
  o as are those interpretations that more explicitly understand the transcendent/immanent presence of the spiritual or divine, as hinted at by Hobson (Eclectic/Integrative), made clearer by Rogers, and especially by Thorne (Person-Centred, 5.1.1(vi)), or as expressed for example by MacKenna (Analytical Psychology, 4.3.2(vi)); these overlap with and extend into:

• a **Spiritual** interpretation, where justified,
  
  o as in the understandings of various Spiritual and Pastoral authors (6.2.2(vi), 6.2.3(vi)),
  
  o so that I instinctively also look for, or employ, a ‘Relational Theology’ (7.6.2(3)b), and see 8.2.3).

Accordingly, following this cycle of research, my understanding of interpretive possibilities (and, as importantly, their interrelationships) has both deepened and widened. With this has come an increased commitment to discerning and applying whichever interpretation might be most appropriate and cogent in any particular case;
but also a greater acknowledgement of my starting ‘bias’. However, in keeping with Gadamer’s principles (2.2.1), I seek to employ this starting bias beneficially, by looking out for the possible presence of intra-, inter-, and trans-personal aspects, and, where sensed or discerned, expecting each to be accounted for.

### 8.1.4 Summary

Through this research I identified various accounts and insights regarding deep moments, which, through a process of thematic coding and analysis, and a meta-analytic comparison and critique of the thematic findings, enabled me to identify various factors involved in the description, explanation, and understanding of moments of deep encounter. Together, the different factors constitute a framework that goes some way to explaining what may be involved in moments of deep encounter, or in their facilitation and interpretation, according to whichever combination of factors may be applying in any particular instance. This explanatory framework can be represented diagrammatically, as in Figure 8.9, by bringing together the figurative triangles from earlier in this chapter, but making an adjustment to emphasise the central role of the different aspects (and especially the *present interpersonal* and *transpersonal*) in the constitution, facilitation, and understanding of moments of deep encounter.
8.2 Assessing the research

Ponterotto (2005: 132) suggests that, how research is evaluated, largely depends on the anchoring paradigm. Rejecting a positivist paradigm, Polanyi (1967: 25) asserts that it is “futile to seek for strictly impersonal criteria of [a discovery’s] validity”. The resultant ‘crisis of legitimisation’ means that, in qualitative research, “Multiple criteria of evaluation compete for attention” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 19-20). Consequently, in assessing my research, there is no single principle or set of criteria that might be applied, but rather questions such as to whether it is:

- reliable in its consistency of judgments (Boyatzis, 1998: 144f.);
- credible (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 94-6; Janesick, 2000: 392-4);
- illuminating of the decision-making leading to the findings (“When this holds, readers have the information with which to judge for themselves whether the findings are reasonable.”) (Ely et.al., 1991: 156);
utilising an adequate data sample, open procedures and rigorous methodology, with a meta-synthesis that adds heuristic value and raises questions for future research (Fredriksson, 1999: 1175);

- authentic, meaningful, plausible, rigorous, useful, valid (Guba & Lincoln, 2005: 197-207);
- rigorous (Jensen & Allen, 1996: 556; Kincheloe, 2001; Langdrige, 2007: 80; Timulak, 2007: 305, 2009 591);
- coherent (Lynch, 1996a: 147);
- comprehensive, credible, rigorous, trustworthy (Paterson et.al., 2001: 51-3, 123-6);
- offering aesthetic merit, impact, reflexivity, a substantive contribution (Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005: 964);
- comprehensive in its treatment of data (Silverman, 2006: 298-9);
- credible, reliable, rigorous, trustworthy; offering generalisability, resonance of fit, and theoretical sensitivity (Swinton & Mowat 2006: 57, 70-1, 121-2).

As invited by Ely above, readers will have a sense as to whether this research affirmatively answers some of the questions posed. To help further with that assessment, I suggest below some principal implications, achievements, limitations, and future directions of this research, all of which contribute to its evaluation.

