Focusing for a change

A study of Experiential Focusing and the processes that lead to personal growth.

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Abstract

This study arose in the light of theoretical and practical criticisms of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy. It evaluates and develops the theory of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy as an integrative approach to therapy and explores the process of personal growth for individuals within therapy and Focusing partnerships. It then develops the teaching and learning model for counsellor education.

The thesis examines the theory and practice of Focusing and of Focusing-oriented Therapy since its inception and other therapeutic disciplines such as mindfulness-based interventions. It explores the experiences of people learning Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy within the context of professional training in counselling.

Review and analysis of the literature suggested that Focusing should be re-described as a process of attending to, symbolising and exploring a range of human responses to life events and that the different techniques of Focusing-oriented Therapy should be understood as different facets of that core endeavour. A comparison with Emotion-focused Therapy, Mindfulness-based interventions and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy suggested that radical acceptance of emotion, cognition and bodily experiences is a key part of what Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy offer. The thesis examined the range of techniques and strategies that feature in psychotherapy and recommended that emotion, cognition and behaviour should be experienced and understood as interrelated aspects of the human person.

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analytical approach (IPA) was adopted. The research involved the participation of 11 former counselling students from a British university who had participated in a training programme in Focusing and in Focusing partnerships. Data was collected through the method of audio-recorded semi structured interviews over a period of 9 months. It is presented in the form of super-ordinate themes that capture research participants' insights and correlate these with the research aims of the study.

The thesis concludes that Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy can be disseminated as a plurality of change processes that integrate emotion, cognition and behavioural change within the human person and that therapy training programmes can usefully incorporate the key lessons from the study. Indeed, the thesis proposes that Focusing should feature as a core part of the professional skills training for counsellors and psychotherapists as well as an aspect of the personal development aspect of their training.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis is a qualitative inquiry into the processes of personal change that Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy seek to facilitate. It sets out to explore what personal change means for people who practice Focusing and to analyse the integrative model of psychotherapy developed by Eugene Gendlin. Through this inquiry, I aimed to propose directions for the practice of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy and for further research in the field of self-help and personal change.

My reason for embarking on this research stems from my training in Humanistic Person-centred Therapy and my subsequent career as a counselling trainer with a specialism in Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy. My original training built upon the model of psychotherapy developed in the 1940s and 1950s by Dr Carl Rogers, with very little explicit acknowledgement of changes and developments within the field of counselling and psychotherapy in the following 45 years. Rogers had proposed that his formulations 'may give both direction and impetus to investigation' in the field of research (Rogers 2001:233), but little insight was offered into further research into Rogers' ideas and the challenges that they faced. One of the theorists within the person-centred tradition who undertook research within that approach was the Austrian-American philosopher Eugene Gendlin. Gendlin worked on the theoretical background of psychotherapy (Gendlin 1997) and engaged with others in empirical research into the differences between successful and unsuccessful therapy using outcome measures. This theorising and this research activity led to the development of Focusing as a discrete practice (Gendlin 1968, 1978/2007) and to the creation of an integrative model of psychotherapy which became known as Focusing-oriented Therapy (Gendlin 1996). Gendlin's development of this form of psychotherapy (which is both a revision of person-centred psychotherapy and a new vision of psychotherapy as a whole), alongside the dissemination of training in Focusing as a taught procedure, offered movement beyond the impasse that the person-centred tradition seemed to me to be in at the beginning of the 21st century.

The impasse of the person-centred therapy tradition which I had identified, related to three main issues: client choice, research and fundamental concepts. The issue of client choice is

about the dynamics of power in the therapy relationship and the question of who has the power to decide what style of therapy a client will receive. If clients cannot effectively choose the therapy that they will receive (since they cannot really know in advance what their experience of therapy will be), then therapists will need to provide an holistic or integrative service to their clients. The issue of research relates to the implications of the so-called Dodo Bird verdict on research into the outcomes of counselling and psychotherapy (Luborsky et al 1975). This verdict suggests that all major forms of counselling and psychotherapy are equally effective and that none, therefore, should predominate. The third issue is the issue of fundamental concepts or ideas. The field of counselling and psychotherapy is divided by awesome theoretical differences that call into question the truth claims of the various orientations. Taken together, these three issues implied an effort to think through afresh the theoretical foundations of counselling and psychotherapy and to develop and refine an integrative approach to counselling and psychotherapy.

With these concerns in mind, I received further training in Focusing-oriented Therapy in a British university and later became involved in training counselling students in Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy. My argument when I was interviewed for this role was that Focusing drew on an evidence base that could inform the practice of counselling and that Focusing could contribute valuably to the personal and professional development of counselling students. In addition to these specific emphases, I argued that having training in Focusing within a professional counsellor training programme had the potential to be a new and creative phase or 'cycle' of research and practice that began with the work that Carl Rogers had initiated in 1942.

This study carries forward the development described above. Gendlin's work had, as described, a potentially valuable evidence base and offered promise, but the work required ongoing evaluation and refinement, using the tools of qualitative inquiry, in order that the experience of practitioners could inform the ongoing development of his integrative model of therapy and also influence the ongoing viability and utility of the theoretical framework that Gendlin employed. The general idea that informs this research study is that there are problematic features that inhere in the theory and practice of Focusing-oriented Therapy and Focusing and that these features should be subjected to rigorous analysis in order that

Focusing can continue to provide orientation to therapy and to stimulate personal change in the ways that Gendlin envisaged.

In this section, I will outline the research study conducted here. I have examined the theory and practice of Focusing and Focusing-oriented therapy using a specific research methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, which I discuss in chapter three. As stated above, Gendlin developed both the theory and practice of a new form of therapy. He had a background in philosophy and described wishing to attend Carl Rogers' counselling practicum at the University of Chicago because he judged that clients' descriptions of their experiences would prove a fruitful area of investigation in the specific area of philosophy that he was interested in (Gendlin & Lietaer 1983). Gendlin brought to counselling a specific philosophical interest in how human experience is symbolised, and this was the subject of his first book (Gendlin 1962/1997). He continued to work on his philosophical ideas, published numerous papers and created a major statement of his ideas in his book *A Process Model* in 1997. An effect of this work is that the theoretical background to Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy is a very specific, ambitious and complex statement of ideas with considerable use of innovative technical terms that can be hard to orientate oneself within without spending considerable time on the specifics of the philosophical model employed, rather than the details of practice and experience using terminology that practitioners are familiar with. A friendly critic like Germain Lietaer has commented that:

> …It is striking to see Gendlin move between being very concrete and being very abstract in his writings. He unites in his person the rare combination of a "philosopher-technician." His attempts at building a theoretical basis of experiential psychotherapy read like philosophical tracts which I find difficult to swallow. On the other hand, his rules for constructive focusing and his instructions for listening are sometimes overly concrete. (Lietaer et al (eds) 1990:24).

I have found that, with persistence, I have been able to gain an understanding of Gendlin's philosophy but, typically, have not referred to it in detail when teaching Focusing and have often made use of other understandings of therapy when trying to clarify specific ideas. With these points in mind, an aim in this research study is to develop a 'middle-range' theory of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy and the personal change processes involved in these practices. R K Merton described middle-range theories (Merton 1968) as

standing mid-way between 'the minor working hypotheses evolved in abundance during the day-by-day routine of research, and the all-inclusive speculations comprising a master conceptual scheme' (1968:5). I would argue that Gendlin's philosophical system is a good example of an 'all-inclusive speculation comprising a master conceptual scheme', but the richness of material that comprises the practice of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy requires a middle range theory that connects more effectively with the practice of therapy in all of its plurality and complexity. I am also inclined to argue for the value of a 'framework for understanding' (Hutchinson 2008:2) within which to understand the phenomena of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy since theory or theories often seem to limit or constrain the thinking and practice of practitioners. An initial aim of this research study, therefore, will be to develop a revised (middle-range) theory of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy which will be able to feed into counsellor training programmes and into the ongoing practice of counsellors.

In addition to the problematic issue of the theoretical background that Gendlin created as an underpinning for Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy, the general idea is that there are problems or concerns that inhere in the practice of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy. Purton has written somewhat polemically about the 'myth of the bodily felt sense' (Purton 2014:221) in a way that draws on a critique of Gendlin's philosophy but also on concerns about the effect of these ideas on how Focusing is taught. In discussing the procedure where students of Focusing are taught to bring their attention into the middle part of their body, Purton had written that:

> I have found that when focusing is taught in this way students often become very aware of their bodily sensations, but at the same time they may lose touch with the difficulties in their *lives*. Rather than giving attention to their situation, they give attention to their 'inner goings-on'…one of my earliest focusing partners seemed never to do anything else, and I was even at the time a little puzzled by what she got from the practice. (Purton 2012:59 his italics).

Purton points here to an issue that I, also, have identified in the context of teaching and practice. This practical concern, alongside others, motivated my wish to evaluate and explore the practice of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy alongside review and analysis of the theoretical background. My aim with the development of a middle range

theory of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy is to resolve issues with the practice of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy as well as the theoretical underpinnings of the approach.

In addition, I was curious as to the experience of student counsellors who had received this distinctive training in Focusing within their professional training. I wished to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching and learning strategies that had been employed and to consider lessons for the delivery of the personal and professional development parts of the curriculum for counsellor education. The introduction of a large (weekly) element of Focusing into counsellor education had been intended as a contribution to the personal development of trainee counsellors but it possessed and possesses a wider significance in that this experience offers trainees a direct experience of the process(es) of therapy and of therapeutic change. This learning possessed the potential to directly influence the practice of counsellors and to widen (and deepen) the therapy that these counsellors offered to clients beyond what had been typically available through the training in person-centred therapy that I had originally received. I argued above that Focusing-oriented Therapy was a step in the journey beyond the impasse that existed in the counsellor education that I had received, and this study is significant in that It uses the tools of qualitative research to evaluate the teaching strategies employed and the learning that trainee counsellors received when Focusing was added to their training curriculum.

As a result of the broad teaching context, the study has two main parts; one part is a reconsideration of the theory of Focusing and of Focusing-oriented Therapy in light of the varied challenges and changes that have arisen in the theory and practice of Focusing-oriented Therapy over the years since it developed. So, the Literature Review which follows in chapter two has an evaluation and discovery element. Within that chapter I critically examine Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy as they were originally conceived and understood and as they developed into a new integrative counselling orientation that transcended the person-centred background that was its point of origin, and also connects with other traditions of therapy from the wider therapeutic world. These larger connections are essential to understand what Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy are and how they should develop into the future. The second part is the qualitative research element which

entails careful inductive analysis of data from research participants so that the teaching and the development of the teaching can be understood in terms of how it was received and practised by students and what they made of it and what the effects were. This will inform the development of theory and practice that I discuss in the literature review and provide a point of connection to the research origins of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy.

Research aims

The research aims which guide this study are:

1.To develop the theory of Experiential Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy in light of criticisms and limitations raised by theoreticians and practitioners of other related approaches to therapy.

2) To evaluate Focusing-oriented Therapy as an integrative model for therapy.

3) If appropriate, develop a theory and practice for the integration of therapy.

4) To evaluate and develop methods of counsellor education that incorporate insights from the practice of Experiential Focusing.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter One Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the study. I describe the role of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy as a transformative new development within the tradition of person-centred therapy and make the case that Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy should be subjected to rigorous qualitative inquiry in order to discern the practices and ideas that lead to personal change and to facilitate drawing of conclusions about those practices and the theoretical framework. I include the research aims that form the basis for the analysis of literature and data that will follow.

Chapter Two Literature Review

This chapter reviews relevant literature that pertains to the topic of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy in light of the research aims described in chapter one. I review key texts by Eugene Gendlin and critically discuss his integrative model of therapy and the range of therapeutic interventions that he presents. I discuss texts by authors who have sought to extend Gendlin's work, including Purton's two books on Focusing-oriented Therapy and then review the work of Ann Weiser Cornell, a Focusing trainer, who presents a distinctively different model of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy. I discuss other related therapy models, including work on Emotion-focused Therapy and I consider key ideas associated with mindfulness and mindfulness-based interventions. I discuss key texts on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and consider the light that that approach casts on Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy. The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy and to develop ideas that contribute to the creation of a middle-range theory of Focusing alongside revision of the practices that can contribute to personal growth and personal change as well as effective practice within counsellor education.

Chapter Three Research Methodology

This chapter examines the research methodology that was used for this study. I consider the epistemological basis of my chosen methodology and critically discuss my method of data collection. I chose to collect data from a specific purposive sample and I discuss the rationale for my choice of participants and the details of the interview schedule that I conducted. I discuss issues of validity and reliability in the context of the method of data analysis that I employed. A key section of the chapter is my discussion of the ethics of the research. I conclude by considering my own role in this research and the impact that this has had on the literature review, data collection and data analysis.

Chapter Four Results of Data Analysis

This chapter presents the findings of the study in light of the research aims. I discuss a range of themes that emerged from analysis of the data and consider these in relation to the conceptualisation of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy that was undertaken in the literature review.

Chapter Five Discussion

Chapter five presents the main conclusions that arose from analysis of the conceptualised data in dialogue with relevant literature analysed in chapter two.

Chapter Six Conclusions and Recommendations

In chapter six, I discuss implications of the research for ongoing theory and practice in Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy and within the professional training of counsellors. I discuss the limitations of this study and make recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I will review the literature that reflects the development of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Psychotherapy. I will concentrate on discussion and evaluation of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy that addresses the aims of this research study identified in chapter one:

1.To develop the theory of Experiential Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy in light of criticisms and limitations raised by theoreticians and practitioners of other related approaches to therapy.

2) To evaluate Focusing-oriented Therapy as an integrative model for therapy.

3) If appropriate, develop a theory and practice for the integration of therapy.

4) To evaluate and develop methods of counsellor education that incorporate insights from the practice of Experiential Focusing.

I will begin by defining some of the terms (according to the literature) that I use in this study. The approach to psychotherapy which is examined herein is generally known as Focusing-oriented Psychotherapy (Gendlin 1996) or Focusing-oriented Therapy. It can also be referred to as Focusing-oriented Counselling (Purton 2007), although that phrase is less common. The latter phrase reflects the connection of this approach to the Person-centred Therapy tradition within which the two terms (Counselling and Psychotherapy) are used synonymously. I will use the terms counselling and psychotherapy interchangeably since I do not think that there is currently a meaningful distinction between them.

A fundamental aspect of Focusing-oriented Therapy is the process of Focusing which can function outside of the formal therapy context as a technique that people employ either alone or in a peer support relationship known as a Focusing partnership. Focusing (denoted by the use of a capital letter in order to distinguish between it and other ways in which people focus) was originally identified as a process that occurred during therapy but the development of Focusing as a practice outside of the therapy context means that it is a type of self-help technique or a tool for personal growth outside of its original setting. The experience of research participants in this study was primarily outside of the formal therapy context.

Whether in the context of counselling or not, Focusing is a practice that is devoted to personal change (and personal growth) as well as the alleviation of personal distress. I will use the phrase 'personal change' to denote a process that is chosen by an individual. With this in mind, a main criterion for the usefulness and effectiveness of Focusing (and Focusing-oriented Therapy) is whether a person who engages with the practice experiences a personal change that accords with their wishes, feelings and values. Defining *personal* change and emphasising the wishes and values of the individual person is not intended to detract from the socially-defined meanings of these ideas and the ways in which individual choices are integrally related to societal expectations.

There are also criteria for the value or effectiveness of therapies that have been identified within, for example, UK National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines. These draw on the concept of 'evidence-based' or 'empirically-supported' treatment. There is a connection between such guidance and academic research into counselling/psychotherapy and personal growth. Such research is an essential resource alongside the person-specific criterion identified above, since evidence-based methodologies draw from a wider field than the choices and judgements of the individual person. In addition to the theoretical ideas and practices discussed in this chapter, this study aims to contribute to the evidence base for counselling and psychotherapy by utilising a phenomenological approach to qualitative research (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis – IPA) that focuses on the experience of the individual person and then 'moves from the single case to more general claims' (Smith et al 2012:31).

2.1 Gendlin, Purton and Friedman: Unity and Diversity

I begin by critically examining Gendlin's ideas on Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy and I go on to discuss the work of other writers who have carried his ideas forward while utilising his main terms and concepts.

Gendlin's approach to psychotherapy and personal growth centred in the use of the concept of experiencing (Gendlin 1961). He had a prior interest in this notion from his work as a

philosopher and his first book was a long dissertation on the concept of experiencing and how it can lead to the 'creation of meaning' (Gendlin 1962/1997). Gendlin's interest in psychotherapy arose from his sense that psychotherapy might be a context where a philosopher with his research interests would be able to witness people giving attention to their experiencing and making meaning from it. He read accounts of therapy, with transcripts, and described his experience of becoming a counselling student and, later a researcher. His initial observation was that clients in therapy were giving attention to their experiencing:

> …and then I got more and more interested, since indeed they were doing this: they were letting a person have directly his experience and slowly to work at how to express that, how to symbolize that, how to say that. And I also found that they didn't talk about it that way. So as soon as I was admitted there, and I learned a few things, I was able to apply some of my philosophical concepts to what was happening. So, I very early was able to think about it in a somewhat better way, I thought. So, I also felt very lucky that they let me in. (Gendlin & Lietaer 1983:78)

Initially, therefore, Gendlin viewed his work as learning from and within the person-centred tradition of Carl Rogers, with the addition of, as he puts it, some better thinking about what clients were experiencing in therapy.

In a 1973 chapter, Gendlin offered some defining features of experiencing. He argued that experiencing is a term that integrates psyche and body:

> From an experiential point of view it is not merely an abstract truth to say that psyche and body are one. After saying this one does not continue to use separate physical and psychological words. Instead, words are used to refer to that physically felt and psychically significant process we call "experiencing." It is feelingly sensible to any person, and is physical but contains very many cognitive, situational, and observational aspects. (1973:323).

In that chapter, as well as arguing for the view that experiencing is bodily felt, Gendlin also suggested that the 'very many cognitive, situational, and observational aspects' that are contained within a person's experiencing can be differentiated in many different ways. It is a key part of Gendlin's philosophy that experiencing can be felt in a holistic way, but that

there can be many different articulations of what is felt. In an interview in 1979, he elaborated this point:

> Direct experience is a kind of texture—it doesn't have boxes. It's more like a Persian rug—even *that* is too structured. Experience is non-numerical and multi-schematic. No one scheme will ever explain it. You can always create another aspect of experience by putting any two elements together. Therefore, *new* symbols and concepts are always possible. Jungian, Freudian and other schemes work if you just use them to lift out of experience something useful, something that almost jumps out. But if you force a scheme, it will never work. You can't fit the whole of experience to any conceptual system. You falsify your experience if you assume it must be like your concepts. (1979:2).

This quotation also shows Gendlin's perspective on the function of different theoretical ideas in relation to complex experiencing: that 'schemes work if you just use them to lift out of experience something useful'. Therefore, there is a usefulness to diverse theoretical ideas if they are used to 'lift' something out of experience.

Gendlin also argues that experiencing has a direction:

> Experiencing has direction. Just some and no other further steps will "carry forward." Anything else is an abrupt change or stasis. This purposive, directional, value aspect is a fourth basic concept in the theory. (1973:326).

He bases this idea partly on observation of clinical situations:

> The direction of one's next psychotherapeutic step is always implicit in one's present experiencing, it isn't a matter of choosing goals, as if the direction could be anything, and is added on from the outside to present experiencing. Rather, what is now experienced as painful, tense, stopping, or has poor results cannot be carried forward in just any way chosen from the outside. Just certain steps will carry it forward in a concretely felt, bodily way, and anything less is not therapeutic movement. (1973:326).

This concept is related to his general philosophical outlook, in which a phrase like 'carrying forward' has a technical meaning (1997). Gendlin believed that experiencing has a direction psychologically, just as more straightforward physical processes can be thought of as possessing a direction:

> For example, if the room is overheated, a person's bodily experienced sensation of being "hot" is also an implying of something further, some way of acting or talking to make it cooler. When a person is "hot," it may not yet be clear whether to open the window or go outside, whether to turn the air-conditioning on or to fan oneself, but the implying of something cooling is there, and is not separate from being hot. To be cooler is not a value separately added onto some neutral experience of temperature. (1973:326).

In addition, Gendlin's concept of experiencing has a quality of interconnectedness. In his book, A Process Model, he explains this idea:

> Our concepts stem from the intention to put **interaction first**. We began with body and environment as one event, and only gradually developed certain limited ways in which they are separable. (1997:29 his emphasis).

Gendlin goes on to illustrate this with examples from a therapy situation in which a person argues that they cannot change because their partner does not treat them in the right way and that their partner does not treat them in the right way because they do not ever change. Gendlin had illustrated this interactional style of thinking with an analogy, the analogy of the "IF cans" (1997). These were a series of screws on the tops of radio receivers: each receiver needed to be tuned to a certain point and then each, in turn, needed to be re-tuned as each other part was tuned until the whole system was tuned together to an optimum degree. The IF cans were an illustration of what Gendlin termed an 'interaffecting' system. On his account experiencing is not seen as a purely 'internal' or introspective process but entails the ways in which people are affected by external events and experiences as well as past and future events. I note the similarity between Gendlin's account of interaffecting systems and the recent discussions about embodied, active, situated cognition referenced below wherein a key concept is the situatedness of experience within social, environmental and linguistic contexts (Larkin, Eatough & Osborn 2011).

Finally, Gendlin argues that experiencing has the potential to come into focus. He employs the phrase 'direct referent' to describe the ways in which a whole complex experiencing process comes into focus and becomes something that a person can refer or 'point' to. Gendlin argues that a direct referent 'constitutes the felt meaning of some topic, situation,

behavior, or personality aspect.' (1964). Gendlin suggests that the forming of some aspect of their experiencing into a direct referent is a key event that allows a person to articulate their experience and to begin to work with it and to resolve problematic or unresolved issues.