8.2.1 Implications
Section 1.2.2 anticipated the possibility of various learning outcomes. The following are the principal research implications (being summarised later in Box 8.3).

a) Methodologically, I would affirm ‘meta-study’ as a research process, and the particular form of it which I developed, involving a triple stage thematic analysis, meta-analysis, and meta-synthesis, underpinned by a theoretical framework that encourages an open-minded, attentive attitude; a critical dialogue; and an emergent, overarching understanding. Whereas a thematic analysis on its own might have produce a single layer of findings and conclusions, the additional meta-analysis enabled a greater range of the interconnecting complexities to be revealed, articulated, and engaged in dialogue; thus allowing contradictory voices to be partly reconciled, or at least their differences and varying emphases to be better understood; so that a more comprehensive and nuanced overall explanatory framework could emerge through the meta-synthesis.
A possible qualification to my endorsement of meta-study might be Paterson’s (et.al., 2001: 19-21, 30) observation that the extensive and multi-perspective nature of meta-studies cautions that preferably they should be undertaken by research teams, rather than by individuals. Certainly, undertaking this meta-study as an individual proved to be an extensive and demanding task, and one that necessarily required a continual reflexivity and iteration to ensure that the judgments involved, analysing, comparing and contrasting data, were carried out as consistently as possible over an extensive period of time. Nonetheless, Carroll (2004), and hopefully this research, illustrates that individuals, working by themselves, can undertake meta- or similar studies; even if, generally, individuals may need to undertake projects with smaller data samples than those which may be collectively tackled by teams of researchers.

Each stage of my meta-study also offered particular implications. My thematic analysis endorses, where appropriate, the use of various types of data (positive/negative, direct/indirect), and the adoption of a recursive, inductive/deductive approach to developing thematic codes that are then applied in the analysis of data (2.3.1). Furthermore, my thematic codes could have wider use if deductively applied elsewhere: ‘indicators’, ‘aspects’, ‘cause/facilitation’, ‘theoretical frames’, and ‘interpretation’ may be pertinent themes for investigating many interpersonal and/or transpersonal phenomena (with the ‘boundary’ code being less widely applicable, but still sometimes pertinent beyond this study).

As for the meta-analysis, whilst naturally I found the various elements of my theoretical frame (and overall critical-realist stance) to be helpful, I found the notion of a critical dialogue employing hermeneutics of both empathy and suspicion (and the other related concepts described in 2.2.2) to be particularly useful for investigating and mutually critiquing different positions. I would also commend the principles represented in the ‘tension’ triangle in Figure 7.3 and the related discussion, as a way not only of sketching and identifying some of the tensions involved in this data, but as a means of relating, and (to the extent possible) integrating, competing interpretations. For this topic and potentially more widely, this invites ‘both/and’, as well as ‘either/or’, types of interpretation.
The use of different ‘facet’ triangles in the meta-synthesis, diagrammatically and in terms of the principles represented by them, emerged as a helpful way of mapping and cohering an overall explanatory framework. As anticipated in 2.3.3, the recognition of different perspectives and facets inherently built in triangulation, but more particularly, as it transpired, it echoed and endorsed Richardson’s (2000: 934; Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005: 963; Janesick, 2000: 391-2) suggestion that a crystal, rather than a two dimensional triangle, is a better image, since it allows for multiple facets and angles of approach to be investigated, pursued, and related. In effect (and as anticipated in 1.2.2 and 1.2.3), ‘deep moments’ functioned as a crystal or prism, both inwardly to illuminate the phenomena themselves, and outwardly to illuminate the authors, approaches and frameworks that indicated deep moments or failed to do so, so that the research also enlightened various connected facets of theory and practice.

b) Turning to the theoretical implications resulting from the research, firstly I would affirm the conceptualisations of ‘moments of deep encounter’ set out in 1.3, including the:

- working definition (Box 1.4);
- constituent aspects (Box 1.5);
- different types of related moments (Box 1.6) and aspect permutations (Figure 1.1);
- distinction between ‘transpersonal’ and ‘spiritual’ (Box 1.7), with different possible configurations of spiritual and non-spiritual interpretations (Figure 1.2).

Although (as indicated at the time) I needed to present these in the introductory chapter in order to define my research subject, they were nonetheless theoretical conceptualisations and findings that emerged recursively through my research, and were supported by the meta-analytic findings. Collectively, I suggest that they contribute to a better conceptualisation of moments of deep encounter.

Secondly, this research represents a more comprehensive identification, collation, and analysis (Chapters 4, 5, 6; Summary Tables 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1), and comparison and critique (Chapter 7, Summary Table 7.1), of moments of deep encounter than, so far as I am aware, any previously undertaken or presented.
Thirdly, new, confirmatory, or more detailed theoretical insights emerged from the meta-analysis and meta-synthesis regarding each thematic code, including regarding:-

- **indications** of deep-moment occurrence, focusing and beneficial roles, and characteristics including ‘penny-dropping’ insights or resolution, safely risking of deeper working, and being ‘outside-of-ordinary’ time (7.1.3, 8.1.1, Figures 8.2, 8.3);

- the significance of present interpersonal, and transpersonal, aspects for constituting and facilitating deep moments, or moments of deep encounter (7.2.3, Box 7.2, Figure 7.1), and a collating of understandings and relational theologies regarding transpersonal/interpersonal interaction (7.6.2(3)b), Box 7.3);

- identification of facilitative factors, and the conclusion that deep moments may be facilitated but not engineered (7.3, 8.1.2, Box 8.1, Figure 8.5);

- the potential facilitative factor of different types of boundaries and their (appropriate) lowering (7.3.2, 7.4.1, 8.1.1d), Box 8.2), and the disputed issues concerning them (7.4.2);

- the limited correlations between different theoretical frames, particular paradigms, and deep-moment occurrence and interpretation (7.5); and,

- the principal categories and overlapping types of interpretation, the tensions underlying them that might sometimes be held or reconciled and not collapsed, and the variability of cogency depending on circumstances (7.6, 8.1.3; Tables 7.2, 7.3, 7.4; Figures 7.3, 8.7).

Fourthly, the explanatory framework (in 8.1 and Figure 8.9) maps and relates different descriptions, explanations, and understandings of moments of deep encounter, being an emergent, overarching understanding that is more acute and comprehensive than any, I suggest, previously available. Consequently, taken together, the four implications build a theoretical understanding of moments of deep encounter beyond that previously existing (thus fulfilling a stated purpose of meta-studies (Paterson et.al., 2001: 109, 120-2; Jensen & Allen, 1996: 553-6)).

Fifthly, moving outward from the phenomenon itself, the framework and findings provide a nexus and focal point for relating the insights, precepts and practices of different therapeutic and pastoral approaches, and for integrating them (in the sense of identifying complementary or overlapping insights) where possible.
c) The **practical** implications echo some of the methodological implications, or flow from (and feed into) the theoretical insights, and again represent an outcome of meta-study (Paterson, et.al., 2001: 131). Firstly, 7.1, 7.2, 7.4 and 8.1.1 invite an **open-minded, attentive attitude** towards the possibility of deep moments occurring, involving various aspects, characteristics and boundaries. Secondly, the **facilitative** insights in 7.3 and 8.1.2 invite an encouragement of the **factors** cited, so as to enhance the possibility of deep-moment occurrence. Thirdly, 7.5, 7.6 and 8.1.3 invite a willingness to allow for the possibility that **different theoretical perspectives and/or interpretations** might be applicable according to the nature and circumstances of each deep moment, and to then hold different interpretive possibilities in tension, whilst critiquing them and assessing their cogency so as to determine the most appropriate interpretation in any instance.

Fourthly, taken together these implications invite a **reflexive, flexible** willingness to adjust one’s **practice** to help facilitate and interpret a deep moment in response to the talker being listened to, rather than rigidly applying a preferred theoretical approach. Fifthly, this then extends more widely into inviting a greater awareness, communication and understanding between **different theoretical approaches**, so as generally to encourage more sensitive and effective practice around deep moments.

The different implications are summarised in Box 8.3.