In early papers, at the University of Chicago Counselling Centre, Gendlin had written about the 'experiencing construct' (Gendlin & Zimring 1955). In this research, alongside other research projects, Gendlin developed the idea that experiencing could be a determinant of therapeutic change (Gendlin & Zimring 1955). Alongside other colleagues, Gendlin asked the question as to the key determinant of therapeutic change and he suggested that perhaps experiencing was a key factor. This led to the idea of an experiencing scale (Gendlin et al 1968 and Klein et al 1969) (appendix four) and the idea that an independent researcher could listen to a recording of a counselling session and be able to judge where people were on the scale. A goal of this early research was to decide if a person's experiencing level was a determining factor in whether people benefitted from or changed during counselling and psychotherapy.

In the interview with Lietaer referenced above (Gendlin & Lietaer 1983), Gendlin observes that his work on the experiencing scale was a significant influence on Carl Rogers as Client-centred therapy developed in the 1960s. He describes the situation thus:

> I think in many places where client-centered therapy is practised, they went with Carl Rogers and then they went with me another little stretch, so that client-centered therapy became more experiential and somewhat more humanly real, and included more expressiveness of the therapist. And then with focusing more emphasis was laid on helping direct the client's attention to the edge, to what is not yet clear that one feels in a bodily way, and so forth.
>
> My main, I think, influence on Carl Rogers was during the period of the Process Scale… That Process Scale he took mostly from the work that I did together with Zimring, in the years just preceding '55, '57 and '59. And he was then of course much more able to put things together and get them out and so on: and so, he took much of our work and put it in the form of the Process Scale. And then also, I then also continued to take that again and developed it further and it became the

> Experiencing Scale, and we used it in a lot of research, and in that whole period much of what Rogers was saying was taking some of my things. The change from self-concept, as he had called it before, to process of responding to one's experiencing, that came from me, or perhaps even through me since there is a philosophical background to that notion. (Gendlin & Lietaer 1983:81-2)

In this quotation, Gendlin refers to Rogers' work on 'A Process Conception of Psychotherapy' (Rogers 1961:125-159) which referenced Gendlin's work on experiencing. A later text on 'The Therapeutic Relationship with Schizophrenics' (1967) which was co-written by Rogers and Gendlin among others, referenced use of Gendlin's experiencing scale as a research instrument (1967:109-131 and 589-592).

One of Gendlin research findings from the use of the experiencing scale was that being low on the scale at early points in therapy could predict that a person would not make progress in therapy (Gendlin et al 1968). He observed that this finding contradicted what he had expected, i.e., that people would gradually move up the scale as they participated in therapy. He observed:

> It is especially discouraging that therapy does not develop the ability to focus and interact in an experiential manner. We had always thought that therapy develops exactly this capacity in individuals who lacked it—in fact, we had thought that *only* therapy can develop it.
>
> It seems now that we have two distinct factors here: *(a) Engagement* in an experientially focusing and involved manner of interview behavior produces change and problem resolution. *(b*) *Development* of this mode of behavior in individuals who lack it seems not to occur in psychotherapy. It seems to be a prerequisite for therapy, not something to hope for from therapy. (Gendlin et al 1968:225).

His conclusion, therefore, was that experiencing level was the crucial factor in therapy and this was more significant than other variables such as the content of what people spoke of (Gendlin et al 1968).

Gendlin then developed, in this initial research context, a technique for teaching people how to raise their experiencing level (appendix five - the 'Focusing Manual'). The 'focusing'

process, which was the term that he coined for instructions given in a research context to enable a person to raise their experiencing level, entailed the following: people were taught to pay attention '*to that part where* you usually feel sad glad or scared', they were invited to see what comes to them when they asked themselves: '"How am I now?" "How do I feel?" "what is the main thing for me right now?"'. People were asked to 'select a meaningful personal problem to think about' and were asked to 'Pay attention there, where you usually feel things, and in there…get a sense of what *all of the problem* feels like. Let yourself feel *all of that*.'. Within that feeling 'place' people were instructed to 'Keep following one feeling. Don't let it be *just* words or pictures—wait and let words or pictures come from the feeling'. He suggested that people should 'try to find some new words or pictures to capture what your present feeling is all about. There doesn't have to be anything that you didn't know before. New words are best but old words might fit just as well. As long as you now find words or pictures to say what is fresh to you now.'. The process would conclude with the instruction: 'If the words or pictures that you now have make some fresh difference, see what that is. Let the words or pictures change until they feel just right in capturing your feelings.' (Gendlin et al 1968:239). For the purposes of the research, Gendlin had developed precise instructions, some of which are included above, and modified versions of these instructions were later utilised in books that articulated the Focusing process for a wider audience (1978/2007). With regard to the research project, Gendlin included a questionnaire and a scale for rating people's answers to the research questions. He concluded that:

> The ability to focus directly on preverbalized felt experiencing and to carry it forward concretely with attention, with words, and with actions, does appear to be quite an important ability for psychotherapy, for personality, and for creativity (Gendlin 1968:237).

This research related back to the observation that clients who achieved good outcomes in therapy would not simply talk about their problems or concerns but would occasionally pause to explore how they felt about what was being said by them or their counsellor, this would lead to a transcript with frequent ellipses. Gendlin hypothesised that people were giving attention to their felt experiencing in these moments, in such a way that they could access a source of guidance or direction that went beyond superficial thought and fixed emotional reactions.

Focusing received definitive expression in a small book (1978/2007). Gendlin there defines Focusing as a series of six 'subacts or movements' (1978/2007:49). The first of these subacts was titled 'clearing a space'. This particular action did not feature in his earlier Focusing guidance and he later suggested that it began as a mere preliminary and later acquired much greater significance (Gendlin et al 1984). When teaching clearing a space I have suggested that it contains three elements that are intended to occur in the same 'movement': clearing a space involves bringing one's awareness, within, to the 'place' where one would typically feel negative emotions, 'taking an inventory' (Campbell & McMahon 1997: 149) of problems or concerns, and, finally, moving each concern, imaginatively to one side, so there is a sense of appropriate distance from troubling issues. An intended outcome of this process is that the focuser should have a sense of an open space within and a renewed sense of the self as separate from all of the concerns that he/she is usually carrying. Gendlin devoted a separate chapter of his book to clearing a space (1978/2007:81-94), offering details on what to do and how to overcome obstacles. He wrote that:

> The first movement of focusing is enormously important because if it can happen, the rest will probably happen too. In the first movement you clear a space for yourself to live in while the rest of the focusing process is going on. (Gendlin 1978/2007:81).

The introduction of clearing a space, which went beyond what had been developed and evaluated in the initial research project has been something of a controversial move which I will revisit below. It has also been offered as a separate intervention, for example within Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) where clearing a space is a separate 'task' that some clients may wish to undertake in certain specific circumstances (Elliott et al 2005:169-179). Krycka & Ikemi survey research into clearing a space as a relatively discrete practice (Krycka & Ikemi 2016:262-3, 266-269). In this sense, clearing a space is a distinct change process that is offered in Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy and the change process identified does not seem the same as the other parts of the Focusing process. For example, in subacts two to six, a person is asked to enagage in various ways with an issue or concern, whereas in subact one, a person is asked to push all of their concerns to one side and to experience their self as separate from all of those concerns. I will discuss research participants experience of clearing a space in chapter four.

As described, subacts two to six follow the pattern set in Gendlin's original research protocol and he emphasised that the subacts or movements would come to merge into one movement with practice (Gendlin 1978/2007:49. These six subacts or 'steps' of Focusing, as they are taught in the small self-help book (1978/2007), are similar to the presentation of Focusing in his 1996 book on Focusing-oriented Therapy (1996:71-75). In that text, it is suggested that the therapist can encourage Focusing within the context of regular counselling/psychotherapy (1996:41-56).

Gendlin regarded Focusing as the key to therapeutic change (or raising experiencing level and Focusing as the way to do that). Focusing was seen as the 'motor' of therapy:

> …experiential level can be viewed as the "motor" of therapy. No matter how much time is spent with the motor off, that doesn't turn it on. If it is sufficiently on, progress is made. (Gendlin 1969:13).

He contrasted Focusing with two of the 'dead ends' that people might encounter in therapy. One dead end was the attempt to resolve personal issues by intellectual interpretations and the other dead-end was repetition (and repeated expression) of unchanging feelings (Gendlin 1996:8-15). He argued that Focusing guidance should be incorporated within psychotherapy as part of a pattern of interaction between counsellor and client. Friedman has described this pattern as one of 'tucking' Focusing suggestions into regular parts of therapy (Friedman 2000). Gendlin's own style of interaction with clients drew upon and extended the model that he had learned from Carl Rogers (Rogers 1951). He expressed this pattern concretely by advising that:

> *In therapy the relationship…is of first importance, listening is second, and focusing instructions come only third.* If something is wrong in the relationship, it must be dealt with as soon as possible, and all else must wait. And without listening one is not really in continuing touch with the person. (1996:297 his italics).

The therapeutic relationship between counsellor and client was, therefore, the most important therapeutic avenue of change (1996:283-298). In this sense, his approach mirrored many other therapeutic modalities. It has been noted (for example by Friedman (2007:179-181)) that Gendlin has an odd order of chapters in that the 'most important therapeutic avenue' (1996:283) is confined to the second to last chapter in the book.

In addition to offering Focusing instructions within the context of a therapeutic relationship characterised by the practice of client-centred listening, Gendlin's book also offered an integrative model of therapy (Gendlin 1996:169-304). As outlined in chapter one and at the beginning of this chapter, an aim of this study is to evaluate the viability of this integrative model.

I have discussed the research background to the development of Focusing and it seems significant that Gendlin did not offer research support for the whole integrated therapy package that he later created, Gendlin had expressed support for counselling research into 'subprocesses' within therapy since such sub-processes would form the substance of the different techniques and interventions that he favoured and wished to integrate into the therapeutic relationship. In an article on counselling research (Gendlin 1986), he argued that study of subprocesses was preferable to comparing whole therapies (such as Psychoanalysis or CBT) and he recommended his own research into Focusing as an example of such study of small sub-process. He reported that other examples were: '(a) free association (Bordin, 1966a, b, 1980): (b) systematic desensitization (Lazarus, 1968, 1971, 1984): and (c) The two-chair gestalt reversal (Gendlin 1986:132).
With regard to the latter, he observed that four 'successive studies (Greenberg, 1983, 1984) were good models of the research direction I advocate.' (1986).

In order to achieve an effective integration of different techniques that have research support and might prove useful to a client with specific difficulties, Gendlin advises thinking of techniques as located along avenues where specific procedures can be compared with similar techniques from different therapy orientations (1996:169-180). Along an avenue, the therapist would compare like-for-like techniques and seek to discern the essential features of these techniques and utilise that essence. Gendlin advised that therapists should learn to use all techniques in a way that is driven by the particular 'client-who-is-in-front-of-you', rather than learning ideas and concepts that are specific to a particular therapy tradition. An example of this notion of avenues is Gendlin's approach to working with dreams. There are different therapy traditions that offer interpretations of dreams to clients and Gendlin proposed that all such interpretative ideas should be rendered available to clients so that

they could discover the utility or otherwise of specific interpretations. He suggested that possible interpretations should be offered as open questions in the context of Focusing and people would be able discern what idea, if any, had valence for themselves (Gendlin 1986).

Gendlin's book on Focusing-oriented Therapy (1996) is both a manifesto for this approach to integration and an illustration of how some of the 'technique avenues' might be unpacked and used in an integrated, client-centred, focusing-oriented way. I would argue that many of the chapters in the second half of the book offer an introduction to the practices, but some chapters do not provide sufficient detail and guidance to enable therapists to avail themselves of the richness contained therein (1996:169-304). For example, there is a chapter on 'experiential dream interpretation' (1996:199-211): but the detail that is necessary for counsellors to become confident in such work necessitates, I would argue, recourse to his book-length treatment on the subject (1986).

I have pointed out that Gendlin advocates becoming very familiar with diverse techniques, and all of the ways in which they are similar to and different from related techniques from different therapy traditions. He argues that therapists should become able to discern the essence of each and, then to utilise them in the moment with a client in distress. Gendlin presents the essence of some of the techniques/avenues. For example, he argues that the 'essential irreplaceable contribution of role play' in therapy (i.e., the two-chair procedure but, also other related techniques from different traditions) is: 'role reversal, living and feeling something from the other side' (1996:193). In a similar way, he suggests that there is an essence to 'catharsis' that pertains to 'traumatic childhood events' where:

> …there is usually a double oppression, not only from the events themselves, but also from the fact that one is not allowed to cry, tremble, or "throw a tantrum". Tantrums are a very natural process for living organisms. When a long-blocked child is at last allowed to cry, it thereby also experiences itself as being whole again. Such times are precious and catharsis can have a deep personal value. (1996:222).

With regard to 'action steps' he points out that deliberately chosen small acts of behavioural change can have a definite irreplaceable experiential effect: 'A small act, therefore, insignificant in itself, has the potential to shift the whole inner complexity of a problem.' (1996:228). Having discerned the essence of a technique that it shares with other

techniques that are formally similar, he then discusses the detail and the greater complexity that is associated with working along the avenue.

I would argue that Gendlin is partially successful in this endeavour. However, in practice, I have found that I have had to make use of resources from other orientations, such as Emotion-focused Therapy (EFT) (Elliott et al 2005), or Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) (Kennerly et al 2017) when teaching Focusing-oriented Therapy in order to fill out some of the detail that the chapters of Gendlin's book lack. I have also found that students require sufficient time to work with particular 'technique-avenues' and sufficient time and the right learning environment to understand specific techniques. I will revisit these latter points when I review analysis of data from students who have learned some of these techniques in chapter four. Such techniques include a wide variety, including methods that are associated with CBT ('Action Steps', 'Cognitive Therapy' and 'A Process View of the Superego' (Gendlin 1996:227-258)), methods associated with Gestalt Therapy ('Role Play' (Gendlin 1996:192-198)), methods that revolve around the use of imagery ('Experiential Dream Interpretation' and 'Imagery' (Gendlin 1996:199-220)) and methods that entail exploration of values ('The Life-forward Direction' and 'Values' (Gendlin 1996:259-275)). Each of these diverse approaches entail a different 'style' and 'feel' and the ability to explain to a client what it is that one is asking and where the exploration is going. This is a reason for my comment, above, that students require time and space to become sufficiently familiar with all of these strategies and their connections. Understanding the time and space…and the difficulties involved in such learning within counsellor education is a crucial aim of this study.

With these caveats in mind, I consider that Gendlin's proposals for use of different techniques in a unified way are a convincing starting point. Gendlin advocated perceiving how these are already together in the person (by which he means that people will or can or might experience all of these processes if therapists can allow it) 'Let us go by how the avenues are already together — and change the therapies' (Gendlin 1996:135) and this prescription is, I think, essentially correct. What is less clear is the notion that Focusing is the essential 'motor' of these techniques. Gendlin wrote that:

> Focusing is like a motor. It powers all the other methods like a motor powers the car. Wheels and chassis don't move without it. But who can drive anywhere in just a motor?
>
> This analogy overstates the case for focusing. No single way can be the only way for human beings. It also overstates the need for other methods: one can go far with focusing alone. But let us always ask, "What can we learn from the other method?" as well as "How would that method work better with focusing?" (Gendlin 1991:265)

Gendlin's statement that the 'analogy overstates the case for focusing' is, I think, correct, although that leaves the different methods without the clear unifying focus that his book seeks to offer. I will return to this theme when I examine Purton's books on Focusing-oriented Therapy below.

A related criticism of Gendlin's book is that the later chapters discuss different subprocesses of therapy and he advocates research into such subprocesses (1986) but the actual integrative model that he advances was not subjected to the rigorous evaluative research that he advised. In an article on psychotherapy research (1986), he recommended eighteen strategies for changing psychotherapy research 'to make such research more productive and meaningful' (1986:131) but did not advocate research into the actual integrative model that he would later create. This is a reason why I found that other thoroughly researched models (such as EFT or CBT, see above) were helpful in teaching the techniques that Gendlin advocates. A purpose of this study is to consider the light that research participants' experience can shed on the overall coherence of Focusing-oriented Therapy as an integrative model of therapy. I will also conclude that there is a need for further research on that topic

It is, I think, important to note that Gendlin's work concerns the general topic of how people change in therapy and it is not concerned with specific syndromes or conditions (although Gendlin had written about Schizophrenia (1963 and 1964) following on from his work in the so-called Wisconsin project (Rogers et al 1967)). Gendlin's 1996 book offers a whole package to help the whole person. At the same time, integrated work that is more closely modelled on specific client conditions can valuably supplement Gendlin's account.

The integrative aspects of Gendlin's work represents a clear dividing line between Focusing-oriented Therapy and the Rogerian person-centred tradition that preceded it. While Gendlin remained committed to provision of a therapeutic relationship that was modelled on Rogers' teaching and practice, he was clear in his advocacy of 'focusing instructions' and of the other interventions that featured along the different avenues of therapy. Person-centred therapy, as classically defined and practiced, remains committed to Rogers' notion that the 6 'necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change' (Rogers 1957) did not require supplementation with Focusing instructions or other interventions. Gendlin had argued that Focusing-oriented Therapy 'is Client-centered Therapy' (1996:301) but 'classical client-centred therapy' (Merry in Sanders 2012:21-45) is still described without reference to the integrative aspects of the Focusing-oriented Therapy model, including Focusing itself.

I have referred to Gendlin's book on Focusing with dreams (Gendlin 1986a). As discussed, this combines different ways of interpreting dreams into a focusing-oriented experiential framework and is, therefore, a good example of how different theories can be combined in a client-centred framework. This book, and the title in particular (Let Your Body Interpret Your Dreams), raises important questions about what it is that is offered in Focusing-oriented Therapy in terms of human change processes. Gendlin makes a link between two elements in the psychological make up of a person, dreams and the body, and implies that there is a type of agency on the part of a person's body, as an interpreter. The book title seems to be suggesting that the person does not interpret his or her dreams but that the person's body does this. Gendlin's earliest formulation of Focusing (in the manual for his research) had recommended that a person should give 'attention *to that part where* …[they]… usually feel sad glad or scared'…and that 'part' would typically be within their body. But there was no suggestion, at that stage, that the person's body was the source or origin of the changes that such attention would facilitate. In an appendix to his book on dreams (1986:141ff), Gendlin included a brief theoretical discussion of, among other things, the ways in which bodies are more than just biological drives that are calibrated by cultural patterns (a view which Gendlin attributed to Freud (1986:142)):

> *No human or animal body is mere drives. The body includes behaviour patterns. The "remnant body" of mere drives is only a fiction.*

No one now disputes this.

The body includes very complex patterns of interaction between the animals, and with what is around them.

The actions your body desires were not given by culture, Culture only elaborated already complex animal patterns. (1986:143, his italics)

As he goes on to elaborate the implications of this idea of 'complex patterns' that inhere in the body, he frequently seems to attribute a kind of agency to the body, as distinct from the person-as-a-whole who has a body. For example, he suggests that:

> You can physically feel the space behind you. if there is someone following you on the street at night, your body-sense includes what might happen and the possible ways you might act.
>
> So, the body senses its possible behaviors and the circumstances and people with which they might occur. (1986:143).

There seems to be something of a segue here from something that a person (with a body) can feel, to something that a person's body or body-sense can feel. On the next page, he elaborates these emphases with respect to language-use:

> When you open your mouth to speak, the words come. From where? From the body. When they don't come, there is little you can do about it. People like to say the words are stored in the brain. But more than the brain is involved. When a familiar word doesn't come, there is a unique bodily sense of that word. In an odd situation, when you find no way to use words, *you feel the new word-use you cannot devise.*
>
> The body knows the language. (1986:144 his italics).

There would appear to be some confusion in this passage. The notion of words being 'stored' in the brain has been questioned by Bennett & Hacker (2003:159f). When discussing memory, they argue that:

> …there is no such thing as storing memories in the brain. Rather, the capacity to remember various kinds of things is *causally dependent* on various brain areas and on synaptic modifications in these areas. (2003:159 their italics)

I would argue, in a similar fashion, that words (or memories) are not 'stored' in the body either. Gendlin would seem to be describing an experience of trying to find the right words…and searching within and then the words come…and combining such experiential data with a theory of where words come from, i.e., from the body rather than from the

brain. In contrast to this, I would argue that words and many other human capacities are '*causally dependent* on various brain areas and on synaptic modifications in these areas' rather than coming from the body in the way that Gendlin's statement implies. Gendlin would seem to be attributing a kind of agency to the body that does not appear to make sense of the neuroscientific evidence. In an article on 'Neuroscience and Psychological change in Focusing', Afford wrote:

> Neuroscience tells us how the brain changes the body, via neural (nerve) and chemical (hormonal) signals to alter emotional states, and how the body changes the brain, via feedback (neural and chemical) about its actual emotional states and how this then changes cognitive states. (Afford 2014:250).

This suggests that there is a 'back and forth' communication process within the human person which creates experience (including the experience of speaking words), rather than agency on the part of one element. Afford surveys neuroscientific evidence, including McGilchrist's work on brain asymmetry (McGilchrist 2012), that helps to explain the experience of Focusing without the need to posit agency on the part of the human body in the way that Gendlin would appear to favour. For example, McGilchrist argues for the significance of integrated bodily awareness as a feature of the 'right' hemisphere of the brain (2012:32-93). Bodily awareness may seem odd or even anomolous from the perspective of the left hemisphere of the human brain but this does not demonstrate that the human body is the source of (for example) dream interpretations but that such holistic interpretations are characteristic of the right hemisphere which also has an anatomically stronger connection to bodily feelings.

In relation to Neuroscience, Bennett & Hacker coined the phrase 'mereological fallacy' (Bennett & Hacker 2003:68-85) to describe the ways in which some thinkers attribute to a part of the human person what can only rightly be attributed to the person as a whole. Their concern was with the brain, but the phrase seems applicable to some of Gendlin's use of language-use in relation to the body.

An aim of this research, as described above, is to develop the theory of Focusing and Focusing-Oriented Therapy partly through a study of its main change processes and it would seem that a relatively straightforward picture is emerging. For Gendlin, the main change

process is the Focusing process that he had developed in response to the original research finding that people did not make progress in therapy if they were judged to be too low on the experiencing scale. Focusing is seen as the unifying factor that allows different change processes within Focusing-oriented Therapy to be understood in a unified way (Gendlin 1996:169-180). If questions are raised about that central change process, those questions have a corresponding effect on the viability of the integrative model of psychotherapy that he offers. In fact, questions have been raised about the notion of the body in Focusing but these do not usually entail questions about the value or effectiveness of the Focusing procedure itself.