**Box 8.3** **Principal research implications**

The following, joint and several, beneficial implications could be identified, that invite an understanding of:-

**a) methodological:**

(1) the benefit of a **three-stage meta-study** employing a **theoretical framework** that involves an open-minded, attentive attitude; a critical dialogue; and an emergent, overarching understanding (but with some caution regarding sample size when undertaken by individuals alone), involving:

(2) a **thematic analysis** that utilises **direct and indirect data**, and a **recursive, inductive/deductive coding** (with my particular thematic codes potentially also applicable more widely);

(3) a **meta-analysis** that involves **mutual critique** and hermeneutics of empathy and suspicion, and which identifies **underlying tensions**
(that may sometimes indicate complementary rather than necessarily contradictory positions);

(4) a meta-synthesis that uses multiple facets in developing an explanatory framework (thus inherently employing triangulation, and more especially crystallisation), inwardly to illuminate the phenomenon under investigation, and

(5) outwardly to illuminate wider theory and practice;

b) theoretical:

(1) a conceptualisation of moments of deep encounter involving a working definition, distinguishing aspects, and differentiation between ‘transpersonal’ and ‘spiritual’;

(2) a considerably more comprehensive identification, collation, analysis, comparison and critique than any previously presented;

(3) particular insights regarding deep-moment indicators, aspects, facilitation, boundaries, theoretical frames and interpretation;

(4) an explanatory framework for mapping and relating different descriptions, explanations, and understandings of moments of deep encounter, that also provides

(5) a nexus and focal point for relating the precepts, insights and practices of different therapeutic and pastoral approaches, and for integrating them (where overlapping or complementary insights can be identified);

c) practical:

(1) an open-minded, attentive attitude towards the possibilities of deep-moment occurrence, involving various aspects, characteristics and boundaries;

(2) the facilitative factors identified (in section 7.3) for enhancing the possibilities of deep-moment occurrence;

(3) an openness to different possible interpretations, and holding them in tension whilst critiquing and assessing their cogency;

(4) consequently, a reflexive, flexible practice that responds to the particular talker rather than prescriptively applying a preferred approach, and,

(5) a wider invitation for understanding and communication between approaches to enhance effective and sensitive practice around deep moments.
8.2.2 Achievements and limitations

a) The explanatory framework in 8.1 (and its underpinning thematic and meta-analyses), and the research implications identified in 8.2.1, address (within the parameters of this research) the research questions posed in 1.2.2 and Box 1.2, and broadly bear out the research justifications summarised in 1.2.3 and Box 1.3 (with one qualification discussed below), to constitute the research’s fundamental achievements.

Without then pointing out or repeating all the contributing achievements that I might claim for the research, I would highlight four in particular. **Firstly,** I would emphasise again that the research offers a more comprehensive study of moments of deep encounter and related phenomena than that previously undertaken or presented (including through the various summary Boxes, Figures, and Tables); involving, I hope, an “astute conceptual analysis” (Gergen, 2001: 809); and an appropriate ordering (but not forcing) of the insights identified into an explanatory framework (Reason (1993: 281) notes a fine line “between chaos, in which all is lost in confusion, and order, in which all is lost through calcification”).

**Secondly,** I have engaged different voices, insights, approaches and perspectives in dialogue, attending to, critiquing, relating and mapping positions of great diversity. This reflects:-

- Gergen’s (2001: 809) idea that dialogue should not ‘terminate’ different traditions or practices, but help them to “evolve in ways that more fully integrate the voices of the discipline and of its constituents and contribute to the intellectual resources of the world”;

- Jones’ (1996: 153-4) notions of a “relational model” and a “relational epistemology”, involving not “some prefabricated synthesis of fields”, but rather “an interactive dialogue”, that reveals “continuities and discontinuities” which “cannot be predicted” (as sometimes occurred in my meta-analysis);

- Kincheloe’s (2001: 687-91) understanding of interdisciplinary bricolage, which (although never easy) is “sensitive to multivocality”, “understands that the frontiers of knowledge work best in the liminal zones where disciplines collide”, and syntheses diverse information to move “to a more sophisticated level of meaning making”;

- Josephine Klein’s (2005: 175) call to move beyond naïve description and “passionate adherence to one formulation or another”, towards a more systematic presentation that identifies some “central concepts...for a coherent theory” of “intersect phenomena” (although Klein’s (2003, 2004, 2005) own
collation of various examples does not attempt an overall analysis or synthesis regarding them); and

- Wenger’s (1998: 103-21; and for my earlier reference see 2.1)) notions of:
  
  o ‘brokering’ between the ‘boundaries’ of different ‘communities of practice’, by which elements of practice in one community can be introduced into another (the adherents of different therapeutic and pastoral approaches constitute in effect different ‘communities of practice’),

  o involving ‘boundary encounters’ that require a negotiation of meaning, with, additionally, overlapping practices sometimes also being possible; and

  o with brokers experiencing ambiguity and isolation by being both ‘members and non-members’ of different communities, yet needing appropriate degrees of both connection and perspective in order to function as brokers (which resonates with needing hermeneutics of both empathy and suspicion), so as to

  o make the connections between different practices that enable new practice, knowledge and competence to emerge; although,

  o such boundary encounters require continuing maintenance (which resonates with my fifth practice implication above that different approaches need to communicate with and understand each other).

That my research journey involved engaging in and facilitating dialogue in the various ways described, is, I suggest, an achievement of this research.

The first two achievements led to a third, that notwithstanding immersion in copious data that revealed (through the coding matrix) numerous interconnected insights and multiple competing voices, nonetheless, my resultant findings and understanding were able to transcend the divergent voices and details to provide an overall explanatory framework. Furthermore, from within this, the most significant findings could be identified with a simple elegance, as expressed in Box 8.4.

**Box 8.4 The research’s core findings**

(1) Others, but not all, experience moments of deep encounter, with some general patterns of occurrence, but no absolute correlations (such as with particular approaches);

(2) the present interpersonal is necessary for deep moments, and additionally a transpersonal aspect for moments of deep
encounter, to occur;

(3) *key facilitative factors* were identified;

(4) ‘both/and’ possibilities were identified for understanding boundaries, relevant theoretical perspectives, and different interpretations;

(5) the main *interpretive categories* were ‘Earlier Life’, ‘Relational’ and ‘Spiritual’, which could overlap, with their applicability needing to be determined with each deep moment.

The research’s transcending quality and outcome might enable moments of deep encounter, and their related practices and understandings, to become more accessible to others, whilst also helping to enhance the understandings and relationships between the different voices involved.

The previous achievements were enabled in part by a *fourth* possible achievement: I undertook the research and dialogue with, hopefully, appropriate *reflexivity*. I flagged the need for reflexivity at the outset (in 2.2.1). It included, for example, reflexivity regarding the criteria that I would use in determining an emergent, overarching understanding (Box 2.3). Yet if these were indicators of *prior* reflexive awareness, as Sandywell (1996: xiv) observes, “reflexive practice never returns the self to the point of origin”, and therefore it is important also to indicate movement in my own understanding and practice regarding deep moments, and regarding the research process, as *resulting from* the research. I would (non-exhaustively) illustrate such reflexive movement as follows, regarding:

- my deep-moment *understanding*:

  o in 1.4, I explained that *how to think about* deep moments was central to my research; the theoretical reflections and framework in 2.1 and 2.2 were not pre-held articulated positions, but were themselves reflective and indicative of an increased understanding gained through wrestling with the topic;

  o in 8.1.3c), I explained that, instead of a preferred overall interpretation emerging, I learnt that *interpretation* might best be determined by the circumstances of each deep moment;

  o in 8.1.3d), I revealed my *interpretive biases*, indicating both greater reflexivity and awareness of the possible interpretations being referred
to, than had been the case when undertaking my MPhil (Tebbutt, 2008).