Purton reports that he finds 'Focusing to be a very valuable ingredient in psychotherapy' (Purton 2014:221) but he has raised questions about the concept of (bodily felt) experiencing. He suggests that the:

> …difficulty is essentially that 'experiencing' is not a thing or process: we experience things, processes, situations, and also our own responses, but we don't experience *experiences* or *experiencing*. It is confusing to try to turn 'experiencing' into an 'inner thing or process': if we ask a traveller about his experiences in Burma, we expect to hear about what he did, what happened to him, how he responded, and not about any 'inner goings-on'. (Purton 2014:63).

I am inclined to think that 'we' might ask a traveller about 'inner goings-on' in the sense that we might ask them how they felt when they were visiting Burma. For example, if we asked how they felt when visiting the Schwedagon Padoga (a gilded Buddhist stupa in Myanmar), our query might be motivated by a prior understanding that such a place might have an emotional effect on a person. If the person replied that they felt so peaceful (or agitated) in that place, then we might conclude that we were gaining an insight into their experience of Burma. On Purton's account this would be an enquiry about the traveller's responses and not an enquiry about their experiencing: their peaceful feelings were a response to the Pagoda and not an 'experience of their experiencing'. If there was anything like an experience of their experiencing, then it would be an example of a 'secondary reactive emotion' (Greenberg et al 2005:30) where the person felt angry or some other emotion at their own primary response of fear. But a more basic primary response, such as feeling peaceful or agitated would be a response to the place (perhaps based on prior expectations

and commitments) rather than a response to their self. A related point here is Purton's view that an emotion or a felt sense is not an 'inner' something, a point that I glossed over in my observation that we might ask about the traveller's 'inner goings-on' in the sense that we might ask about how they felt. I would judge that Purton is right to argue that such a response is not, strictly speaking, an inner going-on, but rather an interactional process, where a person goes to a place and feels a certain way and, perhaps, reflects on their response and then reports on this upon their return. Gendlin also thought that experiencing is an interactional process. Part of the disagreement between Purton and Gendlin is a philosophical disagreement about language-use. Purton (whose background is in 'ordinary language' philosophy (Purton 2014:6) in contrast to Gendlin's background in Phenomenology) contends that 'theoretical' language often lacks coherence because of 'misleading pictures' that 'lie at the heart of the theory' (2014:35ff). He judges that 'experiencing' conceals a misleading picture of 'inner goings-on' in spite of the related idea that experiencing is interactional. Purton favours replacing potentially misleading theoretical concepts with phrases that connect more straightforwardly with everyday usage, such as 'responding' rather than 'experiencing'. I would argue that Purton's modified use of terms offers a helpful corrective to Gendlin's confusing terminology. In addition, there is the point that terms can be redefined or corrected and modified – i.e., 'experiencing' is used but understood in an interactional way and not as an internal process, and 'felt sense' is used and understood as a broad concept that may include bodily feeling (and may not).

In addition to these theoretical concerns, Purton has also raised an issue with the practical implications of Gendlin's language. Purton observes that some focusers who had been taught to give attention to their bodily felt experiencing, seemed to 'become very aware of their bodily sensations, but at the same time they may lose touch with the difficulties in their *lives'* (Purton 2012:59 his italics). This issue of the implication of Gendlin's Focusing language in people's experience of the technique will be revisited as I present analysis of the data collected for this research study.

Purton's reformulation of the concept of experiencing as 'responding' has the virtue of not being tied to a technical vocabulary that may not connect with a person's perspective in a straightforward way. As stated above, Purton has not questioned the value of the Focusing

procedure or the experience of Focusing itself but rather the way in which it has been conceptualised. He avers that:

> To say that the experience of bodily sensations is not necessary in Focusing is not to say that the body is altogether irrelevant. But I think that the body is involved through the fact that our non-linguistic *responses* to situations often have a bodily aspect. If I say that I 'have a felt sense' about someone that I cannot put into words, this may amount to the fact that I notice that I tend to draw away from him, or cringe a little when he speaks. I may then focus with these responses in order to discover 'what is in them'. Focusing is about articulating our non-linguistic responses, which include such things as our wariness, our reservations, our openness, our ambivalence, our evasion, our welcoming, our tension, our wanting to laugh or cry. Such responses may often be felt in the body and may be part of that which we need to express in words. (Purton 2012:63-4).

From this account, it would seem that being open to giving attention to one's body *may be* an essential change process in Focusing / Focusing-oriented Therapy and, also, that not giving attention to one's body *may be* a necessary part of successful Focusing. I revisit this issue in my analysis of data in chapter four.

There would appear to be a number of questions or areas of debate and further exploration that would need to be raised into Gendlin's work and into his 1996 book in particular. One area concerns the ongoing value and utility of the experiencing scale and the experiencing construct itself. It does not seem as though there is much discussion of this idea in the counselling and psychotherapy literature. An exception is Jenny White's phenomenological enquiry into Focusing on Music (White 2017) and some research from within the Emotion-Focused Therapy tradition (Mathieu-Coughlan & Klein 1984, Rice & Greenberg 1984), but the dearth of attention to this research resource within the literature raises questions as to why this is not more widely known and used. A recent survey of research into Focusing-oriented Therapy (Krycka & Ikemi 2016:251-282), demonstrated the ongoing value of the experiencing scale as a research device, alongside other research instruments such as the Focusing Manner Scale (Aoki & Ikemi 2014). The authors also note that:

> Current FOT research has shown a gradual change in what is considered most relevant by FOT researchers and practitioners. The research has shifted from more

> traditionally defined macroprocess, or outcomes research, to microprocess-oriented research. (Krycka & Ikemi 2016:264)

Examples of microprocess-oriented research include research into 'Clearing a Space' as a discrete practice as well as research into Focusing-oriented Therapy with specific populations such as Focusing with Children (2016:270). I think, though, that the experiencing scale would benefit from application outside of the sphere of Focusing-oriented Therapy in the way that it is applied by EFT researchers. In general, though, I consider that Focusing-oriented Therapy has needed ongoing research into the specific integrated model with all of the avenues identified by Gendlin.

In addition to the broad issue of experiencing and its bodily aspects, I have asked about the integrative aspects of Focusing-oriented Therapy. When a person 'travels' along therapeutic 'avenues' from Gendlin's book, when, for example, a person engages with cognitive therapy as he defines it (1996:238-246) or with 'action steps' (1996:227-237), can one say that the person is still engaged in Focusing or are these wholly other processes? This question pertains to the whole issue of integration within therapy and it goes back to our earlier discussion of the lack of research support for the integration of techniques that Gendlin argues for.

I have discussed the close historical links between Focusing-oriented Therapy and the person-centred therapy (PCT) of Carl Rogers and the contrasts between these traditions. I noted that PCT, in its classical client-centred mode, retains a strong commitment to Rogers' original (1957) formulation of the conditions that are necessary and sufficient for therapeutic personality change and that the addition of 'focusing instructions', as Gendlin describes them, and other therapeutic avenues would be seen as unnecessary, and potentially unhelpful. A recent model for the relationship between Focusing-oriented Therapy and PCT is based on the image of a nation with many tribes. Sanders (2012) has edited a volume on this theme that includes different therapy traditions with Focusing-oriented Therapy (Sanders 2012:47-70) and Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) (Sanders 2012:103-130). The book facilitates points of discussion between different 'tribes' with numerous cross-referencing devices. I consider that the notion of tribes with Focusing-oriented Therapy as a tribe is very useful and appropriate, although I think that Focusing-

oriented Therapy interconnects importantly with traditions that are not part of the PCT family such as ACT and other mindfulness-based Interventions. This raises the possibility that Focusing-oriented Therapy could be understood as the broader tradition of which PCT would then be a sub-section. Focusing-oriented Therapy has a unique rootedness in a particular theoretical model (Gendlin 1997) that derives from the phenomenological tradition in philosophy and from a specific ongoing research project into client experiences in therapy. These unique features mean that Focusing-oriented Therapy is able to function as something of a foundation for the integration of different therapeutic strategies in the ways that I have discussed above.

Thus far, I have discussed Gendlin's key texts on Focusing-oriented Therapy and Focusing. Other authors have followed Gendlin in addressing this model of therapy in ways that draw on his foundational ideas. In his 2004 and 2007 books (which pre-date his later questioning of Gendlin's philosophy), Purton developed the ideas in Gendlin's book in ways that combine attention to the Focusing procedure with efforts to describe how this is offered to clients in regular Person-centred Therapy. Purton also elaborated a model of how different types of experiencing process are understood and responded to in a Focusing-oriented way. This is a development of Gendlin's integrative framework that combines attention to different and diverse strategies with an understanding of what the core model is that animates Gendlin's 'unified' perspective. For example, he developed the experiencing concept as a device to understand the different types of processes that occur in therapy and the different techniques that therapists would employ. He wrote of using the two-chairs procedure, which Gendlin had described as 'role play' (1996:192-198), as a way of responding to 'divided experiencing' (2004:199-121). In addition, he wrote of using the empty chair technique (which was, to some extent, covered by Gendlin in his chapter on 'Emotional Catharsis, Reliving' (1996:221-226)) as a way of responding to 'curtailed experiencing' (2004:122-124). The experiential categories that Purton employed were also connected to wider research and innovation in experiential therapies, including EFT (Greenberg et al 1993), and the work of Cornell (Cornell 2002 & 2005), discussed below.

Purton's reformulation of Gendlin's integrative ideas mirrors his strategy as well as creatively developing the concepts that he uses. Gendlin had proposed that Focusing, and

therapy more generally, involves giving attention to one's experiencing, allowing things to come into focus and then working with the ensuing process. With this model in mind, Purton describes many different experiencings (or patterns of human 'responding') as variants of that core process. So, if a person is experiencing conflicting impulses and feels pulled in different directions, then that is an example of 'divided experiencing' and the therapeutic strategies that are recommended are not conceptualised as being totally different to what a person is doing when they focus using the six movements. Rather than saying that this is not Focusing; that it is 'role play' or 'two-chair work', Purton's model, where there are five differentiated 'experiencings' (and four other categories of client difficulty that are not labelled as experiencing), suggests that all of these processes are examples of Focusing. This idea offers a useful way of extending Gendlin's ideas and enhances the viability of his integrative model of therapy.

Purton had also used Gendlin's concept of avenues (2004:128-142) to describe different and related ways of working rather than different experiencings. He described working with imagery, emotion, thoughts, action, personal interaction, groups and the body. He had discussed Gendlin's philosophical perspective as a meta-theory (2004:130) that had enabled him to work with the practices of therapy without being drawn into theoretical disagreements among traditions. He also discussed, in some detail, the wider philosophical framework that animates Gendlin's thought and connects that philosophy with a whole conception of psychotherapy (2004:175-206).

I would describe Purton's ideas as a pluralistic reworking of Focusing itself as well as an integrative model of therapy. In Purton's hands, Focusing becomes a tool or technique which can take many different 'shapes' in accord with the needs of the person who is seeking personal change. I will revisit this notion in my review and analysis of experiential data provided by research participants for this study. In addition, Purton's version of the avenues concept assists in reconceiving the person-centred therapy tradition (of which Focusing-oriented Therapy can be seen as a part or as a tribe (see above)) as an integrative approach to client need. However, the ongoing utility of Purton's reworking must take into account his later questioning of the concept of experiencing discussed above. In this regard, I think that it makes sense to consider ways of using different and widened terminology to

capture the experience of Focusing and therapeutic change. Rather than 'experiencing' as a questionable technical term, experiencing can be used within a more straightforward linguistic context: 'what was your experience like when you visited the Pagoda?' as in 'what did you feel emotionally?' or 'how did you find yourself responding when…?'. I have experimented with use of a range of terms when teaching Focusing. I have asked people to notice the thoughts, images, emotions, bodily sensations or urges (behavioural predispositions) that occur as they focus on a situation or problem. I have also suggested that the 'felt sense' of the problem is any or all of these, in whatever way they combine as the problem 'comes into focus'. In suggesting these terms, I have been thinking of Focusing as a pattern of human responding rather than as bodily experiencing as narrowly defined. I will revisit this widening of the pattern of responding as I review the work of Cornell below.

In addition to the work of Purton, Friedman has written a series of books on Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy (1982, 2000 & 2007). He has described the Focusing process in ways that are similar to Gendlin's original model (with some minor variations (Friedman 2000:101-106) and that offer a personal vision of how Focusing should be incorporated into therapy. He advocated offering Focusing as a taught procedure to clients in a session if they request this (Friedman 1982:63-65) and also describes how Focusing suggestions can be 'slipped into' other therapeutic moves (1982:67-68). Friedman describes this incorporation of Focusing moves in verbal therapeutic methods (2007:109-138) and in bodily therapeutic methods (2007:139-174). This latter section reflects a strong emphasis on Friedman's part on dramatic bodily methods (Friedman 2007:139-174) and on the bodiliness of Gendlin's overall approach. It also shows a divergence from what Friedman thinks of as Gendlin's cooler take on Focusing and emotional change (2000:335-336). Friedman was a keen advocate of major emotional discharge in therapy (2000:222-280). I have explained that the notion of emotional catharsis and reliving is included in Gendlin's book (1996:221-226) but Friedman argues that it is somewhat de-emphasised there. In a discussion with Kathy McGuire (Gendlin 1991:227-289) Gendlin had argued that a focus on emotion 'narrows the sentient content', (1991:260-263) and that Focusing aims to widen the person's awareness. This contrasted with McGuire's ideas (McGuire:227-251). Gendlin's approach to emotion is elaborated in an interesting article on anger (1973) which shows his take on emotion: that an identified emotion such as anger is something of an abstraction from the broader stream

of human experiencing. Friedman described the two points of view and there was clearly no fundamental difference between McGuire's and Gendlin's thinking but Friedman's own keen advocacy of emotional discharge creates a different picture of what is the heart of Focusing-oriented Therapy as an integrative model. He points out:

> Emotional release works. Intense feeling therapy works. Focusing helps it to work better. But Gene does not give a fair enough evaluation of the value of a marathon-like group experience utilizing body-centered and heart-centered therapies over and over for the purpose of liberation. To quote one Spring Hill staff member who put it so beautifully: "The crying is not the pain. The crying is the release of the pain. We are going to a liberation party.". (Friedman 2000:298).

Friedman's mention of 'Spring Hill' highlights the fact that he brings to this discussion quite a specific experience of therapy. In a small book on his own experience of different therapies (Friedman 2005), Friedman describes his therapy with Leida Berg, Gendlin himself, and an 'Opening the Heart' weekend workshop (which had occurred at Spring Hill in Ashby, Massachusetts). Friedman points out that these experiences were not ever the same but that they complemented each other. He pointed out that:

> …within the context of the relationship, Leida provided a direct, powerful, thrilling, emotional experience. I cried my eyes out. I flew into rages. I experienced a range of intense feelings. I had a very bodily experience of therapy with Leida, and later, with Gene Gendlin's help, learned also to listen to subtle nuances of feeling. (2005:37).

This early experince of therapy set the tone for Friedman's conceptualisation of therapy and his later experiences built upon that foundation. The whole sense of what Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy are, is affected by his concentration on emotional release. He altered his guidelines for Focusing steps to include sound and gesture as forms of symbolisation, arguing that:

> *Sound and gesture* are less content-oriented than the more familiar triumvirate of word, phrase or image. Sound and gesture are better suited to leading to an intense feeling, a cathartic or expressive therapy "avenue" – which is a kind of therapy that I sometimes like to use after a focusing round. (2000:103 his italics).

Friedman's appraoch to Focusing-oriented Therapy would appear to place catharsis at the heart of the integration of techniques within Focusing-oriented Therapy that I am discussing and evaluating. While his model would seem to have been driven partly by his own

experience of therapy, the diffference strengthens the need for the reformulation of the object of Focusing that I have suggested above. Friedman's experience is a different *response* to life events rather than being a different *kind* of experience altogether. This view of Friedman's prioritising of cathartic processes in Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy would accord with Purton's re-imagining of experiencing (or human responding) as a plural phenomenon.

Purton's and Friedman's work provide useful critical perspectives on Gendlin's key texts but did so in ways that quite closely mirror his ways of describing and teaching Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy. I will go on to consider literature on Focusing that offer a different model of Focusing and possibly a different understanding of what Focusing is.

2.2 Cornell and McGavin: a sense of Presence

In a number of books, Ann Weiser Cornell, alongside her associate Barbara McGavin, has offered a particularly distinctive and challenging account of how Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy can be described, understood and taught. She is an innovator in offering a distinctively different approach to teaching Focusing in a lay context.

Cornell was a graduate student of Linguistics at the University of Chicago who became involved in teaching Focusing at an early stage in its dissemination as a taught procedure (Cornell 1993:167-180). Her book 'The Radical Acceptance of Everything' (2005) describes her experience of Focusing and of trying to teach Focusing. Her role as a Focusing teacher or trainer was part of an initiative developed by Gendlin and described as part of a project of 'giving therapy away' (Gendlin 1984), in which Focusing was taught as a procedure to people who wished to explore it as a self-help mental health technique rather than as a feature of counselling and psychotherapy.

As described above, Gendlin had developed a teaching model for Focusing which differed somewhat from the description of Focusing contained in the research text that introduced Focusing as a taught procedure in 1968. This model consisted of six steps or 'subacts', which he described as 'an effective way to teach Focusing to people who have never tried it

before' (1978/2007:49) even though thinking of the six steps as 'separate movements makes the process seem more mechanical than it is'. In a 1993 chapter, Cornell reported on the ways in which she had modified her approach to teaching Focusing to small groups. This entailed people learning five steps (rather than the original six) and four skills. Part of Cornell's thinking was that some aspects of the Focusing process seemed to be parts of a temporal sequence (hence the notion of numbered steps where one step proceeded another) and some aspects seemed to be learned skills that might feature at any point in the Focusing process. For example, Cornell suggested that there was a skill of finding the right distance from painful or problematic emotions, and this skill, the skill of finding the right distance, might appropriately occur at any point in the process. In so far as this skill featured in Gendlin's model, it was located at the beginning, during the first step of 'clearing a space', and also during the second step of 'getting a felt sense' (when the focuser was encouraged to become aware of a particular issue or problem as a felt sense but not to 'go into it yet'). Cornell argued that it made more sense to think of this as a discrete skill that people could learn and use as needed. Another notable feature of this modified teaching model was the side-lining of the technique of clearing space. This was based on Cornell's observation that this was a technique that many people found confusing and problematic (McGavin in Cornell 2005:63-68). In 'The Radical Acceptance of Everything' (2005:207-209), Cornell advanced a number of arguments against the priority that had been accorded to Clearing a Space in Focusing teaching and explained why teaching the distancing skill had seemed like a better approach.

At a later stage, Cornell opted to renounce all identified steps and to offer guidelines to the focuser and companion that they could use at any point in the process. When Focusing is practiced as a discrete self-help procedure (rather than within the context of Counselling and Psychotherapy), Gendlin had suggested that people practice it within a special kind of peer relationship known as a Focusing partnership (Gendlin 1987) wherein each person takes it in turns to focus and to be the companion or 'Focusing partner'. His Focusing book includes a chapter termed 'The Listening manual' (1978/2007:135-167) which offers tips and skills for the person in the companion role. Cornell's classes offered guidance on the main Focusing process and on the roles of focuser and companion and she developed

handbooks for each of these roles (Cornell & McGavin 2002). This led to a new model of Focusing that had some key distinguishing features.

Cornell's new model of Focusing developed the idea that people should receive support to create a relationship *with* their experiencing. This relationship would neither be too distant nor too close. Cornell's observed that a healthy relationship of any kind should involve both 'distance and connection' (2005:207-218). This is contrasted with the idea of being too enmeshed or immersed in something (or someone), and with being cut off or estranged from something or someone. A corollary of the idea of creating a relationship with one's experiencing is the notion of 'radical' acceptance of one's experiencing. Cornell contrasts radical acceptance with pushing away parts of one's experiencing during Focusing such as consciously creating distance from difficult experiences during 'clearing a space' or Gendlin's technique of side-lining critical inner voices (1996:247-258). Cornell developed a number of tips or guidelines for this process and describes some special linguistic forms that she employed to help the focuser to create the right relationship with his/her emotions/feelings, thoughts and bodily sensations.

For example, Cornell argues for the use of what she terms 'Presence' language. This term points to a way of being with one's experience (being present to one's experience or 'being in presence') that means that all experience - difficult thoughts or positive thoughts, positive or difficult emotions, positive or difficult physical states (including physical ailments) can be accepted and related to and be a source of growth without the usual hang-ups and issues that arise. Cornell and McGavin wrote of negative experiences as 'treasure maps to the soul' (2005:69-104). McGavin wrote of her own suicidal tendencies and Cornell wrote of her problematic relationship with alcohol, and they concluded that such experiences, when accepted and worked with in the right way, would be or could be staging posts on the road of life that point to positive directions and growth.

Cornell has developed a radically different model of Focusing that articulated points of divergence from Gendlin's approach to teaching the technique. Cornell coined a new title for the style of Focusing that she taught: 'Inner Relationship Focusing'. A key part of this was her innovative use of linguistic forms with which the Focusing companion would respond to

the Focuser. These linguistic forms involved Cornell's discovery that as a Focuser offered herself and her experience the right kind of attention, it (the experience) would take on experientially the characteristics of a person. A person's feeling of anxiety would respond in a person-like way to the offer of caring presence from the focuser and the companion. Cornell and McGavin offered an image of this wherein the experience acquired a face at the centre alongside the labelled characteristics of body sensation, emotional quality, imagery or symbolism and connection to life or story (2007:241). In addition, they made creative use of some of the concepts in Gendlin's philosophical work 'A Process Model' (1997) such as the idea that people are not made up of fixed 'units which then interact with each other but rather as processes' (2005:110). So, their use of 'parts' language, where a person would be encouraged to think of their experience as the experience of a part of them (rather than the whole of them), would be seen as the experience of a process that the person is undergoing at that moment, rather than of a fixed part of them that might never change.