- **my practice:**
  
  o the awareness gained of the **facilitative** factors in 7.3 and 8.1.2, and
  
  o my appreciation of the need to respond to and **interpret** deep moments according their circumstances (7.6.3, 8.1.3c)),

  are two significant learnings that have hopefully enhanced my listening practice, in terms of encouraging and responding more sensitively to any moments of deep encounter;

- **my understanding of my research process:**
  
  o I wrestled for a long time with the tension concerning what might be the central thrust of my research, in terms of a pull ‘inwards’ towards examining deep moments themselves, and the pull ‘outwards’ towards investigating (through the lens of deep-moment experience) the nature and implications of wider theory and practice. Eventually I sensed that the task was to hold this tension constructively together, making use of both **inward and outward directions** in the research (as acknowledged in 1.2.2 and 1.2.3), so that a more creative contribution to theory and practice might result;
  
  o the development of the **thematic coding** was hugely significant: instead of the more lineal study, concentrating especially on differences in interpretation, that I envisaged initially when couching the research questions, the emergence of the six thematic codes demanded a more **holistic, recursive, and interlinked treatment**, that unearthed the descriptive and explanatory facets that also contributed to questions of understanding, as reflected in the threefold structure and triangular representations that emerged in the explanatory framework provided in 8.1.

**b) Reflexivity also extends to awareness of the research’s limitations**, as now described.

**Firstly,** moments of deep encounter are **difficult to research.** Within the general challenge of observing, discerning, and communicating what is involved in human experience (Polkinghorne, 2005: 138-9), deep moments have been held to be inherently difficult to assess, quantitatively and qualitatively (Nahum et.al., 1998: 315; Fonagy, 1998: 350-1). Moreover, if language (at least partly) constitutes rather than represents reality (2.1.1), it makes any attempt to characterise or understand deep moments “fraught, unstable, and subject to misunderstanding”; and/or, if there is no objectively knowable ‘reality’ or universal ‘truth’ (2.1.3), it makes my explanatory framework, and its
assessment, contingent on my own or others’ perspectives. Accordingly, these various factors suggest that at most my research will be partial and limited, not least because subjectivity is inescapable (although I would still reassert my observations about language and hermeneutics, in 2.1.1, and regarding critical realism, in 2.1.3).

A **second** possible limitation concerns **data identification and analysis**. Inevitably, more and different types of data could be researched to confirm or qualify my findings, and therefore I indicate some future directions for this in 8.2.3 (although, the qualification about individuals attempting meta-studies with too extensive data samples, and the extensive nature of this research, raises the alternative possibility that within this research I attempted to analyse too much, rather than too little, data). Inevitably also, for all my attempts to analyse data appropriately, at least in some instances someone else might have exercised different judgments. Nevertheless, overall I endeavoured to analyse data appropriately and consistently (including through constant comparison (3.2.2)); and, within the parameters of this research, I believe I achieved a balance between depth and breadth, with sufficient comprehensiveness and comparability to justify the findings that were emerging (2.3.1).

**Thirdly**, when claiming above that I had broadly fulfilled the research justifications in 1.2.3, I also registered a qualification, which concerned the intellectual challenge of conceptualising the interaction between the constituent aspects of moments of deep encounter. Originally I had envisaged assimilating or developing a theory regarding (in particular) the interaction of the inter- and trans-personal elements. Whilst I have identified many insights and reflections regarding the different aspects, their roles and potential interaction, I have not developed an overarching theory to the extent anticipated. This was partly because the earlier research tasks were more extensive (and productive) than expected, leaving less available time or space, and partly because my increased appreciation (from 2.1) of the linguistic, epistemological and ontological difficulties of conceptualising and discussing the ‘self’ (or ‘subject’) and its possible intra- and inter-personal dimensions, let alone the ‘transpersonal’, led me to recognise that this was a much more complex task than I had previously envisaged (thus representing another personal learning from the research). However, I suggest below that further work in this area would be appropriate, including by developing a ‘relational theology’. (Paterson (et.al. 2001: 121) similarly discovered in their study that a hoped-for new and
comprehensive theory was not immediately possible, but grounds for future theorising were established.)