Cornell's work offers an alternative approach to teaching Focusing as a taught procedure. While Cornell herself is qualified as a therapist and has written a Focusing book for therapists (2013), her work has been primarily in the former domain.

There are, I think, some legitimate questions that can be raised in relation to Cornell's uses of language in Focusing. For example, she advocates reframing some I-language as it-language i.e., where a person reports that they feel a certain way: 'I feel sad/happy/scared', she advocates reframing this as 'I notice that I am having a feeling of…sad/happy/scared' or 'I notice a part of me that is feeling…' or 'I notice something in me that is feeling…'. This use of language does not naturally or straightforwardly connect with people's experience and could, I imagine be off-putting. I report this point partly because I personally find such language-use off-putting. I also recognise the purpose of these innovative linguistic forms within her scheme: as ways of creating a 'relationship with' an experience that was not there before the language was used (before that, the person was, perhaps, enmeshed or fused with a difficult thought or emotion) but these language uses do not have the same straightforward connection to experience that ordinary language use ('I am scared') does.

Similarly, presence language can seem somewhat peculiar. Speaking personally, I can grasp the idea that I might stop being overly identified with an emotion and become *present to* it (rather like the idea of the observing self (Harris, 2008)), but I do not think that it is actually clear what being in *presence* means. It *seems* like an evocative term that creates a sense of the spiritual (like being in the presence of God) but I am not sure if this is what Cornell intends. Cornell writes of wanting to use language that is not confusing and does not distract (2005:173-181). She suggests that, as a Focusing guide, she does not wish to bring people into their heads and away from their immediate experience, but the language of presence can, I think, have that effect, as would any unclear concept or idea. A person might be distracted from their immediate experience and think about the words themselves. Similarly, the idea of relating to experience as if one were relating to a person (which is arguably the essence of Inner Relationship Focusing) could be somewhat off-putting in a similar way.

Cornell's approach is to offer linguistically alert approaches to Focusing that avoid the pitfalls that could 'trip up' some Focusers and Focusing teachers. Cornell argues that most of the changes that she initiated were straightforward innovations based on what seemed to work better, over against Gendlin's own teaching model. This was especially the case with the step of teaching Clearing a Space. Friedman, who had been a close collaborator with Cornell, argued for a more plural traditional approach to teaching Focusing. He suggested that steps can remain helpful. Friedman retained 8 steps that are based on Gendlin's 6 steps and he made Clearing a Space an optional step (based on Cornell's arguments). Friedman's argument was that steps are easily understood and memorised rather than the stepless skills approach of Cornell (he compares this to the task of learning a song like 'We shall overcome' where there can be variations in the verses used on any one occasion but learning the main verse structure is necessary for innovation and variation later on (Friedman 2000:101-106)).

It would seem possible that this disagreement accords with some people's characteristic thinking and teaching style. When teaching 'thinking at the edge' (a philosophical methodology based on Focusing (Gendlin & Hendricks 2004)), Gendlin elaborated fourteen steps and he has six numbered steps for Focusing and sixteen questions to pose in Focusing

with dreams (1986:17). It would appear to be the case that the use of a numerical system format accords with his typical style of thinking (and this general style worked for Friedman too). It is possible that this is a matter of characteristic style and Cornell simply does not have the same style. Perhaps there are identifiable differences here that can inform the practice of Focusing teachers and practitioners. I discussed above one of the primary aims of this research which is to assess the implications of the data and the literature for ongoing understanding of how Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy should be effectively taught and how the theory of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy should be understood. Cornell and McGavin's work offers some clear guidelines in regard to both of these areas.

Other differences between Cornell's and Gendlin's approaches to Focusing would appear to reflect more fundamental differences (rather than differences of style). It was noted above that Cornell's approach to Focusing is to view all experience from a position of radical acceptance. This includes the so-called inner critic and also negative emotions, thoughts and physical sensations. In contrast, Gendlin had advocated sweeping the inner critic to one side (1996:247-258) and the use of the Clearing a Space step to create a distance from difficult emotions and thoughts that intrude on the main Focusing process. In a similar way, he advocates the use of 'reframing' as a way of combatting negative thoughts. Cornell offers a difference of style, but would also seem to be making a crucial distinction that reflects the difficulty some focusers have with the experience of trying to clear a space and with trying to reject the inner critic or some other distraction (Cornell 2005:61-70). This distinction runs through other therapeutic approaches as well. For example, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Hayes et al 2012), in contrast, to traditional Cognitive Therapy (Kennerley et al 2017), suggests that clients should be encouraged to accept their experience of negative emotions and thoughts and orient themselves to life goals and values, rather than learning to challenge and restructure negative thinking and ideas. I will examine these ideas in more detail below since a key aim of this research is to evaluate and develop the theory of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy for ongoing training and practice.

I have somewhat laboured the points of difference between Cornell and Gendlin's teaching methods and models because in this tradition of therapy, the tradition of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy, there is considerable specific detail as to what the focuser,

therapist or companion might choose to say or think or be asked to consider. This is different to the typical approach adopted within the person-centred tradition wherein specific techniques and skills are eschewed somewhat in favour of a broader concern with attitudes and values on the part of the therapist (Mearns and Thorne 2007). It would appear that, in some respects, the focus of attention *is* in the detail of specific actions and skills within the world of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy. This contrast strengthens the sense of the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Focusing-oriented Therapy in relation to Person Centred Therapy and other tribes within the so-called person-centred nation (Sanders 2012).

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the questions that I have raised about some of Cornell's uses of language, I consider that her innovations are correct in three respects: Focusing *should* be understood as an attitude of radical acceptance of human experience, Focusing *is* about creating a relationship of connection plus distance with one's experience and Focusing *does* involve having a reflexive sense of oneself as 'observer' or 'self-in-presence'. To use a phrase that derives from Gendlin's philosophy (Gendlin 1997), Cornell has 'carried forward' Focusing in ways that are true to Gendlin's original intentions and true to the context of teaching Focusing away from the therapy situation.

2.3 Phenomenological research into therapy and personal change

The philosophical background that Gendlin brought to his work on therapy stands within the phenomenological tradition. In a paper published in 1973, Gendlin makes reference to a number of philosophers within the phenomenological tradition, including Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty (Gendlin1973:317-322). He describes aspects of their thought and points out ways in which his ideas are distinctive. Gendlin's major philosophical works – Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning (1962/1997) and A Process Model (1997) are works that develop the phenomenological tradition, in spite of the fact that he does not make frequent reference to other scholars. It is arguable that his key psychological method – Focusing – is a phenomenological approach to addressing psychological problems in that the method aims to create a direct experience of a person's difficulties without any prior description or conceptualisation of the problem that is addressed. Indeed, the initial stage

of Focusing, as described by Gendlin, the stage of clearing a space, bears some resemblance to Husserl's notion of bracketing, where one's initial take on one's problems are set aside and an inners 'space' is created which can then be filled with awareness of whatever issue or concern seems to require most attention. The symbolisation of the problem which then follows is intended to be fresh and accurate in a way that seems to reflect a phenomenological approach to psychological phenomena.

Alongside discussion and evaluation of the ideas and practices that derive directly from Gendlin's own research project, it is appropriate to consider wider accounts of phenomenological research into therapy and personal change in order to assess the contribution that that research tradition makes to the aims of this study.

It is noteworthy that Gendlin's concept of bodily felt experiencing as possessing 'very many cognitive, situational, and observational aspects' accords with some investigations into cognition as part of a dialogue/conversations between "third phase" cognitive science and phenomenological philosophy: Larkin, Eatough & Osborn (2011) published a paper on embodied, active, situational cognition (EASC) which argues that cognition is:

> …not something which takes places solely or exclusively "in the head" (see, e.g., Gallagher & Zahavi, 2007). With the exception of certain sub-personal processes, cognition in EASC is conceived of as a conscious, *intersubjective* process (Gallagher & Varela, 2001) of *sense-making* (Thompson, 2004). It has been argued (Wilson, 2002) that this process is to be understood as: situated (i.e., context-sensitive): temporal (i.e., varying according to time available): distributed (i.e., persons "off-load" certain cognitive work onto the environment, and thus the environment co-constitutes the cognitive system): engaged in the world, and thus action-orientated (i.e., intentional in the phenomenological sense): and embodied (i.e., at the very least, the body defines our perceptual involvement in the world). (Larkin et al 2011:319-20)

The focus of that particular paper is on the contribution that Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) can make to the wider discussion of EASC. Larkin et al reference IPA studies of the experience of lower back pain try to show that:

> …Through reference to the sustained example of participants' accounts of chronic pain, we have illustrated the importance of situating embodied personal experience in the context of meaning, relationships, and the lived world (Larkin et al 2011:318)

I have referenced this study partly because I think that it is excellent and thought-provoking but also because it seems to illustrate the ways in which some of Gendlin's observations and ideas seem to mesh with more recent thinking within phenomenological philosophy since the study offers a useful complementary perspective on Gendlin's concept of experiencing.

In a similar way, Allan, Eatough & Ungar (2015) constructed a study of the role of the body, of embodiment, in the process of learning evidence-based practices (couple and family therapy). This was a study of the experience of learning and was, therefore, different to those interpretative phenomenological studies that derive from the field of health psychology with a focus on the experience of health conditions such as chronic pain (such as those studies referenced in Smith et al 2012:121-146). The authors drew on Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment as a concept that helped them to interpret participants' reflections. They noted that:

> …the participants discussed a felt sense of grappling with learning a new approach to working with couples and families. For most participants they were on a quest to become more effective in their work with couples and families and were surprised how much personal work was involved and how much it had to do with something "in" them. Some participants identified it as a "part" or a "piece" inside them while others discussed a "feeling" or described a felt sense they had when they struggled or experienced success at integrating an aspect of a new therapy approach they were learning with their clients. (Allan, Eatough & Ungar 2015:865)

The authors used Gendlin's 6-stage Focusing model (Gendlin 1978/2007) as a device to organise the participants' experiences. Of interest in this study is that the researchers did not directly ask participants about their bodily experiences. This study offers a good example of the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis to explore experiences of learning within counsellor education that parallels my own study of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Psychotherapy within the same context here.

Part of the aim of this study is to evaluate the significance of Focusing within the context of a Focusing partnership in relation to the personal and professional development of trainee counsellors. Focusing within a Focusing partnership is not personal therapy in the classical sense (which is often a requirement within professional counsellor training programmes) but it was intended to function as an opportunity for personal development work (Purton 2004:168-9) in a way that paralleled the role of personal therapy in other programmes. In addition, there was a crucial professional development aspect to fortnightly practice in Focusing that is, also, perhaps, similar to the intended effect of personal therapy in other training programmes. Of interest are a number of IPA studies that evaluate the significance of personal therapy in counsellor training programmes. For example, Rake & Paley (2009) conducted an interpretative phenomenological investigation into therapists' experience of personal therapy. They concluded that personal therapy had an ongoing significance for therapists and that personal therapy contributed to their professional development. They noted that 3 key themes emerged from the data: 'I learnt how to do therapy: I know myself much better: and a…[it was]…very dissolving process'. In a similar way, Rizq & Target (2008a) observe that personal therapy 'is valued mainly as a means of enhancing reflectiveness within clinical work' and they note that the research 'points to the potential significance of early attachment experiences in the development and amplification of participants' reflective capacities'. Rizq & Target had published another paper on the same theme (2008b) that concluded that:

> Detailed examination of a subset of data from this study suggests that personal therapy is valued as a vehicle for a genuine, often extremely intense relationship with the therapist, through which participants become able to establish authentic emotional contact with themselves and their clients (Rizq & Target 2008b)

Giorgi & Giorgi (2009) reference a number of studies that show a phenomenological approach to research including a study of 'living through some positive experiences of psychotherapy' (Giorgi & Gallegos 2005) This included analysis of 3 clients' experiences of psychotherapy and noted that 'instrumental to the existence of the positive experiences was a high-quality relationship with the therapist that was safe, trusting, caring and non-judgemental. '. The authors observe that one of the phenomenological findings is that 'the

relationship between therapist and client is complex but unified in a way that needs further clarification.' (Giorgi & Gallegos 2005:195).

These studies demonstrate the potential for phenomenological research to fulfil the research aims identified in chapter one. Just as some of these studies demonstrate the significance of embodiment and situatedness for different human experiences (including human beings training as therapists), so IPA and other phenomenological research has the potential to clarify the role of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy in the personal and professional development of counsellors as well as within the self-help context. Similarly, IPA studies of personal therapy within the counsellor training context show the potential for an IPA study of Focusing and Focusing partnerships to contribute to an understanding of the personal and professional development of trainee counsellors.

2.4 Emotion-focused Therapy: Focusing as a Task

An important text in regard to the dissemination of Focusing as a therapeutic strategy, apart from Gendlin's own work, was Greenberg, Rice and Elliott's book 'Facilitating Emotional Change' (1993). This details the authors' approach to therapy in which therapists are taught to offer their clients a healing therapeutic relationship, with the use of typical therapeutic relationship skills, alongside the offer of a series of six therapeutic tasks which clients might wish to engage in with their therapists in order to facilitate emotional change in a collegiate way. The second of the tasks which they identify is Focusing. Greenberg et al's tasks are research-based and their inclusion of Focusing as a task is built on Gendlin's research efforts in the previous thirty years. This therapeutic approach offers a useful perspective on Focusing and on integration of different techniques into a person-centred relational framework. This orientation was originally named the Process Experiential approach but has been renamed Emotion-Focused Therapy in recent years (EFT) (Elliott et al 2004). Both EFT and Focusing-oriented Therapy are seen as 'tribes' of the 'Person-Centred Nation' (Sanders (Ed.) 2012). Alongside the insight that EFT can provide into Focusing and a research-based approach to integration, Greenberg, Elliott and colleagues offer a useful perspective on emotion theory which connects in an interesting way with the theoretical ideas that I have

discussed hitherto. Perhaps the tribes of the nation can be seen as mutually influencing rather than as derivatives of the main nation.

The 1993 book represented something of a culmination of Greenberg and Rice's elaboration of task analysis as a tool for the development of an empirically informed integrative psychotherapy (Rice & Greenberg 1984:124-146). A task analysis is a way of refining a process that has been identified in some practical setting (for example a task might be children completing a learning activity successfully) and conducting research on that refinement process. With this research strategy in mind, Rice and Greenberg argued that psychotherapy should be understood as a series of potential tasks that clients might wish or need to undertake. They argued that the therapist or counsellor should watch for signs that a particular task would be called for at a particular point. For each task that they identified and developed, they created a task 'marker', i.e., something specific that they anticipated the client would say or do that showed that a particular task was called for. The task marker for Focusing had three identifying features:

> first, the client makes reference to a particular internal experience (versus an abstract, general, or external experience). Second, he or she describes difficulty in articulating or symbolising this experience. Third, he or she expresses some distress or disturbance in connection with the experience. (Greenberg et al 1993:167)

These three features were seen as indications of an unclear felt sense about a particular problem or concern. They also identified a marker for an 'absent' felt sense. Greenberg et al's view was that this situation should lead to a suggestion on the part of the therapist that they might engage in a particular process, in this case Focusing and this would bring a sense of structure into the therapeutic relationship. They argued that therapy could remain relatively client-centred (i.e., driven by the client's wishes and needs) but would also be guided by task interventions which are specific research-identified collaborative 'moves' on the part of the duo. The development of these tasks and, in particular the creation of task markers offers a very useful perspective on how integration can be viable in therapy because there can be clarity as to what can or should happen and when. In the EFT training context, counselling students engage in practising specific tasks and also in 'open marker' work, where the person in the therapy role does not know what the person in the client role

will bring, and they have to identify the marker or markers in the context of a normal client narrative.

A later volume produced by this school of therapy: 'Learning Emotion-Focused Therapy' (2005) extended the list of tasks to thirteen. This reflected ongoing research into such tasks on the part of the authors and other collaborators. The original tasks were driven by the research interests of the developers, for example, Greenberg had studied Gestalt Therapy after his initial person-centred training and conducted research into techniques that derived from that tradition (Greenberg 1983), but the tasks have expanded over the years, and the formal presentations of the approach in book form (Greenberg et al 1993, Elliott et al 2005) offer an overall integrated therapy package that has been evaluated in research studies in a way that Gendlin's integrative model has not (Elliott 2004:43-51). However, in contrast to Gendlin (1996) and Purton (2004), the range of tasks within the EFT treatment model is somewhat narrower than the range of 'avenues' that Gendlin and Purton offer. I would contend that the widest possible selection of avenues and tasks that might meet human need should be subjected to research at the sub-process level (= task analysis) and that a widened integrative therapy package should receive research support in the ways that EFT developers have conducted research into their complete package.

In addition to the issue of research into integration, there is the question of the theoretical underpinning for the therapeutic approach which we have discussed above. Greenberg, alongside different collaborators, has produced a number of books in which he explores the theme of emotion in relation to human development and psychotherapy (Greenberg 2003). The EFT understanding of emotion is an important contribution to understanding if Focusing is a viable basis for an integrative model of therapy. I would argue that integration requires identification of a core human process, alongside the idea of task markers that can serve as a 'centre' of the model of therapy, since without such a core, different therapy techniques lack a coherent focus. Purton had identified experiencing as the essential process and different human difficulties were conceived as different kinds of experiencing difficulty. In a similar way, EFT's developers have proposed that emotion is the core process and different human difficulties are different types of emotion problems. I will now examine the EFT view of emotion.

EFT's emotion theory is based on the idea that emotion 'is an empirical fact, both experientially and scientifically' (Greenberg & Paivio 2003:vii). EFT emotion theory entails the differentiation of different emotion processes. Greenberg et al identified four main types of emotion process: primary adaptive emotion, secondary adaptive emotion, maladaptive emotion and instrumental emotion (2005:30). The research process that Greenberg and colleagues undertook (Greenberg & Safran 1987) developed an understanding of the ways in which emotional change can happen and, in particular, the trajectory through which people might come to move between different emotion processes. For example, a person who experiences what is termed a secondary reactive emotion is seen as having learned that some emotions are unacceptable to early caregivers. They might have learned to express a more acceptable emotion that is secondary to the primary emotion. An example of this could be a boy who experiences anger, as a secondary response, to the sadness or fear that is his first (socially unacceptable) response to a situation. The support of a therapeutic relationship and the offer of different tasks is intended, within EFT, to enable a person to recognise and to access their first or primary emotion. Primary emotion is understood as being fundamentally adaptive, in an evolutionary sense, and as possessing the capacity to offer quick guidance to foster human survival and flourishing. Emotion when integrated with reason is seen as being able to produce wiser decisions than cognition alone. The work of EFT-style therapy involves encouraging people to become aware of their emotional responses, to access primary adaptive emotions and to move beyond less adaptive emotions to experience the changes that these processes can bring.

There is some evidence from the literature that Focusing can function as a change process in which people experience the move from secondary, maladaptive or instrumental emotion to primary adaptive emotions (Friedman 2000, 2002, 2007). For example, Friedman explores emotion explicitly in his work on Focusing and he explores the ways in which emotion is accessed, symbolised and processed in Focusing, in ways that are similar to EFT.

A further key concept in EFT is the idea of the emotion 'scheme' (Greenberg et al 1993). Schemes are similar to and different from the idea of schemas in cognitive psychology. An

‘emotion scheme’ is understood as a complex emotional process which enables human reactions. Elliott et al (2004) illustrate the idea with a diagram with emotion at the centre and with symbolic-conceptual, perceptual-situational, bodily-expressive and motivational-behavioural as associated elements. On this account, when a person feels a certain way emotionally, this is understood as a complex human response which will include some or all of the following: a sense of the situation, some cognitive symbolisation or understanding, some feeling in their body and, most importantly of all, an inclination to behave in a certain way. Emotion schemes are a concept within EFT that is intended to aid understanding of the ways in which people’s experience should be interpreted. In practice, the concept functions as a guide for therapists to invite elements of experience that the client has not reported or explored. So, if a person describes a problematic situation, they might be invited to consider their thoughts or ideas and how the situation is symbolised or pictured, or a person might be invited to consider what action they might be inclined to take to resolve the situation. Similarly, they might be invited to become aware of their bodily reactions. At the heart of the scheme is emotion and invitations to different elements of the scheme are intended to bring the emotion to the fore. Within the context of the Focusing task within EFT, a felt sense is understood as a scheme where the emotion component is absent or unclear (Greenberg et al 1993:165-185 and Elliott et al 2005:169-186). Hence, the Focusing step of giving attention to the feel of the situation through the body is an example of inviting a part of the emotion scheme into awareness. This way of characterising Focusing and this notion of the felt sense would seem to clarify some aspects of the concepts involved. However, there are concerns that have been raised about the idea of emotion schemes that relate to the more general background of this idea in cognitive science and to the information processing model of the human mind that was a factor in Rice’s original presentation of EFT tasks (Rice 1974:292-4). These concerns relate to the analogy that was drawn between computers and human brains within cognitive psychology and the flaws that were identified in this analogy by thinkers such as Dreyfus (Kåufer & Chemero 2021:200-256). More specifically, Purton has argued that emotion schemes are understood as ‘internal models’ and as ‘dynamic structures’ within EFT (Greenberg 2000:67-8). He considers that such concepts do not really make sense of the actual experience of emotion, which he thinks of in an interactional way. He points out that:

> To have an emotion, such as fear, is to be inclined to respond in certain ways (e.g. withdrawal, freezing, aggression) in a particular kind of situation, such as that of perceived danger. As the child develops their linguistic abilities they come to replace the behavioural response with utterances such as 'Oogh!' or 'Scary!' or 'I'm scared'…the idea of emotions as inner states (physical or mental) is a myth generated by a misunderstanding of how language works here. (Purton 2014:123).

Purton's argument is that EFT writers' descriptions of particular emotion schemes often seem to convey their meaning reasonably well in spite of the incoherence of the picture of an internal model or structure that they presuppose, but he argues that the reader is, in effect, translating those ideas into ordinary language (2014:123-4).

Greenberg, Rice and Elliott commented that their:

> …use of the concept of scheme and emotion schemes…is not meant to reify this structural construct to the status of an actually existing entity in the head…[they]…have used this concept as a tool to capture…[their]…view that an internal organising process exists. (Greenberg et al 1993:viii).

However, this clarification retains the notion of schemes as 'internal organising' processes.

I consider that the 'non-internalised' reading of the concept of the emotion scheme retains value in that it makes good sense to speak of emotion as often having the four aspects identified above: - symbolic-conceptual elements, perceptual-situational elements, bodily-expressive elements and motivational-behavioural elements. Inviting these elements, if one or other is absent, can help a person to experience and explore their emotional responses in the ways that EFT practitioners describe. In addition, I consider that use of 'emotion' or 'emotional response' as a core category is a helpful clarification of what 'felt sense' actually means, particularly since an emotion is understood as being part of a more general response that contains all of the four elements that are identified above. In chapter four, I present findings from my analysis of data from research participants and discuss the extent to which emotion and processing of emotional responses feature in research participants' accounts of Focusing.

There is an interesting connection between EFT's model of the emotion scheme as having five elements (including emotion at the centre) and Cornell's image of the 'full felt sense'.

Elliott et al reference Cornell in their later 2004 book (2004:26) and it would seem that the diagrammatic form which they offer is a version of what Cornell proposes. However, as described, EFT places emotion at the centre of the diagram of the emotion scheme whereas Cornell places a face at the centre of a similar diagram in her book (2005:239-241) to symbolise her experience that aspects of human experience can take on person-like characteristics. This difference may or may not represent a large difference in terms of the experiencing process that Focusing creates or enables.

In this section I have discussed ideas around tasks and 'task markers', integration and research, and the theory of emotion within EFT. I have argued that the notion of therapeutic tasks and the priority given to task markers offers a helpful way in which integration of different techniques into therapy is effected, without de-prioritising the relational 'avenue' that Gendlin emphasises. The fact that EFT has received research assessment as a complete integrated therapy package is a further improvement on the lack of research into Focusing-oriented Therapy as a complete integrative model. I would add that a publication such as the book 'Case Studies in Emotion-Focused Treatment of Depression: A Comparison of Good and Poor Outcomes' (Watson et al 2007) is a good example of the use of good quality qualitative research (in this instance, a case study methodology) that I argue for in chapter three and in chapter six. However, I noted that EFT's integrative therapy model is still rather confined to the tasks that the research developers chose to concentrate on and there are, I think, numerous other therapy strategies that could be researched and incorporated, such as those in Gendlin's book (1996), in so far as the focus is on client preference and client need. With this in mind, I will now examine literature from an approach to therapy and self-help that derives from a different tradition to the person-centred lineage shared by EFT and Focusing-oriented Therapy. I will discuss the significance and contribution of mindfulness-based interventions such as MBCT or MBSR as points of comparison and contrast with Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy. Part of my objective in this chapter is to assess and develop the theoretical basis of Focusing-oriented Therapy and Focusing in the light of criticisms that have been raised about their theoretical foundations and also in the context of other related traditions of practice that are part of the 'experiential' family of therapies, that include mindfulness-based interventions and those therapies that consciously draw on mindfulness such as ACT (Hayes et al 1999 & 2012).

2.5 Mindfulness-based Interventions: Listening to the Body

What has been described as 'a very exciting development' (Mental Health Foundation 2010:2-3) within the world of counselling and psychotherapy has been the growth of approaches to psychological change and psychological healing that derive from the practice of meditation and associated ideas about human psychology. These meditational practices have links to older spiritual traditions that include traditional Hindu and Buddhist ideas but also Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh practices (Bowker (ed) 1997:631 & 1086).

The use of a particular type of meditation, known as mindfulness, has taken a specific form that has received wide acceptance and applicability within the UK National Health Service and elsewhere with the development of Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (Segal, Williams and Teasdale 2002). This is an approach to therapy that is linked to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy but has distinctive practices that derive from traditions of meditation. An earlier and influential use of mindfulness meditation practices (and ideas) within psychology was the development of Kabat-Zinn's programme of Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn 1990/2012). This programme operationalised the use of meditation practices within psychology by creating and offering a series of meditation workshops that people could access who were experiencing stress, anxiety, pain and illness. Kabat-Zinn and colleagues had also conducted research into the effectiveness of these practices (1990/2012:454-456). Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2002) resolved to consider ways in which the practice of meditation in MBSR could have an application within psychology to treat recurrent depression, i.e., experiences of depression that recur over time. Within Segal et al's programme, people who had experienced a number of 'episodes' of depression would learn to meditate and would undertake such meditation over a period of eight weeks with an intention to continue, and the practices would explicitly include the use of meditation as a tool or technique to help create a different ('decentered') response to the phenomenon of depressogenic thought – what Beck et al termed negative 'automatic thoughts' (Beck, Rush, Shaw & Emery 1979:150-157). People with depression would be encouraged not to push away or argue away negative depressing thinking but to observe such thoughts in the same way that one would observe any other phenomenon within

meditation, including distressing emotions and different physical symptoms i.e., by noticing them and then moving on, bringing one's awareness back to the breath.

Over time, with the practice of meditation, research suggested that people would tend not to experience relapse into depression as previously (Segal et al 2002:311-323). MBCT researchers point out that many people who took part in the MBCT eight-week programme would permanently or semi-permanently move beyond the experience of thinking depressing thoughts or entertaining depressing beliefs. Participants would be likely to experience the thoughts and not be hooked by them. In a more general way, Segal et al argue that participants 'were actually learning *a more general mode of mind that was especially helpful in relating to difficult experiences'* rather than 'just being exposed to a set of skills or techniques to be used at the first sign of stress' (Segal et al 2002:61 their italics).

Kabat-Zinn argues that the practice of meditation can also lead to experiences of self-discovery and transformation that go beyond reduction of stress and anxiety. For example, he observes that avoided emotions and painful experiences can be experienced and transformed as the person engages with awareness of bodily processes (Kabat-Zinn 1990/2012:79-86). He observes that experience of the MBSR programme demonstrates that a particular part of the body can, as it were, hold a painful memory and that giving awareness to that part of the body in the ways that the MBSR programme teaches and encourages can safely unlock the avoided emotional content. In a similar way, Segal et al observed that the 'MBSR approach allows participants to see how negative thoughts and feelings are often expressed through the body' (2002:60-1), and so body-centred meditations would not just be tools to help a person to relate their thoughts in new decentred way but also as ways of relating in new ways to experience as a whole.

Williams and Penman argue for the value of meditation as a life practice and as a way of peace that goes beyond the specific practice of stepping back from and being aware of, but not ensnared by difficult thoughts (2013). In the notes on the back cover of their practical guide to mindfulness book, they report that mindfulness 'helps promote a genuine *joie de vivre,* the kind of happiness that gets into your bones and allows you to meet the worst that life throws at you with new courage.'

Both MBCT and MBSR, alongside other mindfulness practices, have been subjected to ongoing research, partly to continue to assess the effectiveness of these therapeutic strategies but also to consider the mechanisms by which mindfulness effects change for practitioners. For example, one study (Kuyken et al 2010) observed that MBCT led to enhanced levels of self-compassion which 'nullified' the typical link between reactive depressive thinking and actual depression. This study suggested that the process of mindfulness entails a heightened attunement to thoughts, emotions and physical sensations which leads, in turn, to heightened reactivity. I.e., a person would be more aware of their thoughts and emotions and would, therefore, respond more sharply to sad or depressing events. However, the study concluded that the practice of mindfulness meant that this did not lead to consistent low mood or depression and the researchers noted that a person would be more able to consciously choose the thoughts, emotions or sensations that they wished to focus on (rather than just reacting). It was suggested that this alternative 'mode of mind' (Williams 2008) seemed to operate through distinct neural processes.

In a similar way, Baer (2009) suggests that the practice of Mindfulness within a class setting typically leads to increased mindfulness in daily life, which leads, in turn, to a reduction in depressive rumination and reduced emotional avoidance. The researchers argue these changes enhance practitioners' ability to self-regulate.

Linehan (1993) and Kabat-Zinn (1982) emphasise the importance of the element of exposure in mindfulness, where practitioners learn to accept difficult emotions and physical sensations and experience the effects of 'desensitization', whereby exposure to difficult emotions and physical sensations means that people are better able to cope with them without negating or avoiding difficult material. Baer argues that mindfulness works through the process of decentering (2009), where different or distressing cognitions are observed just like any other internal 'event'. They note that this leads to less rumination, less fear of emotion, less avoidance of emotional stimuli and increases in constructive valued behaviour even when the person is experiencing difficult cognitions and emotions.

It would appear that these features of mindfulness-based interventions have had a strong effect on the development of other therapies, such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Hayes et al 1999) and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (Linehan 1993), both of which draw on mindfulness skills and techniques alongside other strategies.

Part of the significance of mindfulness in the context of a study of Focusing is that some students of Focusing with prior experience of mindfulness or of meditation, immediately note points of similarity between the practice of mindfulness within MBCT and MBSR and of Focusing. For example, they comment on the significance of attention to the body in each practice, while also focusing on solving cognitive problems. Other points of similarity include the custom of closing one's eyes when practising Focusing as a taught procedure either on one's own or within a partnership. This rather superficial point of comparison links with the more general point that Focusing can seem like or feel like a type of meditation. However, this type of meditation, the Focusing type of meditation, aims to resolve personal difficulties (unlike some traditions of meditation that aim to create a realisation that the self does not exist, so suffering or problems do not actually exist in the usual sense) just as mindfulness practice within the context of MBCT or MBSR entails the use of meditation with the aim of resolving issues with depression or stress and anxiety. In addition, some approaches to Focusing include an initial stage which involves a brief body scan prior to the step of 'clearing a space', This stage derives directly from the use of the body scan within mindfulness practice. At a deeper level, both Focusing and mindfulness involve the process of 'being with' difficult feelings and issues. It is also noteworthy that both Focusing and mindfulness involve some element of decentering from, rather than avoidance of, difficult thoughts and ideas.

On the other hand, there are clear differences between mindfulness-based interventions such as MBCT and MBSR and Focusing. Focusing is classically practiced in a pair setting or on one's own (although Focusing can be facilitated in a group) or in the context of a therapeutic relationship. Mindfulness-based interventions are typically practiced initially in a group or class – this is the foundation for the ongoing practice that students of mindfulness are asked to continue with in their lives and, as noted above, one of the research findings is that attendance in an 8-week class can successfully lead to a semi-

permanent change in a person's 'mode of mind' (Williams 2008). This is a significant point of difference with the practice of Focusing where the relationship of the practitioner with a Focusing partner (rather than with a class) is arguably a hugely significant part of the experience of Focusing.

Some Focusing writers, such as Gendlin (Gendlin 1996:65-6) and Purton (Focusing and Buddhist meditation 2010) have described points of difference between Focusing and meditation (including, presumably, mindfulness meditation). Gendlin uses an elevator metaphor to describe points of difference: as a person 'descends' into their bodily felt experience, they come to an optimal place of awareness where they can make progress with their problems, whereas 'descending' further into a meditative state removes one from the place where one can usefully process or deal with issues and problems. Purton describes points of similarity between meditational practices with which he is familiar and Focusing and concludes that 'There seems to be a danger here, although I cannot at present formulate it very clearly, of the 'psychologising' of spiritual traditions, and thereby losing what is distinctively spiritual. And there is also the converse danger of 'spiritualising' psychotherapy, that is, of making systems of psychotherapy into a substitute for religion.' (2010).

In the guidelines for Gendlin's strategy of 'thinking at the edge', (Hendricks 2001), there is a stage where different but related concepts are linked together by the use of '='. The purpose of this strategy is to facilitate exploration of similarity and difference where the '=' can be linked to qualifying terms such as 'inherently' or 'partially' and this then leads to further exploration and provision of detail. An initial foundation for the use of '=' is a creative leap, where what is superficially different is seen as having significant inherent links. With these ideas in mind, I am inclined to suggest that, in a fundamental way, mindfulness and Focusing are the same processes in spite of the differences identified above. One key area of difference, however, is the contrast between the class format for mindfulness and the pair and the partnership and 1:1 therapy format for Focusing. Notwithstanding these differences, I judge that there are key areas of learning within mindfulness-based interventions for the ongoing development of Focusing-oriented Therapy including, centrally, the significance of radical acceptance of human experience.

In the next section, I will go on to examine literature from an approach to therapy and self-help that derives from an entirely different tradition to the person-centred lineage shared by EFT and Focusing-oriented Therapy but which has clear links to MBCT and MBSR.

2.6 Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: Dialogue with Difference

Focusing-oriented Therapy, Emotion-focused Therapy and MBCT/MBSR are types of experiential therapy, i.e., they are therapeutic modalities that address or speak to a person's whole experience rather than Focusing on or prioritising narrower elements of experience such as cognition or behaviour.

A related development within the world of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). This strand of therapy is described in one of its founding texts as 'an experiential approach to behaviour change' (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson 1999) and the authors of that book make explicit links with other experiential therapies such as EFT (1999:79) and make reference to some of the research support for EFT (1999:62-3). The authors of the founding text also make explicit reference to mindfulness. Notwithstanding these connections, ACT has a very different background to Focusing-oriented Therapy, since it traces its origins to the behavioural tradition of B.F. Skinner. However, I will argue that there are important points of connection with Focusing-oriented Therapy and that the six main experiential processes that are recommended within ACT offer distinctive points of comparison with and challenge to Focusing-oriented Therapy's favoured techniques. I consider that a dialogue with ACT facilitates development of Focusing-oriented Therapy as an integrative model of therapy.

ACT is described by its creators as being based upon a research programme into human language-use and language development that derives from and is seen as superseding B. F. Skinner's behavioural study of language (Skinner 1957). The creators of ACT resolved that Skinner's approach was not adequate to the task that Skinner had set himself because his ideas were not amenable to ongoing research in the ways that he had intended (Hayes, Barnes-Holmes & Roche 2001:10). Their aim was to create a model of language-use and

language acquisition which could become a solid foundation for ongoing research and development in psychotherapy. This approach to language and cognition is termed Relational Frame Theory (Hayes, Barnes-Holmes & Roche 2001). One aim of this theoretical model is the development of an approach to therapy that would bypass the so-called cognitive turn in psychology and psychotherapy.

A background to this development was the linked idea that behaviour therapy and behavioural psychology needed to come to terms with human language and cognition and also that the behavioural critique of Cognitive Therapy was broadly correct. CBT therapists have argued that the benefits of CBT for depression derive from the cognitive changes that the therapy process facilitates (Greenberger & Padesky 2015). Behaviour therapy proponents have argued that changes to depression depend upon changes in how a person lives his or her life (and the reinforcement that these changes bring into play) and that cognitive change may or may not be a result of these behavioural changes. There is some research support for this view. Jacobson et al (1996) offer evidence from a large research study which compared CBT with two reduced versions of the package of treatment that CBT offers. This project compared the behavioural components of CBT to the strictly cognitive interventions that feature prominently in CBT treatment protocols. The key finding in this research was that behavioural interventions, such as activity scheduling cognitive were as effective in terms of outcome measures as the alternative packages that utilised behavioural components alongside the other parts of CBT (such as challenging negative thoughts or modifying dysfunctional core beliefs). This research catalysed the development of 'Behaviour Activation', which has since been identified within UK NICE guidelines as a treatment option for depression (https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg90/ifp/chapter/treatments-for-mild-to-moderate-depression#psychological-treatments-for-depression). ACT draws on the thinking behind this research, that behaviour therapy should not uncritically accept the development of CBT but subject CBT's main ideas to critical scrutiny.

Relational Frame theory (RFT) (Hayes, Barnes-Holmes & Roche 2001) mirrors other studies of human language that show that words gain their meaning from their connection to other words within networks of meaning. In the context of RFT, these networks are termed

'relational frames'. An outcome of relational frame theory is that many experientially positive and negative features of human experience are understood as effects of what RFT theorists, such as Hayes, Barnes-Holmes & Roche (2001), term 'arbitrarily applicable derived-relational responding'. An example of this might be when a difficult experience becomes associated with other things within a relational 'network'. For example, a bereavement might become associated with a bright sunny day because of the weather on the day of a tragic funeral and subsequent bright sunny days acquire a tinge of sadness. This is an *arbitrary* relational response since there is no necessary (non-arbitrary) connection between bereavement and sunny weather, but the latter has acquired (semi-permanently) some of the functions of the whole event for a particular person whose particular language history encourages such associations. ACT/RFT theorists argue that language processes and, therefore, memory functions, emotion and, to some extent physical experience itself, can become somewhat fixed due to the properties of language for human beings.

An outcome of the development of RFT, as outlined above, is that ACT emphasises certain therapeutic interventions rather than others. Since language processes are seen as being, to some extent, out of the control of the human person, ACT practitioners advocate acceptance of difficult thoughts rather than trying to push them away or dispute them (as in CBT). ACT practitioners argue that, in certain situations a particular person will be inclined to experience certain thoughts and emotions without any conscious choice on his/her part since relational framing had created that effect within them and that acceptance of that effect will allow them the 'wiggle room' to choose functional behaviours rather than the dysfunctional behaviours that they might have adopted on the basis of their current thinking.

Similarly, human emotional responses are understood as the effect of a person's history being brought into the present by some feature of the current context (which is seen as being shaped by language) and the only way to avoid an emotion is to change one's history or one's ability to remember, neither of which is completely possible although the attempt can have baleful consequences. Hayes et al point out that:

> …In order to avoid automatic emotional reactions, we have to distort our lives in such a way as to be psychologically out of contact with our own histories…successful

> avoidance means that a person becomes incapable of benefitting from past experiences…and, in addition, hasn't the slightest idea of what their behaviour is really about. (Hayes et al 1999:68).

Hayes et al recommend that people 'accept…[their]…historically established feelings and then behave in a valued direction' (1999:69).

ACT and RFT researchers tend to see these experiences through a traditional behavioural lens: certain patterns of framing are reinforced within a person's learning history and this determines much of what they feel and think and know. The experience of human freedom within this deterministic framework is seen as occurring when behaviour is 'under appetitive control'. Behaviour under appetitive control can create a sense of freedom since an 'appetitive stimulus' (rather than an 'antecedent aversive stimulus') is not something that I *have to* choose or avoid. I can choose among different options and all are attractive, and all are optional (none are coercive like behaviour under 'antecedent aversive control') (Wilson 2008). While ACT is a behavioural approach to therapy and has a deterministic understanding of human behaviour, ACT practitioners utilise the language of freedom when discussing values and committed actions.

The development of ACT has spawned a large literature. The later version of the founding text defines the six identified processes (present-moment awareness, dimensions of self, defusion, acceptance, chosen values and committed action) as interconnected parts of a 'psychological flexibility' model (2012:60-99). The developers of this approach have then worked on ways in which people's difficulties can be understood in relation to these six processes (2012:62-63). Therefore, a person's difficulties are conceptualised in a relatively unified way, using the model (2012:130) and the model then suggests how the processes of ACT can be deployed in so far as an assessment of client difficulties suggests itself. In this iteration of ACT, there are different starting points and different progression routes. In addition, clients are understood as requiring support in those particular areas which cause most suffering and most inflexibility in their process.

In the psychological flexibility model there are, therefore, contrasting processes: acceptance of difficult personal emotions is contrasted with avoidance, defusion is contrasted with

fused thinking, the experience of one's self as an observer of personal experience (known as self-as-context) is contrasted with the conceptualised self, and lack of clarity in one's personally chosen values is contrasted with values clarification. Finally, lack of action in the direction of one's values is contrasted with committed action. All of the six recommended processes are understood as contributions to personal change in a direction that is in accord with the person's values.

I have suggested that ACT is of interest since there are points of connection with Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy As well as defining this approach to therapy as an 'experiential' approach to behaviour change ACT includes a number of strategies or processes that would seem to closely mirror the techniques associated with Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy. For example, one technique within ACT is the replacement of avoidance (of difficult psychological content, such as painful emotions) with acceptance of such content. This is combined with exercises designed to build a person's self-concept as an observer of experience alongside the notion that the observer self, also known as 'self-as context' can be experienced as much more robust and able to hold or contain disparate and conflicting experiences such as different and difficult thoughts and emotions. Clients are encouraged to experience the self as similar to a chessboard that 'holds' the pieces in a game of chess and does not take sides. From the perspective of the chessboard, so to speak, the outcome of a game is not fundamental, and all outcomes can be lived with. This notion of 'self-as-context' or 'observer-self' is remarkably similar to Cornell's idea of self-in-presence. In a similar way, the idea of acceptance within ACT is almost identical to Cornell's re-working of Focusing as an approach to the 'radical acceptance of everything'. It should be noted that acceptance in ACT and in Cornell's Focusing is not intended to indicate acceptance of external events or circumstances that might need to be changed.

I would also identify valuable points of similarity between the Focusing techniques of 'clearing a space' and Cornell's innovative uses of language and the ACT technique of defusion (1999:148-178, 2012:243-269). When a person defuses from a thought or idea, they use techniques that help them to experience their thinking as 'words and images' rather than as definitive facts that they *must* respond to (that would be an example of 'fused' thinking). The technique of defusion is fundamentally the same as the notion of

'decentering' in MBCT and MBSR. Within ACT, defused thoughts are not negated or proven wrong, but are experienced as psychological 'events' that can be observed and, perhaps, learned from, without the seemingly inevitable process of difficult emotion or problematic behaviour having to occur in consequence. One example of a defusion technique is the 'milk, milk, milk' exercise in which the word 'milk' is considered, and any associations noted (perhaps colour, texture and taste) and then the word milk is repeated for one to two minutes and the effects noted. People report that all sense of the experiential meaning of the word is lost temporarily and only the actual sound remains. People might then be asked to repeat the exercise with a negative thought such as 'I'm bad'.