**Fourthly**, another limitation would be to recognise that this research is only a *work in progress*, representing what I have so far found. However:

All interpretations are unfinished, provisional, and incomplete (Denzin, 1989b: 64);

theory is an articulation of the best understanding thus far available to investigators as to why things are the way they are (Edge, 2008: 653);

we live with tensions and possibilities that keep us talking, without getting in any final word (Strong & Paré, 2004: 13).

Moreover, the research’s incompleteness becomes a strength, if further necessary work can be identified and pursued, as proposed below in 8.2.3.

This indication of potential limitations and achievements, summarised in Box 8.5, reflects that meta-studies inevitably include gaps and limitations, yet remain capable of significant achievements (Paterson et.al., 2001: 120-1).

**Box 8.5 Principal achievements and limitations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) In addition broadly to fulfilling the research questions (1.2.2) and justifications (1.2.3), potential achievements included:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) a comprehensive study involving astute conceptual analysis and appropriate ordering of the resultant insights into an explanatory framework;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) engaging different voices in dialogue, through ‘brokering’ rather than suppression, and integrating where possible;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) transcending the multiple data, insights and perspectives, to provide an explanatory framework and some core findings (Box 8.4), potentially making the phenomenon and wider understandings more accessible;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) undertaking the research reflexively, with both prior and resulting awareness regarding deep-moment understanding and practice, and the research process;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b) potential limitations included:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) the difficulty of researching deep moments, including linguistic and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
epistemological challenges and inevitable subjectivity;

(2) the risk of insufficient, imbalanced, or misjudged data identification and analysis (although I would claim sufficient comprehensibility, balance, and appropriate analysis);

(3) a more limited conceptualisation of intra-, inter- and trans-personal interaction than intended (but increased appreciation of the challenges involved); and

(4) a work in progress (which invites further research).

8.2.3 Future research

Reflexive awareness of the limitations of my research to date, and therefore some awareness also of where the research might go next, leads me to suggest here some possibilities and directions for further work.

Firstly, with regard to studying relevant data within the continuing framework of a ‘meta-study’, it would always be possible to go deeper, in terms of analysing to an even greater extent the areas of literature examined, but also wider, in terms of going beyond the areas studied. As two examples regarding the latter, firstly, some social constructionist approaches that draw on discursive psychology and poststructural understandings of ‘social poetics’ offer some promising references: Shotter and Katz (1998, 1999) refer to Anderson’s ‘arresting’, ‘moving’, ‘living’, or ‘poetic’ ‘moments’; Katz and Shotter (2004a, 2004b) to ‘striking moments’ (also Lowe, 2005) and ‘engaged meetings’; Fuller and Strong (2001) to ‘alive moments’; and, Strong (2004) to ‘meaningful moments’. Secondly, from a background in ‘Interpersonal Neurobiology’, Siegel (2013; Siegal & Solomon, 2013) refers to ‘healing moments’ in psychotherapy, and also cites Tronick’s ‘dyadic states of consciousness’ (Boston Group, 4.2.5(v)). From this very different perspective, it is fascinating that he similarly stresses the importance of therapeutic ‘presence’, and points to an ‘integration of consciousness’ (that resonates with the ‘resolution’ theme suggested by others). Whilst for their linguistic, psychological and cognitive emphases these two illustrative data sources fell beyond the priority areas of data search for this research (2.3.1), nonetheless, they deserve attention for their potential confirmatory or additional insights regarding deep-moment phenomena.
Secondly, as for research approaches other than meta-study, I indicated in 1.2.1 that quantitative research might also contribute to an understanding of moments of deep encounter. During my research, it became apparent that some quantitative research regarding the patterns and frequency of deep moment occurrence (in connection with code (i)(a)) would be particularly useful to produce a more statistical, and less impressionistic, assessment of the overall numbers and frequency of moments of deep encounter occurring in practice. Fifty-percent of Budgell’s small sample were familiar with ‘linking’ (6.1.2(i)), and Mahrer et.al. (5.1.4(i)) researched the incidence of some wider deep moments. However, larger samples within research focused on moments of deep encounter, would be helpful.