These techniques would seem to be aiming at the same experience of a person's thoughts that Gendlin was after when he created clearing a space (Hayes et al 2012:248-250). There are also a range of other defusion exercises including the suggestion that a person might re-phrase their thought as 'I notice that I am having the thought that…I am worthless, or un-loveable'. Harris suggests that clients can test out the strategy by repeating a harmful critical thought to their self and noticing their emotional reactions, then using the defused version of the thought and noticing their responses a second time. He suggests that this should alter one's relationship with the thought and create a sense of distance from it, without making it go away (Harris 2008:47-8). A further strategy is for the client to repeat disturbing thoughts in the voice of a cartoon character. According to ACT and in accord with McGavin's observations (Cornell 2007:61-68), it does not help to try to suppress a difficult thought, and so defusion and presence language aims to create acceptance of the thought whereby the sting of emotional pain may be drawn. I have offered some detail in my description of defusion since I consider that there are important points of similarity with some Focusing-oriented Therapy strategies and that comparison helps to clarify what Focusing-oriented Therapy techniques are aiming for. For example, clearing a space has three aims (p. 13 above) but, as Cornell observed, none of those aims seem particularly congruent with Focusing as an act of acceptance. When clearing a space is seen as, in part, a defusion strategy, however, then it can be seen as a device that facilitates acceptance and as highly compatible with the Focusing process. Review of the analysed data in chapter four will clarify the effect of clearing a space for research participants. I would also suggest that clearing a space does not work for people when they are 'fused' with the content and so the

issue does not allow itself to move away to a different 'place'. The ACT technique of defusion has, therefore, a useful function in terms of extending and clarifying a key part of the teaching model that is used for Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy.

As with other therapeutic orientations, there is research data to support ACT strategies as well as the approach as a whole. There is also research data that supports the ACT perspective on dysfunctional processes. Hayes provides considerable evidence that experiential avoidance does not work: he surveys research data in relation to the following: physical pain, physical trauma, anxiety, childhood abuse and trauma, job performance, substance abuse and depression that seems to show that: 'the person's willingness to experience whatever emotion is present is of central importance to many areas of human psychological functioning.' (2005:46-7). This research data supports the use of willingness or acceptance interventions within ACT and also within Focusing-oriented Therapy because it provides good reasons to believe that avoidance and non-acceptance does not work for people. These findings also create useful links with the evidence base for mindfulness-based Interventions wherein a key finding is that mindfulness practices facilitate exposure to difficult emotions and physical sensations with the suggestion that such exposure enables participants to cope and flourish and engage in constructive valued behaviours (Baer 2009).

I suggested above that comparison with ACT can provide direction for the development of a viable integrative model of Focusing-oriented Therapy. ACT as based, as described above, on six core processes that, together, make up the ACT approach to therapeutic change. Actual specific interventions are seen as fitting into this framework. A guideline for integration is provided by Bach & Moran's suggestion that specific interventions can be inserted into the relevant part of the model (2008). They will, for example, review evidence-based strategies, judge where they fit into the ACT model of flexibility and insert strategies into the model. This then means that each intervention potentially contributes to psychological flexibility rather than offering something discrete and unrelated to the overall integrated picture. An example is exposure strategies. These would function in ACT as willingness exercises, and also as committed actions in line with chosen values. Exposure exercises would, therefore, be integrated into the model in line with the above functional ideas. This strategy of working out an integrated model of therapeutic change within which

different techniques can be 'inserted' offers a good approach to integration in Focusing-oriented Therapy also, where a large range of techniques were reviewed and need to be understood in an integrated way. Purton provides quite a good example of this (2004).

A further point of comparison is the status that is accorded to the values part of the ACT model. I have emphasised that the notion that 'committed action' in ACT is seen as being in the service of chosen values. Gendlin had included two chapters in his book on Focusing-oriented Therapy, one on Values and one on his concept of the life-forward direction (1996:259-275). As with Friedman's observation about the chapter on the therapeutic relationship in Focusing-oriented Therapy, these chapters come near the end of the book. The dialogue with ACT rather suggests that these sections might be more significant than their location implies. It is possible that values work in Focusing-oriented Therapy should be significant in relation to the task of Focusing with difficult personal responses and difficult personal material from the past i.e., that values can dignify and offer purpose to the harder aspects of therapy and personal change.

I have argued that ACT is a surprising dialogue partner with Focusing-oriented Therapy but that the dialogue can offer insight into psychotherapy integration, clarity over techniques and strategies and a wider evidence base for analysing the problems and hindrances to personal change as well as the techniques that are proposed. This dialogue has been fruitful in these regards, in spite of the fact that ACT derives from such a different tradition to Focusing-oriented Therapy.

In this literature review, I have examined key texts in relation to Focusing-oriented Therapy. These included Gendlin's books, and books by Purton and Friedman that carried forward the approach to Focusing that Gendlin had pioneered. I have critically examined Gendlin's model of bodily experiencing and have questioned the resources that he provides for therapists to deliver an integrative model of therapy in spite of admiring the breadth of strategy avenues that he offered. I argued that Purton's reformulation of clients' personal difficulties as different kinds of experiencing was an insightful contribution to the notion of integration and that it showed how Focusing itself could be a highly varied mode of attending to a wide variety of different human responses. In a slightly similar vein, Friedman

shows that the felt sense and Focusing itself can be experienced in a different kind of way and still be recognisably Focusing.

My examination of the work of Cornell & McGavin offered a very different take on what Focusing can 'look like' and I agreed that radical acceptance is a fundamentally correct approach to the task of establishing a Focusing relationship with one's difficulties. Cornell's innovative language practices showed the key role that language plays in the Focusing process. Examining key texts from the EFT tradition offered clarity on how an integrative experiential therapy can function. EFT also displays an evidence base for an integrated therapy package that includes Focusing. EFT is based on the idea of emotion and the concept of the emotion scheme. I critically examined those ideas and concluded that emotion can be a useful integrative concept when understood in a way that accords with regular linguistic usage, shed of its confusing theoretical baggage. I discussed the practical and theoretical contributions of mindfulness-based Interventions and argued that the process which clients undergo is fundamentally similar in mindfulness and Focusing in spite of the fundamental contextual differences between the practices. Finally, ACT proved a distinctively different dialogue partner that provided clarity and direction in the task of showing what Focusing-oriented Therapy techniques are and what they are seeking to achieve. ACT also provides a good model of how an integrated therapeutic approach can be a coming together of different processes and can incorporate different evidence-based techniques and strategies.

In the next two chapters, I discuss the methodological framework for this study and then review the analysed data that will allow me to respond more definitely to the research aims identified in chapter one.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

In chapter one, I explained the background to this research study of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy and detailed aims that guided my research. In chapter two, the substantive literature that has informed my understanding of this area of practice was reviewed. I developed an understanding of the main debates and issues within the field and substantiated the claim that the theory and practice of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy requires rigorous qualitative research that will address the aims that I identified.

3.1 Research Design

I have identified the following research aims in relation to Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy:

1.To develop the theory of Experiential Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy in light of criticisms and limitations raised by theoreticians and practitioners of other related approaches to therapy.

2) To evaluate Focusing-oriented Therapy as an integrative model for therapy.

3) If appropriate, develop a theory and practice for the integration of therapy.

4) To evaluate and develop methods of counsellor education that incorporate insights from the practice of Experiential Focusing.

As discussed in chapter two, Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy derive from the phenomenology tradition in philosophy (Gendlin 1973). I would argue that conducting a phenomenological analysis of these experiences accords with the fundamental insights that they seek to disseminate. In my research I have been guided by a particular phenomenologically oriented qualitative approach: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA: Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012). I selected IPA because it is a phenomenological methodology. Phenomenology is a tradition in philosophy that prioritises human experience as holistic, with emotion, cognition, behaviour and physical experience as interrelated phenomena. Moran described it thus:

> Phenomenology is best understood as a radical anti-traditional style of philosophising, which emphasises the attempt to get to the truth of matters, to

> describe *phenomena*, in the broadest sense as whatever appears in the manner in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer. As such, phenomenology's first step is to seek to avoid all misconstructions and impositions placed on experience in advance, whether these are drawn from religious or cultural traditions, from everyday common sense, or indeed, from science itself. Explanations are not to be imposed before the phenomena have been understood from within. (Moran 2000:4)

I would argue that these emphases are especially relevant for examining the experience of personal change within counselling.

I selected IPA because it is an interpretative methodology. Phenomenological inquiry has been described as an examination of experience 'in the way that it occurs, and in its own terms' (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2012:12). I would argue that human experience as 'it occurs' and 'in its own terms' is an interpreted phenomenon (i.e., human persons do not just experience things, but come to understand them in diverse ways on the basis of a process of interpretation) and that a process of interpretation on the part of the researcher is necessary to grasp the experience(s) that research participants describe.

I selected IPA because it emphasises the experience and perspective of the individual person alongside themes that recur among different research participants. This idiographic emphasis, in contrast to the prioritising of nomothetic inquiry, means that significant data that only occurs within one data item can be prioritised if it is 'intrinsically interesting' (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2012:31).

I reviewed and evaluated other methodologies such as Grounded Theory (Charmaz 2014), other phenomenological research methodologies such as that advocated by Giorgi (Giorgi & Giorgi 2009:26-52) and the method of Thematic Analysis favoured by Braun & Clarke (2013). Grounded theory methods do not favour review of literature before collection and analysis of data, which did not seem to be a realistic (or even appropriate) strategy for this research. In addition, Grounded Theory appears to work with the questionable idea that there is, typically, *a* theory that is grounded in the data rather than a theory or theories that one might develop upon the basis of a process of interpretation of data that is collected for a

purpose (Thomas & James 2006:767–795). In addition, Grounded Theorists adhere to the notion of continuing data collection and analysis until theoretical saturation occurs, which means that such studies are often rather larger than the study planned herein. I discuss Giorgi's alternative approach to phenomenological research below but would summarise my choice of IPA as being based on a preference for an interpretative approach to phenomenology alongside the commitment to description of experiential data. Braun & Clarke offer a nuanced account of Thematic Analysis (TA) as a method that is not a methodology. I favoured IPA since TA is essentially a method that works with themes that recur across a data set, often a large data set, and I wished to retain the option to prioritise themes or ideas that only arose in one data item if it was 'inherently interesting'. My judgement was that IPA seemed to offer all that the other approaches were providing without the limitations that inhered in their accounts.

Smith and colleagues (2012) recommend in-depth semi-structured interviews as the ideal method for research with an experiential focus. For this reason, I selected face-to-face semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection to permit scope for participants to talk about what was important to them while also allowing the possibility of comparison and the identification of themes from different participants. I generated what is a relatively large sample in IPA terms, Smith et al (2012) recommend between three and six participants in order to allow focus on the specifics of particular cases, however, I selected a sample of 11 research participants, because I was interested in identifying common themes in Focusing practitioners' experiences as well as concentrating on the detail of individual experiences. One might seek to draw numerical conclusions ('a majority of respondents thought this…') but approaching data from human subjects with the collection of numerical data in mind risks missing much significant material (see the critique of nomothetic enquiry in Smith, Harré & Langenhove 1996:56-69).

Practising qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews has meant that I have been able to gain some insight into the psychological world of research participants and, as such, I have been able to reveal something of the 'world' that is shared in common. I also consider that how research participants speak and how they think reveals something of the dominant discourses that inhere in human language and human social practices – i.e., beliefs and

ideas, prejudices and dominant impressions. They also reveal something of how their beliefs and impressions are unique to them and are, perhaps, fresh discoveries or new ideas and impressions (rather than just being repetition or recycling of older ideas and practices).

The appropriate epistemology for practising qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews is critical realism (Braun and Clarke 2013:26-28) in that qualitative data can be seen as revealing the typical ideas and assumptions that people have, but also psychological and sociological 'truth'. However, I would argue that this cannot be seen as a demonstrable claim. For there to be a claim of this kind, one would need to be able to observe reality outside of one's language and concepts and observe one's language and concepts and compare the two things to see if the concepts faithfully mapped onto reality. I would argue that one can never do this in an absolute sense because one always begins with a reality which is already described in words and concepts. Within the context of IPA, this means that research is understood as an hermeneutic exercise in which researchers begin their work with what Martin Heidegger terms 'their fore-conception (prior experiences, assumptions, preconceptions)' (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2012:25) and they should then allow the encounter with the new data (from semi-structured interviews) to 'make the 'scientific theme secure by working out the fore-structures in terms of the things themselves' (Heidegger 1962/1927:195, cited in Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2012:25).

I am aware that IPA is a rather specific version of a phenomenological approach to qualitative research (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2012:45, 200-201) and that there are other phenomenological research strategies and styles. The longest established approach to phenomenological psychology is that of Amadeo Giorgi (1997). Giorgi & Giorgi (2009:26-52) describe how their version of 'the phenomenological method, adapted for scientific purposes, can help psychology make new discoveries about the experiential world in psychologically significant ways' (2009:26). They argue that the aim of such research is to 'capture as closely as possible the way in which the phenomenon is experienced within the context in which the experience takes place' and that 'phenomenological analysis attempts to discern the psychological essence of the phenomenon.' (2009:28). Giorgi & Giorgi follow Husserl's 'method' for carrying out such a project including the use of what they term 'the scientific psychological reduction' in which direct or indirect prior knowledge of the

phenomenon is acknowledged and placed to one side and the researcher is directed to concentrate on 'careful description', which is seen as 'much harder to do than to say…' since '…unexpected biases lurk everywhere, especially in everyday life or with the 'common sense' attitude.' (2009:33). This is, therefore, an approach to phenomenological research that is avowedly descriptive in its intent and also aims to be a rigorous scientific method, including, for example, the 'ability to check the results of a study or to replicate it' Giorgi argues that this ability 'is a scientific criterion, and phenomenologically grounded science accepts that criterion' (Giorgi 2010:7). With this criterion in mind, this type of phenomenological research follows a structured approach to descriptive data analysis that the reader can check and should, in principle, be able to replicate. It focuses on generalisability in description in order to capture the essence of the phenomenon. With this focus in mind, one would typically look for more than one account and aim to grasp the essence of a phenomenon rather than concentrating on the unique way that an individual person experiences it.

From the perspective of this approach, Giorgi has criticised other phenomenological methods, such as IPA, for lacking the essential criteria for a scientific method, including replicability and for the lack of clarity about exactly how the methods should be followed (Giorgi 2010). Smith (2010) responded forcefully to Giorgi's arguments:

> Personally, I do not see replicability as an appropriate referent for judging most qualitative approaches to psychology (content analysis might be an exception). Qualitative research is a complex, interactive, dynamic process and it is not clear exactly what one would be expecting to replicate. (Smith 2010:189)

He argues that 'checking' is a process that is applicable in phenomenological research (even if replicability is not) but that the checking process is more complex and demanding than Giorgi would seem to suggest. Beyond the specifics of the disagreement between Giorgi and Smith, there lies the broader point that IPA is not a *descriptive* approach to phenomenology in the particular way that Giorgi requires. Following Heidegger's modification of Husserl's phenomenological method (1962), IPA is an explicitly *interpretative* methodology, wherein descriptive comments within data analysis are always understood within a hermeneutic framework, alongside more obviously interpretative comments as different kinds of interpretation. For example, Larkin, Watts & Clifton (2006) discuss what interpretation can

offer with respect to a study of relationship breakup (Clifton, Larkin & Watts 2001), emphasising that a consciously interpretative process allows for a dialogue with other contexts of knowledge. I would argue that while IPA's interpretative emphasis is somewhat controversial in relation to the descriptive phenomenology of Giorgi, it offers the possibility of combining the benefits of 'description' alongside the richness and creativity of 'interpretation'. The creators of IPA explicitly reference different influences within the phenomenological tradition, including Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, i.e., it is not based just on Husserl's method (Smith et al 2012:11-21). In addition, IPA combines phenomenology with hermeneutics and with idiography as key ideas. This diversity means that IPA is something of a hybrid approach, when compared with Giorgi (although it is not poorer for that), hence my observation that it is somewhat controversial. However, as Larkin, Clifton & Watts (2006) argue, in relation to their study of relationship breakup, the combination of phenomenology with hermeneutics (or rather their Heideggerian understanding of phenomenology *as* hermeneutic) facilitates study of the complexity of human experience within its environing context. Certainly, from my perspective, an *interpretative* phenomenological methodology which emphasises the embodied, situated and active character of human experience and human cognition (Larkin, Eatough & Osborn 2011) accords well with the aims of this study of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy within the context of counsellor training.

IPA is a 'named and claimed' methodology. Its creators describe it as: 'a comprehensive framework which includes theoretical underpinnings behind it and guidelines for research design (sampling, methods of data collection and analysis)' (Pietkiewicz, I. & Smith, J.A. (2012) within health psychology and more widely. I am keen to draw on the whole broad tradition that is referenced in key texts on Phenomenology (such as those surveyed in Moran 2000, 2002 and Kåufer 2021) while retaining a key focus on the meanings and ideas that arise inductively from the data that is the central focus of my study. As a phenomenological analysis this study is based on the idea that one can use language to capture and describe what people's experience is like. There is, in addition, a link that can be made between the phenomenological notion that experience should be understood and described in its own terms – going 'back to the things themselves' – and the priority that is accorded within some traditions of philosophy to so-called ordinary language (Wittgenstein

1953, Austin 1979). In a similar way, this emphasis accords with the priority that is accorded to ordinary human action and interaction in some traditions of sociology such as ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 2016). These diverse traditions share a focus on the ways in which people themselves describe or make sense of their experiences. In this regard, technical or theoretical language is seen as functional to the extent that it can connect with and illuminate people's experience in ways that they can come to understand.

I wish to examine peoples' experiences when they engage in Focusing. I also wish to understand how they make sense of that experience. I am, therefore, engaging in what has been termed a 'hermeneutic of empathy' alongside a 'hermeneutic of questioning' (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2012:36) in the sense that I have collected what I hoped would be valuable data from a phenomenological perspective, which I then interpreted within a broader framework of understanding and ideas.

3.2 Research Sample/Research Participants

With these concepts in mind, I wanted to be able to interview people who had or who potentially had a thorough exposure to Focusing. I invited students of Focusing within a university counselling programme to attend an interview where they would be asked to speak in their own terms of their experience of Focusing. I had been a lecturer who had been involved in teaching these students and there was, therefore, a prior relationship. I explained that there might be some specific topics that I might wish to ask about, but that I would only ask about those if they didn't arise naturally in the course of the interview. What I had in mind was that these students had learned about Focusing as a taught procedure in the context of a broad curriculum that included the range of different or differentiated areas of 'experiencing' that Purton had written about in his book on the focusing-oriented approach to person-centred therapy (Purton 2004). I judged that it would be useful to gather data on the students' whole experience of learning Focusing including all of these different elements but only in so far as they wished to comment on such things from their own perspective. With this agenda in mind, I conducted semi-structured interviews. The interviewees understood from the research Information sheet that I provided (see appendix three) that there would be a single interview that would take up to 50-60 minutes. I did not

propose (and seek participant agreement for) additional interviews if there were further areas that I wished to explore and, in retrospect, such a proposal would have been useful. In retrospect, it would have been good to have allowed the possibility of engaging in what Grounded Theorists term 'theoretical sampling' i.e., returning to 'the field' in order to access further data that could assist an emergent understanding (Charmaz 2014:192-224). In a different way, it would, I think, have been valuable to have collected data from students of Focusing within other settings and contexts. My aim was to collect data that yielded depth and breadth, but a broader sample might have added to the latter element.

I have explained that data for this research study was gathered from a very specific purposive sample of people who had learned Focusing and would be able to speak of their experience and offer an insight into that experience and into the learning process that they had undertaken. Other students of Focusing might have been participants in other Focusing trainings, however, I judged that the students of Focusing that I had identified and invited to interview had been exposed to a broad approach to Focusing that drew on a variety of Focusing teachers including Gendlin (Gendlin 2007, 1996), Purton (2004, 2007), Cornell (1996 & 2005), Friedman (1982 & 2007) and their training also drew on Emotion-Focused Therapy (Elliott, R., Watson, J.C., Goldman, R.N. & Greenberg, L. S. (2004)). This meant that the students' experience of Focusing was, potentially, relatively non-sectarian. In addition, these students' exposure to Focusing came within a professional therapy training context. This created the possibility of my gaining further learning from the training context and from the particular kind of class that students attended. This class offered a mutually supportive and permissive learning environment. This context provided a useful point of comparison with the usual therapy learning context where people (clients or practitioners) practice being with their own experiences and practice new personal development skills in a 1:1 or group context and there is typically no particular learning theory being practiced.

This context of the broad learning in Focusing that this cohort of university students had been exposed to, suggested that a purposive sample of students from the professional therapy training courses would be a good option. I wrote to all of the students within a particular 'year group' and sent information on the research and the proposed interviews. Twelve students replied and gave their consent to be interviewed. Eleven interviews were

conducted face-to-face and one interview was conducted via skype. This latter interview did not yield an audible recording and so the data was eliminated from the study. All research participants had completed a post-graduate Diploma in Person-centred Counselling which included a fortnightly class devoted to Focusing and regular meetings with a Focusing 'partner'. Two of these research participants (from an earlier 'cohort') also completed a Post-graduate certificate course in Focusing-oriented Therapy which extended their learning in relation to Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy. One of the twelve had a role as a trainee trainer in the year following her post-graduate Diploma course and assisted with delivery of the Focusing part of the course. Of the twelve, six students went on to complete a dissertation in order to qualify for an MA degree in counselling. Eight research participants were originally from the UK, one research participant was from the United States originally, one was from Australia and one was originally from Italy. Because I wished to make best use of the interview time, I did not collect demographic data other than brief details that emerged in the interviews and seemed relevant to interpretation of the data. In addition, I had known the students reasonably well during their studies. The age demographic for the courses from which research participants were drawn was early to middle age. Many research participants had longish prior careers, for example in education. One research participants had previously worked as a clergyperson. One had been an archaeologist and one had worked as a paramedic. It seemed that all students were working towards a fairly radical change in their career – towards counselling. Certainly, the personal development (alongside the professional development) aspects of counsellor training seemed very important for all research participants.

Interviews typically lasted around an hour. I have explained that the interviews were semi-structured. This meant that I enquired about the participants' experience of Focusing and I tried to follow their responses with curiosity and with a willingness that any reply would be acceptable. Having explained that there might be some potential areas of discussion that I might wish to ask about if they had not come up in the normal course of the interview, I then tried to follow the meanings that were expressed, sometimes summarising what I had heard and checking that I had understood. I considered that this style of listening and responding was appropriate to the research methodology and the research aim. I was also

aware that my approach shared something with the practice of listening and responding within counselling.

3.3 Issues of Validity and Reliability

A particular concern as I undertook the research for this project is the general issue of validity and reliability in regard to my findings. It has been suggested by Smith et al (2012:179-183) that IPA studies should be assessed using Yardley's four broad principles of:

(1) sensitivity to context,

(2) commitment and rigour,

(3) transparency and coherence and

(4) impact and importance (Yardley 2015 in Smith (ed) 2015)

With regard to these principles, I have responded to these four criteria as I have conducted my research and in terms of how the research findings are presented and analysed. I have created the opportunity for the reader to assess the research using these criteria partly in the way that the data analysis is presented i.e., the reader should be able to understand how meaning has been made as they consider how themes are grounded in analysed data and interrelated with appropriate data quotations. At a more interpretative level, the reader can consider whether the interpretations that are made mesh with and are true to the complexity of the data extracts presented. Alongside the presentation of the results of the data collection and analysis in chapter four, I have included two interview transcripts in appendix one and appendix two, which can be consulted for purposes of comparison with the analysed data.

3.4 Data Collection and Data Analysis

I have described the way that I conducted semi-structured interviews with eleven research participants. These interviews yielded data in the form of eleven transcriptions. During the transcribing process, I aimed to create a transcript that was verbally accurate and also captured incidental responses by the research participants such as laughter or tears. These transcripts were subjected to an interpretive phenomenological analysis using the model

proposed by Smith et al (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012:79-107). This entailed a 6-step process which began (step 1) with data familiarisation and immersion in which the text would be carefully analysed and (step 2) commented on with an eye for content, significant language use and key concepts and ideas. I was familiar with the practice of textual interpretation from within the context of biblical criticism, in which a text would be analysed in its own terms prior to any kind of comparison with other texts within the Bible or other texts from the environing culture (Nineham 1986, 1978). This earlier learning accords well with IPA's idiographic emphasis upon the generation of emergent themes and then superordinate themes (steps 3 & 4) at the level of the individual interview prior to comparison and refinement of themes across interviews (steps 5 & 6). Smith (in Smith, Harré & Langenhove (eds) 1995:20-21) has suggested that such analysis could yield insight into a research participant's perspective that might offer opportunities for: 1) classification and typology (in regard to a person's ideas and perspectives), 2) development of theory, 3) understanding of complexity and ambiguity in regard to key themes and/or 4) a focus on life history. I have borne all of these levels of analysis in mind in regard to the analysis of my data. Overall, though, I have tried to develop an understanding of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy and the human life processes that people undergo as they engage in these practices. The understanding that arose from 11 specific interviews has informed my understanding of Counselling, Psychotherapy and self-help and has suggested directions for further development and change into the future.

3.5 Ethical Considerations in the Research

For this research project, I sought and received ethical approval from my university's ethics committee and also ensured that the research process accorded with ethical guidelines associated with the professional counselling body (the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, BACP) to which I belong (and which was an accrediting body for the main professional counsellor training programme that the university was running at that time). A key point of reference for ethical reflection were the BERA guidelines for research in Educational settings (British Educational Research Association, 2018). I provided prospective research participants with an information sheet about my research (see appendix three) and sought participants' signed consent for the interview to take place and

to be recorded and transcribed. The consent form sought permission from research participants for their data to be used and specified to them that:

> information will be stored securely, and your identity/information will only be disclosed with your permission, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be identified in these publications. In this instance, data will be stored for a period of 10 years and then destroyed.

In regard to use of data, BERA guidelines require that data will be fully anonymised, including anonymisation of the institution where the students conducted their studies. In the presentation of results of the data analysis in chapter four, I have frequently quoted from the transcribed interviews. For this purpose, I provided pseudonyms for all research participants. Access to this thesis will be restricted for a specified period and the version that is submitted to the university library will also be redacted.

I considered that there were a number of other ethical issues that arose in this project. I thought that there was the possibility that some students might feel in some sense obligated to attend and/or perhaps feel obligated to provide 'positive' feedback on their experience of Focusing out of loyalty to me or for some other reason. The information sheet made clear that people did not *have* to give consent to be interviewed, that there would be no consequence to their non-attendance and that their 'decision whether to participate will not affect…[their]…current or future relationship with the researcher or anyone else at the University'. When I began the interviews, I explained that I was interested in whatever their views were about Focusing and about their learning experience. As they expressed their views, I typically tried to reflect back and/or summarise what they had said so that they could check that I had heard their views as they intended. In this way, I hoped to convey that I wanted to hear their views whatever they were (I.e., I tried not to ignore or edit negative content in my responses or exaggerate and emphasise positive content). With these formal and informal methods, I tried to avoid this negative research outcome and by practising a hermeneutic of questioning I hoped to spot instances of research participants communicating views that were not entirely and sincerely their own.

A second ethical dilemma was the possibility that the research interviews would bring to light content that was emotionally challenging in a way that research participants were not

adequately prepared for and had not freely consented to (since they had not anticipated the exposure of such material). This issue was discussed in the participant information sheet that I provided, and I was alert to this possibility. One participant found discussion of the 'inner critic' emotionally upsetting in a way that she was not surprised by, but had not, I think, anticipated. This student explained that this was okay for her and indeed the topic of the 'inner critic' was one that she had found very helpful in class and was the subject of further study for her dissertation. However, while touching on emotionally challenging material was natural and appropriate for this project, I did not want the interviews to be destabilising for research participants and was alert for this possibility and for the need to provide support and guidance for further help if people required this.

A third ethical concern was the general one, of the need for me to exercise rigour, discipline and sensitivity in the process of data analysis. This is a general point that relates to the issue of validity in qualitative research but also, I think, pertains to the need to honour the people who gave their time and attention as research participants and explored their deepest emotions and experiences (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, 2019, British Educational Research Association, 2018)

As the author of this project, I have been the sole researcher. I conceived of the research topic and conducted the face-to-face interviews. I then analysed the resultant data. This meant that the research process created a dual relationship between my role as lecturer for student counsellors, some of whom then became research subjects. I have discussed above some of the ethical implications that this dual relationship threw up for my project. In addition to my role as lecturer and researcher in a dual relationship with students some of whom became research subjects, there is a further dimension to my role in that my role as lecturer was not only or entirely that of a tutor for an established counselling programme. The Focusing-oriented Therapy programme at the university that the students attended was a relatively new programme, having been established by Campbell Purton in 2005 as a post-graduate diploma programme and recast as a post-graduate certificate programme in 2009 with me as Course Director. This role entailed trying to think through how Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy could best be described and understood (in 2008/9) and how the development of ideas that Purton's work had initiated in his 2004 book and extended in his

2007 book, could be integrated into a programme of teaching and practice. When this process began for me in 2008/9, I thought of myself as being part of an action research project (Elliott 2001). I thought that this entailed creating and then reviewing a teaching programme that was not (and could never be) set in stone by loyalty to the ideas that Purton had elaborated in his successful and well-received texts. My sense was that the situation required using Purton's ideas alongside key texts from Gendlin himself: other Focusing writers, such as Cornell (1996 & 2005) and Friedman (1982 & 2007): alongside research and ideas from related fields such as Emotion-focused Therapy (Greenberg, Eliot & Rice 1993) and recent research and ideas from within the Cognitive Behaviour Therapy tradition such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (e.g. Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson 1999 and 2012) and Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (Segal, Williams & Teasdale 2002) in order to initiate and carry forward a process of learning, adaptation and change. This conception of my lecturing and course director role meant that the research interviews that I undertook had the additional dimension of asking former students to speak about and, to some extent, evaluate a teaching programme that I had created and that was, in addition, an evaluation of something that I had inherited and tried to recast. This meant that I had an additional responsibility to ask for and respect fully the individual research participants' phenomenological world and avoid imposing any meaning that served my own original agenda as lecturer. This is another example of a dual relationship between me as lecturer and as researcher and of the need to be clear as to my role in this context.

In this chapter, I have discussed the methodological framework that guided the research for this thesis. A key part of this has been the necessity for an appropriate phenomenological mode of enquiry and also the need for my adherence to established and sensitively applied ethical guidelines. In the next chapter, I present the analysed data that the methodology enabled.

Chapter Four: Results of Data Analysis

In chapter one, I presented the 4 research aims that guided me in the conduct of this research study. I wished to explore research participants' experience in order to gain a sense of the following:

1.To develop the theory of Experiential Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy in light of criticisms and limitations raised by theoreticians and practitioners of other related approaches to therapy.

2) To evaluate Focusing-oriented Therapy as an integrative model for therapy.

3) If appropriate, develop a theory and practice for the integration of therapy.

4) To evaluate and develop methods of counsellor education that incorporate insights from the practice of Experiential Focusing.

Therefore, in this chapter, I discuss in detail the key themes and ideas that have arisen from analysis of the data collected for this study. As discussed in chapter three, 11 counselling students from a university centre for counselling studies volunteered to be interviewed in order that I could ascertain their experience of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy. The interview transcripts were subjected to Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis which results in the identification of superordinate themes that emerged from the data. 'Emergence' in this context means that such themes were not identified in advance of the interview process as possible questions or points of enquiry but were developed on the basis of topics that were raised by research participants.

I have grouped emergent themes together into six super-ordinate themes that arose from interpretative phenomenological analysis of the data.

Super-ordinate Theme 1: Change arises mysteriously from within

Sub-theme 1.1 <u>Focusing as a self-propelled feeling process – dynamics and change</u>

In a number of ways, research participants described Focusing as what I have termed a 'self-propelled feeling process'. Greta described a particular Focusing experience as being like 'meeting God'. She goes on to report that:

> …I do recall that very clearly. It was um shocking. You know...when you encounter that kind of reality it's not a, is not an easy trip. It is, it's a glimpse of something that is, ah, horrendously large. You know it is shattering because, okay on the one hand it's the largest scope of consciousness, while on the other, it is scary, it's really scary to see that thing, to see that…that thing that is [that kind of larger reality] large, it's, it's, it is not only large, it's incredibly powerful and so you know it's like meeting the wrath of God.

She goes on:

> …it can kind of leave you speechless. It's like, you know, Job [yes]. Yeah. it's, uh, 'okay that's far enough', you know, it's 'stay there, stay', yeah I'm free, my little legal eagle and, ah, pretend that everything is fine or everything is under control whilst on the other hand, I am also carrying that kind of reality that is totally beyond my comprehension. It's what Otto would call the, you know, the fascinans...whatever he calls it...The my...mysterium tremendum and fascinans, Rudolph Otto, when he talks about religious experience.

Using terminology derived from Rudolf Otto, Greta describes this experience as being like encountering the 'mysterium tremendum et fascinans' (Otto 1958) i.e., a 'non-rational, non-sensory experience or feeling whose primary and immediate object is outside the self' which can both attract and repel the human person. Greta reported that she had some familiarity with this experience and was surprised that this should occur within the Focusing context. She had spoken of Focusing as an experience with which she was familiar from different contexts, including the practice of translation and in her role as a fine art restorer. She reported of Focusing that:

> …it has been around all…I think, all my life…as a fine art conservator it was really much around, [as a] fine art conservator, you know, I used to do it. I was a fine art conservator and restorer, and I did it for nearly 20 years, then I used it in my creation of my wearable art and then when I became a translator for National Geographic that I would translate from English into Italian. That thing of checking was absolutely paramount. Because I had to keep this sense of a completely different culture, had

> to translate a culture into another culture, you know, that make sense of an American culture, National Geographic, into an Italian culture and so where finding the right…it's not only about words because you have to give, it's about atmosphere, It's about, you know, it's larger than words that was, you know, that was what I was used to do all the time because otherwise, you can't…

Within these contexts, Focusing described the process by which she would check the correctness or appropriateness of particular words and phrases against her bodily feeling of what she was engaged in. The particular experience that she describes in Otto's language had a surprising unbidden quality that, Greta considered, offered quicker access to a transformative spiritual experience.

Jasmine described the experience of a concern intruding itself in an unbidden way. She described practising the Focusing technique of clearing a space, in which different concerns that were conscious would be imaginatively placed to one side. The focuser would then ask his or herself what needed attention in that session. The intention was that an issue that was most pressing or pertinent would emerge for attention. Jasmine described realising quite spontaneously that a particular experience, from 10 years before, needed attention and the process of experiencing and expressing emotions that had not been expressed at the time of the original event almost took on a life of its own:

> We started off in a very structured, 'let's clear a space', I very much focus on, you know, centring ourselves, quiet breathing, you know, feel the floor, you know, all of that, and then see what's coming. But then, it almost, like, took over, I couldn't say there's this fixed step or stages. It just went 'gosh I think I need to explore what went on here, I need to talk about this' and the anger, I just felt…and It just almost snowballed, it sort of…expressing my emotions, my fears, my thoughts…

Jasmine reported that the issue was resolved after that session. My concern in this description is to highlight the element of unbidden self-propelled feeling that seemed to have driven the experience and to have given it the directionality that it possessed.

Tessa expressed surprise that her Focusing partner would make a prior choice of what to focus on and commented that this contrasted with her own sense that she 'didn't know

what...[she]… was going to be Focusing on…it would, it would arrive'. She spoke of Focusing as:

> …letting your brain take a back seat and letting the image or the feeling somehow, by being with it. For me, I thought I would be one of the people who would put words, I'm a wordy person, so I thought I would be a person to put words to feelings, but I wasn't. What happened was I would end up with an image, not a metaphor but a shape, a colour, a shape and then by letting…by kind of looking at it almost…and then something about just let…letting it, looking at it, being with it, I would somehow come to an understanding, or some kind of resolution or a just, it moved me somehow to, to knowing something more about myself in this thing.

Here, also, there is a sense that the process of Focusing has a quality of not being consciously chosen but having its own momentum and direction.

Fiona describes a similar process:

> …there was this sense that when I started to do it, there was this real freedom that imagery would just come, um, really freely and totally unbidden, that I could just clear a space and then there would just be, a strong image would come. I've got a really good recollection of an early, probably one of the first sessions with my Focusing partner. I'd kind of cleared a space and just couldn't quite see what was there and there was this huge boulder, you know, and I had this image of a huge boulder which was actually really helpful. In the end it turned out that it and it was, it kind of represented ******* I think (laughs), not in a bad way, it seems really negative but it actually wasn't, it was sort of, it gave me a real shift somehow, seeing the boulder and kind of knowing and kind of really experiencing that boulder and feeling it and kind of getting to know what it was and it was warm and it was reliable and it was kind of kind of, it was a support to me rather than anything in the way. There was a real shift in the kind of process, even in visualising it and then coming to know what it was.

Gendlin suggests that all experience has a quality of 'implying' which leads into an 'occurring' (he suggests that every implying is an 'implying-into-occurring') (Gendlin 1997:60ff). In an earlier paper on the theory of personality change (1964), Gendlin had

written of the feeling aspects of counselling in ways that clarify how he views 'implying and occurring' in the therapy context:

> Once this feeling process has arisen, it continues even between the times the individual engages in the four-phase focusing process I have outlined. Thus, during the several days between two psychotherapy hours, the client may find important thoughts, feelings, memories, and insights "coming" to him. He may find a generalized "stirring," an inward "eventfulness," even without a specific symbolized content. Thus, the overall *feeling process* comes to be self-propelled and broader than just the four phases of focusing I have described (1964:100-148).

Gendlin's 1997 text (A Process Model) aims 'to create an alternative model in which we define living bodies in such a way that one of them can be ours' (1997:15). I have suggested above that an aim of this research is the construction of a middle-level theory that can account for the data of human experience described here, without going so far along the road of grand theory construction.

In chapter 2, above, I discussed the experience of students of mindfulness, whose attendance at 8-week mindfulness classes aims to create a different, decentred, relationship with problematic depressogenic thoughts and emotions. I observed that research in MBCT and MBSR demonstrated that the practice of body-centred meditation led to a transformed relationship with experiencing that affected a person's relationship with difficult thoughts, emotions and physical sensations and also seemed to create a surprisingly different sense of self (different 'mode of mind') that was not typically anticipated by participants. These experiences within mindfulness would seem to parallel the experience of research participants as they described their sense that Focusing offered a self-propelled feeling process.

Sub-theme 1.2 <u>Where did that come from?</u>

Theme two builds on the previous theme in which I argued that research participants had presented a picture of the Focusing process as having a direction and momentum of its own. Sub-theme two is posed as a question that most research participants asked as to the

source of the Focusing process and the source of the concerns and ideas that arose. For example, Fiona spoke of working with old 'unfinished' psychological material that seemed to require the expression of old not-expressed-at-the-time 30 years-old emotional responses. Quite unexpectedly, a person appeared, imaginatively, who was connected with the issue and who Fiona had not thought of for 30 years. This person was able to receive the current-but-older emotional response and the issue was resolved. Fiona wondered as to where the image of this person came from within herself: 'and yet just thinking about it and suddenly she was right there in front of me'. Fiona described the process as 'so it was perfect, it was kind of like so unexpected'. Fiona suggested that Focusing was a way into an experiential understanding of the person-centred idea of 'configurations of self' (Mearns & Thorne 2000) in which a person can explore diverse ways in which they experience themself, in this case, Fiona's 13-year-old self. She thought that, perhaps, connecting with that 'configuration' was what brought back the image of a significant person with whom she had unfinished business (and with whom she had had daily contact at the time). This raises the issue of the sort of concept of the 'unconscious' that is being used in this discussion. Fiona was clear that she had not been consciously aware of or thinking about the individual during the last 30 years, but something brought back a vivid awareness of that individual. Purton (2014:65-7) argues for what he terms a 'common-sense' view of self-deception and the unconscious, in which people can be thought of not being conscious of a person but could become conscious of them if their current situation changed in some way. On this account, Fiona was not conscious of the person who came into her awareness but became aware of her as a result of the Focusing process and her own experience of connecting with her 13-year-old self. What is not evident in Fiona's account is some idea of an unconscious realm within the self.

Another aspect of Fiona's narrative that would appear to pose a question as to the source of the ideas, experiences and insights that emerge during Focusing is the topic of dreams. Fiona describes a vivid and somewhat traumatic dream in which her Focusing partner's interpretative question had allowed her to unlock the meaning:

> She actually offered interpretations, which was amazing, and it just allowed me to sort of unlock it completely and I had no idea where she got the interpretation from but she, it obviously came to her and she offered it, so it was amazingly helpful

It would appear that there was a dream which was recalled, which contained numerous details and there is a process of reflection on the dream by Fiona and her Focusing partner. There is, then, a tentative interpretation of the content of the dream and, finally, there is a response by the focuser in which the dream is unlocked – and the interpretation is seen as being useful and insightful. In a similar way to Fiona's recollection of a person who she wished to express old, incomplete emotion to, this dream process had a serendipitous quality (for Fiona) which mirrors the sense that the process of Focusing is something that is hard to understand in terms of its origins.

In a related fashion, Fiona describes her sense that her Focusing process has an in-built safety aspect. She spoke of how:

> …there were points at which it felt like oh I…don't have enough energy for that, I'll just shelve it for a bit and then, you know, it'll come back when it needs to.

David linked this aspect of Focusing (the 'where does it come from?' aspect) to the person-centred concept of 'edge of awareness' (Mearns & Thorne 2000:175). Mearns & Thorne argue that therapist and client should give attention to client material that is not currently in awareness or integrated into their self-concept – material that is subceived (perceived in a subliminal way) – but that might prove useful and helpful to the client's process. David wondered…:

> …if maybe, in some distant way, I kind of knew what something was about, as well as on some level that I'm not... at the edge of my awareness almost or…through going in, via Focusing, I felt like it really came forward to me in a very clear way that I could, I kind of couldn't ignore, it became very present and obvious and somewhere or other you kind of, sort of knew. There's something that, something that feels kind of uncomfortable and I don't let it form maybe…though that means…or maybe I don't entirely know what it's about [no]. I've got a sense that it might be around this…something about…you know… and then it, and then it kind of like: 'Oh then there's a link'. It might be something that I hadn't even put the two and two together…

David refers to the discomfort that arises when something is not 'allowed to form' in his awareness, and also the sense of realisation that comes when he perceives a link with some area of his experience that he had not previously seen as related to the discomfort.

Rachel utilises the notion of instinct to try to tease out what it is she is contacting when she focuses:

> I think what Focusing's done for me is help me to get in touch with what is almost like an instinct thing, like my truest instincts are hidden from me if I try and work them out in my head, but I can feel them. Don't know if that makes any sense at all.

She goes on to describe a quality of emergence in relation to the Focusing process:

> …being with myself in that moment and I'm giving it some, some breathing space, some feeling space and letting things emerge without me having to, um, I was going to say without me having to use language.'. I guess what I mean by that is without me having to use the, use...the convenient shorthand of language...um, let me try and explain what I mean by that. So, I think I'm quite clever with words. I've used words a lot in in all my professions. And so, for me, it's natural, I think, if I just went along an intellectual route, I would come out with a nice, neatly packaged phrase as to how I'm feeling at the minute. So, what I do in Focusing is I kind of let go of that and let go of the clever language and I just let, I kind of let the language emerge.

In each of these data extracts, participants would appear to be describing a sense that they are contacting a source of new thoughts and emotions that is strange in relation to their previous experience of processing everyday events and relationships.

Sub-theme 1.3 <u>It is all about discovering who I really am</u>

Focusing as a self-help procedure is described by Gendlin's (1978/2007) and Cornell (1996) as a tool for personal change and the resolution of personal difficulties. This facet of practical action to examine and resolve issues that arise was similarly a feature of the descriptions offered by research participants in this study. In addition, some research participants offered a further level of analysis of their experience. David described the Focusing process as a stripping away of layers:

> …almost as you, as I look and understand one bit, it's like it shifts and then it becomes something, it's like the layers are coming off it and a kernel of what's there becomes more apparent and it feels so, I feel like I really own the kernel when I get

it, it's like: ‘ah, yeah, so that's, that bit of me in there’ [definitely me]. Yeah, it really does feel like I strip all that stuff away and then 'ah that's that really feels like a piece of me'.