Thirdly, regarding more qualitative research, whilst in 1.2.1 I argued that, for this research, a meta-study, rather than more face-to-face research, was called for, I also raised the possibility of further face-to-face research once a greater understanding had been gained through a meta-study, and proposed a number of possible approaches for undertaking it. My meta-study confirmed that undoubtedly further face-to-face research would now be helpful, whether to provide confirmatory, new, or deeper, insights. 7.1.2, for example, concluded that, whilst both therapists and clients experience significant deep moments, more research into both sides’ experience of the dynamics and interactions involved would be beneficial. Such research could be designed to capture further insights regarding each of the six thematic codes: the experience, aspects, facilitation, boundaries, theoretical frames, and understandings involved in moments of deep encounter.

Fourthly, given the foundations now established through this meta-study, the interaction of the constituent elements of deep moments could be further conceptualised. For me personally, this would perhaps next involve undertaking (or indeed returning to, having previously sketched some initial pointers (Tebbutt, 2000: 38; 2008: 112-3)) some theological reflection to conceptualise a ‘relational theology’ for moments of deep encounter, or more widely concerning the possible interaction of the ‘divine’ within human helping encounter. This would be redundant for those who discount a transpersonal element, or who reject a possible spiritual interpretation for any transpersonal aspect; and, even for those who recognise or look for spiritual and theological possibilities, Graham (1995: 227-8), for example, cautions the necessity of
being provisional when seeking to apprehend the divine. However, Graham (1996: 10) also asserts that the divine can “only be authentically and reliably apprehended in the midst of human practice”. In sentiment with this, Samuels (1989a: 167) observes that contemporary theology is captivated by the “idea of a mysticism of (or between) persons”, and not solely because of Buber’s influence. In 7.6.2(3)b I referred to a number of ‘relational theologies’, and, as I have sought to bring together various deep-moment insights and interpretations, so I would wish to extend this to sift, synthesise, and develop a relational theology of moments of deep encounter, and of wider human helping encounter.

Thus the areas summarised in Box 8.6 all have a place, I would suggest, in future research.

**Box 8.6 Future research directions**

- (1) **Deeper and broader data analyses to extend the meta-study**;
- (2) *quantitative* research regarding deep-moment patterns and frequency;
- (3) *qualitative face-to-face* research regarding the interactions and dynamics within deep moments;
- (4) **further conceptualising the interaction of the different elements within deep moments**, including a *relational theology* regarding trans-/inter-personal interaction.

**8.2.4 Conclusion**

Having defined and distinguished moments of deep encounter, and having explained my theoretical stance, I undertook a meta-study with thematic, meta-analytic and meta-synthetic stages, to provide a transcending framework for describing, explaining, and relating the different insights and understandings available within some relevant areas of literature. This resulted in a more comprehensive identification, collation, and analysis of this group of phenomena than has previously been undertaken. It also offered some methodological, theoretical and practical implications, an evaluation, and some future directions for research. Throughout, I have endeavoured to undertake and present the research in a reflexive, trustworthy and credible manner, being transparent in the analyses and syntheses undertaken.
Moments of deep encounter have been further confirmed as being, at times infrequent, yet sometimes profoundly beneficial, experiences that occur within some therapeutic and pastoral relationships. They involve intra-, inter- and trans-personal aspects, and are more likely to occur when a combination of identified facilitative factors are applied. However, it appears that generally they cannot be engineered, since they possess qualities (that might be described as) involving serendipity and grace. Such qualities resonate with a spiritual understanding that some, but by no means all, apply. Indeed, moments of deep encounter are variously interpreted, with more connections and overlaps revealed between Earlier Life, Relational, and Spiritual interpretations than had previously been apparent.

Consequently, this comparative and theoretical study invites greater awareness and understanding of moments of deep encounter and other related phenomena, and an attentive openness to the facilitative and interpretive possibilities for any deep moment, according to whichever factors may be present and pertinent.


West, W. (2011b) ‘Using the tacit dimension in qualitative research in counselling psychology.’ Counselling Psychology Review, 26(4), 40-44.


332