He goes on:

…yeah there's something that feels very, very powerful about that, that central kind of thing. It's like it reaches to the core, the core of me somehow, in some way it touches into a part of me that's very...feels very much a part of who I am.

He refers to something underneath:

There's something underneath that which I've maybe never recognised as being there in quite the way that it allowed me to do.

David wondered if the process of digging related to areas of his experiencing that was suppressed:

…yeah, maybe it was the degree of suppressed experiencing, in a sense, maybe there was just parts of me that had been suppressed by life and experiencing so on and other people

He would:

…dig, it can dig quite deep and there's just a sense of it being: ‘no that's not quite so important, that's not quite it’. Things that don't quite fit, don't feel quite right. Learning to…learning to almost feel in the dark: to get a real sense of what this thing is, you know, what feels, what carries the real, what really ties into what's there for me...yeah.

Rachel discussed the significance of Focusing as a spiritual practice that she would retain going forward:

Moving forward, I know I will use Focusing in several ways and one of them will probably be as a spiritual practice because I can really see the value of it in that in that way, um, and I guess what I mean by that is using Focusing as a way of remaining open to my experience and, and, therefore, as a way of remaining open to the other as in whether that's another person or just the other. So, there's a really big, part of any sort of future spiritual practice I can really see that being a core element. In my own mini-focusings, I think it's going to remain a default way of trying to be with things.

Rachel's description of her intention to use Focusing as a form of spiritual practice offers a useful concluding reflection on the theme of self-discovery in therapy and personal change. Rachel emphasises that Focusing is able to have this significance because of its potential to function as 'a default way of trying to be with things'. This is reminiscent of the potential of mindfulness as a way in which people come to acquire a different mode of mind (Williams 2008:721-733) which can stay with them after the initial 8-week class is concluded.

Sub-theme 1.4 The myth or reality of the bodily felt sense

Purton has written critically of Gendlin's notion of the bodily felt sense (2014:221-233). He employs the provocative term 'myth' to characterise Gendlin's idea. He explains that he does not think of 'myths as entirely a bad thing' (Purton 2014:221) but thinks that Gendlin's notion of the felt sense, as inherently a bodily process, is confusing in that the notion of felt senses as inner objects is a confused idea and is, therefore, likely to be problematic when people are struggling with unclear cognitive and emotional experiences. He argues that emotions and felt sense are better thought of as patterns of response to situations that may or may not have a distinct physical component. He comments:

> When one is sad there may be a physical feeling of heaviness, when one is embarrassed or ashamed one may be conscious of flushing, when one is anxious, or guilt-ridden, one's chest may feel tense, or one's mouth may feel dry. In *that* way there can be bodily locations associated with some emotions, but it doesn't seem right to say that one's flushing *is* one's embarrassment, or that the tension in the chest *is* one's guilt (2014:225).

Purton's argument is, therefore, two-pronged. He argues that some human responses do *not* seem to contain any kind of physical/bodily component and also that when there *is* a distinct physical/bodily aspect to one's response, then it would not make sense to think of that physical component as constitutive of what an emotion or a felt sense actually is. Purton argues that emotions and felt senses are patterns of response in human experience that are best understood in the context of a narrative about what happened situationally and with the person's response, and their life history. This response may contain a physically felt element or may not. On the basis of this argument Purton proposes to question the philosophy behind Focusing but not the practice of Focusing and Focusing-

oriented Therapy. With these questions and arguments in mind, it would seem useful to consider how research participants described or articulated their experience of the bodily or physical aspects of Focusing.

Greta elaborated the ways in which her prior experience of Focusing was a physical/bodily process. She pointed out that many areas of her working life had involved struggling to find the right words or phrase. In those contexts, for example in translation work, Greta identified situations in which she could not find the right words or the right artistic symbolisation, she found herself regularly pausing and waiting for the right word, phrase or image. As she did so, Greta would give her attention to her abdomen and would wait expectantly for a sense of what was needed to 'form'. Greta's experience when working with clients in counselling was similar:

> I work, when I work with clients I work in this area [the area around your middle]. It's the abdomen, [the abdomen] Mm hmm. Yeah. So, and so it's about really listening to what's happening here and then trying to symbolize that, trying to find a way to express something that is really not formed. So, there is this sense of something that is not formed, it is not about words, it's about everything, it's about the situation, it's about everything, you can perceive everything that is around you, really about the client, about yourself with that client, about the bigger picture and so, you get this sense, and you deal with this and eventually you, I try at least, and sometimes it doesn't work. But I try to, to symbolize to….because it's a symbol which is something that is unknown. This thing is unknown, is not formed. So, you have to find a way to form it. To give it a meaning to keep it, it keep it, to give it a form and this is the work I do with clients, I try to give a form to something that is really not yet formed, it's at the edge.

Greta describes the sort of situation in which language has not yet formed and a person waits for things to come into focus. In addition, she makes a link between that experience and the kind of bodily attention that Gendlin advocates.

Fiona spoke of the physical aspects of Focusing in relation to the visual imagery that she experienced:

> …and that's often how it is for me in Focusing, it seems, you know, particularly with the imagery that it's, and there' s a real textural quality to it, there's a feel, a physical feeling quality to it, so it's not just an image, it's…I can feel the thing

In regard to the boulder that Fiona had visually encountered during a Focusing session, she observed:

> Well, you know I didn't know until I felt it because I sort of saw it and I thought 'oh that is going to feel cold and hard and horrible and impossible to move', but it didn't, it felt warm and it felt like I could just lean on it and that felt good, so good…it's very much like I am inhabiting a dream-like space and it has all the vivid qualities of a dream, it doesn't have…I'm not just looking at it I'm in it.
>
> Yeah, it's a complete sensory experience, it's like all the senses are involved yeah definitely

Tessa described a contrast between her body and her brain:

> I think that the understanding that my body might know things better than my brain does - giving that a chance to explain, you know, so it's in my body giving my body more credence than my cognitive thought.

She linked this bodily awareness with her work with counselling clients:

> Because when, when I'm with clients I'm really aware of my body. And so I feel like there are, when something happens, I feel that my body tells me when something's really significant with the client and, you know, or how things are…I suppose maybe it's another form of empathy, I don't know.

Keith described the effect of working with different parts of himself using two chairs:

> …that was divided experiencing. That really opened my eyes a bit to the experience of that because I think I'd always had a bit of a...I'm not really interested in that, can't imagine myself doing that because it doesn't feel like the kind of thing I would want to try. But then when I did it and I experienced myself the value of actually sitting in two different chairs and how that felt, yeah. I think I had, it enabled me to have the experience of physically getting a different…two different sides of something that I was kind of wrestling with. So, um before it'd always been in my head, I suppose, I might think about things in different ways but always within my

> head, you know, like, thinking about it from there [indicating to one side] and thinking about it from there [indicating another side]. But to physically do it from two different places gave me a different experience of how that could work. I guess I had a physical experience as opposed to just a cognitive one. So just the simple act of physically moving between the two chairs gave me a different experience than I'd ever had before, I think, in trying to work with that just in my head. So that, in and of itself showed me that, you know it brought it back into I suppose this thing being out there that I wouldn't be interested in, to something that actually, yeah, there's value in this because I can see it, I've felt it, I've experienced it.

Purton's description of working with 'divided experiencing' does not require the use of physical props, such as chairs, unless a person wishes to use these. He suggests that the significant element lies in giving attention to each part of an issue or experience in turn and sensing how that part of an issue or experience *is* for the person. Keith's description points vividly to the physical elements of the divided experiencing process – how physically moving between chairs created an altered physical sense of the issue - and to the contrast between this experience and how that topic would typically occur for him…in his head.

Sally contrasts her experience of meditation with her experience of Focusing:

> …meditation and that kind of stuff has never worked for me, it's never appealed to me, but I remember being quite surprised that I could, that I could tap into kind of like a bodily sensation that had an emotional meaning

Sally describes being aware of physical embodied feelings:

> I just, I felt as well that it had always been something that I had been aware of in me, but not aware of if you know what I mean. I suppose it's like edge of awareness stuff that I've always recognised these, these kinds of feelings, these kind of physical embodied feelings that're always trying to tell me something, but so, I knew that innately, but I didn't know it. I don't know if that makes sense

Sally contrasts something that is 'just bodily feeling' with what has 'emotional knowledge':

> Yeah. I would have had a sense I wouldn't have, I don't think I realised in an explicit way that that knowledge, that kind of, um, you know bodily felt knowledge had any kind of relationship to…emotional feelings or anything like that. I think I was, until this course, really kind of a cognitive person, so yeah it kind of feels contradictory

but knowing that that's always been a part of me but not knowing what to do with it. Oh, I think that's why it made sense to me when I had those first early two introductions to Focusing: 'Gosh I can like tap into something', you know, it was tapping into something that I felt familiar with, but it was a mechanism to do that and it gave meaning to it. It wasn't just, it wasn't just that bodily feeling anymore: it opened it up that actually this is knowledge, this is emotional knowledge, this is… there's wisdom in that there's, there's lots of stuff in this, there's a richness in that which I hadn't ever connected before.

Sally describes her perspective on the role of bodily wisdom:

> I feel that there is a wisdom that we all carry with us in an embodied sense and just having that kind of the awareness of it now, as well, you know, and that, wow, there's so much in there. So, I think the body is ignored a lot you know in culture, it is about being ill or whatever, but I think those kinds of feelings and senses and that innate body knowledge is ignored.

Sally describes wishing to create a personal discipline that will allow her to access 'body wisdom' on an ongoing basis:

> I want to kind of build it in more regularly in my life, I'd really like to be able to build it in, you know, even for like 10-20 minutes a day and just get in touch um [almost like a meditation practice]. Absolutely yeah that's what I'd like, that's what I want to do. I want to be more. I feel that could be really...that could be…I know for me personally that would be a really useful especially, you know...working as a therapist it's even more [like a discipline] Yeah.

In a similar fashion, David describes the contrast between his previous 'cognitive' way of working with a bodily mode:

> I think I'd have been doing a lot more analysing, trying to see things from different angles in a cognitive, from a cognitive perspective, trying to get some sense of control of it, in terms of naming what it is in my head, sort of trying to force something to come rather than letting it come, coming from a bit more, from me, within my body. So, I wasn't allowing my body to inform my, my sense of it, I wasn't tuned into that as much as I have learned to be through, through doing Focusing.

Fiona describes her sense of one of the functions of the physical/bodily aspects of the Focusing experience:

> …and that for me is kind of important; it adds to the quality of it somehow, it adds to the experience of it because it allows you then to create some kind of emotional attachment to it, so then, for me, then it stays, it's very memorable. I don't know if that's the purpose of it, if you see what I mean, but by being able to really touch and taste and smell the thing, for me that's so important [the sensory stuff?] yes…to create an attachment to something and I create that attachment and then I have it, if that makes sense.

In contrast to the above accounts, Denise illustrates one of the issue that Purton identifies. She reports:

> …in the beginning it was so slow for me to really feel, you know to get my felt sense. I really couldn't do this getting in touch with the felt sense very well. I think that was the thing, I couldn't really, I didn't always. Sometimes if it was a particularly poignant thing…a tightness in my chest or something but I didn't always just get it, you know. Sometimes I was, sometimes it was because I know it got very emotional at times and that is why I was tapping into something. But I would say that that idea of feeling, in the way that now as a counsellor in practice, using it with clients, not just using Focusing things, incorporating it into therapy, that I feel a lot more than I ever felt back then, I think.

Denise suggests that a change occurred, but that in the early stages of her course, she was not feeling things in her body when she focused and pointed out:

> I think it was just something that came slow to me. Some have to pretend a bit, but I don't know, maybe I was pretending a bit sometimes or thinking I was feeling something, but I certainly wasn't really able to

Denise expressed appreciation for Cornell's model of Focusing (Cornell 2007:219-243) in which she makes room for people that typically process their experience more exclusively in a cognitive way. Cornell has a fourfold categorisation; (1) Emoters, (2) Thinkers, (3) Visual Imagers and (4) Physicalizers (2007:225). She suggests that the person who has a facilitator role in relation to the Focusing process should adapt their approach according to these four categories. A purpose of this categorisation is to make space for people who do not grasp or

understand the use of the word 'body' in Focusing or for whom the use of the word 'body' is a barrier or a distraction. Denise comments:

> That is when I started to realise that I could get a felt sense without it really being a physical sensation…it was possible to actually feel a sense of something without actually feeling a tightness in the chest or a knot in the stomach or... Yeah. I think it did hinder me. That did change, and we got deeper into it.

Denise's description of her experience usefully highlights Purton's point that some people seem not to feel things in their body when they focus and that 'lack' of feeling can be a source of concern to them. On the other hand, eight of the research participants reported that Focusing seemed to be a process in which they were engaged with their bodies in new ways in contrast to their previous engagement with their minds.

In chapter 2, I discussed a paper by Larkin et al (2011) in which the authors argue that a person's mind or cognition should be understood as embodied, situated and active. They suggest that cognition is: '…not something which takes places solely or exclusively "in the head"' (Larkin et al 2011:319) and emphasise the embodied nature of human processing of experience. In a similar way, Allan, Eatough & Ungar (2015) argued that the process of learning within therapy training entailed an embodied process within which:

> …it had to do with something "in" them. Some participants identified it as a "part" or a "piece" inside them while others discussed a "feeling" or described a felt sense they had when they struggled or experienced success at integrating an aspect of a new therapy approach they were learning with their clients. (Allan, Eatough & Ungar 2015:865)

These studies do not suggest that a person's bodily awareness is something that should be contrasted with their mind but rather that the mind, human cognitive processes, should be understood as embodied and that choices and struggles and aspirations and regrets and doubts will typically be felt, in some way, as well as consciously reflected upon. The notion of embodiment as a feature of human cognition also connects well with the experience of embodiment within the practice of mindfulness (see chapter 2 above), where embodiment has a general significance for human processing of experience. For example, Nanda (2010:331-350) observes of her client John that:

> …Feeling the breath in the body, feeling the body sensations of tightness of muscles in his chest, associated with the anxiety, and dread of the situation, allowed him the embodied experience of anxiety, and the understanding of the inter-connectedness of how we think and construct meaning, with our emotions, feelings and body sensations. (2010:344)

Nanda reports that John's experience of embodiment within therapy was crucially significant for the changes that occurred in therapy. Nanda combines a role as an existential therapist with teaching MBCT, and so her client john's experience of learning mindfulness is different to the usual group context (Nando taught mindfulness to the client within 1:1 therapy) but his experience of mindfulness and of the effects of embodiment was similar to the experience reported by people who have attended mindfulness classes. It is arguable that the bodiliness of the experience of Focusing is similar to, if not identical with the experience of embodiment in mindfulness and in the experience of research participants surveyed by Larkin et al (2011). Within these contexts, the physical or bodily aspects of therapy and personal change are crucial but are not contrasted to cognitive processes in the ways that Gendlin seems to suggest.

Sub-theme 1.5 <u>It's 'the vision thing', or is it?</u>

Gendlin's earliest presentation of the Focusing technique (Gendlin et al 1968:239) retained an emphasis on changes in bodily feeling as an indicator of change alongside asking research participants to consider words or pictures that seemed to match (or 'capture') the feeling that they were aware of in relation to the problem that they were Focusing on. He described the effects of Focusing as follows: 'there is a very distinct and unmistakable feel of "give," easing, enlivening, releasing' (Gendlin 1968). A notable feature of research participants' discourse in this study is the number of people who mentioned the visual aspects of their experience during Focusing. Ten of the eleven research participants referred to visual experience and the significance of that for their process. For example, Tessa averred that she is…:

> …not a visual person at all. So, it was a surprise that it was a visual thing, but it almost wasn't a visual thing. It almost was…I couldn't see it. It just was a sense of a shape and the sense of a colour and sometimes there would be a scene coming

> through it or a different or different quality to the, to the shape. You know sometimes it would feel as though it was almost moving and sometimes it would feel quite solid but there was something around the quality of the shape that I couldn't see but sort of could see that by Focusing in on that and linking it with the thing…so, I wouldn't be abandoning the topic of Focusing, it would still be there, sort of almost represented by this thing.

Tessa describes 'seeing but not seeing' and a number of different features of the experience.

In contrast to Tessa, Fiona described her experience as follows:

> I think to begin with there was loads of really strong visual imagery that I would get. I am, I am very visual, I think, the way I think, the way my thoughts form up are always in pictures.

It is, therefore, no surprise that her experience of Focusing should have this strong visual quality.

Rachel elaborated how her Focusing partner helped with to process the visual and imaginative aspects of the Focusing experience:

> So he was, you know, working with that with me and then I said: 'it feels like I'm trapped in a, in a loft and that there's…', I'm in, so I'm in the loft and there's all this noise banging on the loft hatch and he just completely went with that as a visual image and asked me...I can't remember the kind of questions he asked me but he, he stuck with it with me and so, he didn't push. …I think he might even have asked me what? was there anything in that loft which kind of makes me explore the space a little bit more and I don't know why he used this but he, he then changed...he then changed the metaphor and he said 'it feels like somebody needs to pull the plug out for you…'

Rachel explained that the process of being accompanied with visual imagery and the process of asking questions of the imagery was a key part of their work together.

In a similar way, David described his Focusing partner helping him to be with visual images and helping them to form. He describes:

> …it's almost like at first there's sort of the mists of, you know, non-focus and then, you know, allowing the mists to sort of...dissipate and then what comes forward out from there for me, and what's kind of present in my life at the moment.

All participants described dreams that they had brought to the Focusing on dreams session and this, of course, entailed processing visualisations. Research participants' accounts of Focusing with dreams offers a rich source of accounts of visual imagery in relation to individual persons' processing of their experiences (see below).

Friedman summarised the Focusing process as a process in which one is aiming to symbolise the felt sense. He wrote of 'silently asking for a word, phrase, image, sound or gesture to come which will accurately symbolise the felt sense' (Friedman 2000:91). He goes on:

> …when I resonate an accurate symbolisation with a befriended felt sense, I get a felt shift. The physical feeling in the body changes. In fact, this is how I know a handle [symbol] is accurate. It gives a shift. (2000:92).

Friedman's account points to the importance of symbolisation in the Focusing process. He argues that there is no hierarchy in the form that symbolisation will take: 'one kind of symbol is as good as another. There are no 'extra points' for, say, beautiful images or particularly sophisticated turns of phrase. The aim of Focusing is accuracy.' (2000:91). It is, I think, noteworthy that all research participants made positive reference to visualisation, at least in relation to Focusing with dreams, and that four participants emphasised the importance for them of the visual elements of the Focusing experience.

Super-ordinate Theme 2: Focusing involving emotional change, cognitive insight and behaviour change

Sub-theme 2.1 <u>Is it all about emotional change and emotional intelligence?</u>

I have referred above to Greenberg et al's elaboration of emotion theory, including the distinction between 'primary adaptive emotions', 'primary maladaptive emotions', 'secondary maladaptive emotions' and 'instrumental emotions' (Elliott et al 2005:30). This classification scheme is designed to help therapists and clients come to an understanding of

their own experience and to develop emotional intelligence. Greenberg has recently utilised the term 'emotion coaching' as a way of:

> …thinking about therapy as training – training people in how to learn which emotions to trust and follow, which to bypass to get to something deeper, and which to regulate and transform and also when to do which of these. (Greenberg 2009:xii).

Research participants in this study frequently described the Focusing process as a form of emotional learning in ways that parallel Greenberg's description. For example, Sally spoke of her previous take on the bodily sensations that began to inform her emotional awareness as she progressed in her learning:

> 'That's why I kind of think it was at the edge of awareness almost that I knew were on a very deep level...um...But I didn't know it either. I don't think I had the, the language or the emotional intelligence or anything like that to, to kind of connect it'

Sally describes the process of 'drilling down' to something deeper:

> Going through layers but all the layers, as I said before, felt, they all felt relevant. So, everything had to be drilled down through to get to the next one. So, if I didn't go to that first layer, I couldn't know…I suppose it's like in a way like I don't know, Yes, I kind of…like the shift isn't it? because you have got to, to be with something and let it be there for it to change. You can't go to what's under it almost or that's how it felt to me anyway.

Fiona describes a Focusing 'journey' and subsequent reflection process whereby layers of emotion that created suppressed experience were worked with:

> it was really helpful to me that session and I actually sat and wrote a whole load of stuff down after that particular session. I think I'd sort of been in my head with it a bit thinking about what is it that's suppressed? I know there's something that's suppressed and gaining hold of that idea. It's conflict, you know, - there was no forum available in my family for conflict and it becomes suppressed by emotion so I will cry instead of, instead of having any forum for that conflict to be expressed so an understanding that the inner critic can be the suppressor; that's how I understood it to be. Either that's the part that has all the energy and so you can't hear, you can't hear that anyone values you, you can't, it's kind of related to the inner child

> experience. That's where I went with it. It's like, yeah, so I was asking myself 'what is it that is suppressed?' because part of me has done the suppressing or it's you know kind of it's really, I find it quite difficult to get my head around it in some ways.

Fiona appears to be describing a 'secondary reactive emotion' process in which a primary emotional response to a situation cannot be expressed within a particular social/family context and the person experiences, instead, a secondary response that acted as a suppressor and, in this case, as an inner critic. Within the Focusing process, Fiona described being able to express some of the emotions that were not permissible at the time.

Rachel expresses the way in which she has used Focusing to allow emotional learning to take place. She also wonders if the Focusing idea of the felt sense is different to an emotional reaction:

> Right, I think the feeling aspect of it is good and very powerful for me and again, in a way, that takes me by surprise because I am, like I say, intellectualised rather than allowing myself to feel. And with Focusing, because I'm not trying to put a language on something, I would let myself feel it, feel where it is, feel the quality of it and often it presents itself as a kind of a knot but not always you know. Often, it's a tight knot here [pointing]. But sometimes it's more like a…just a heaviness, like it feels heavy all round here or sometimes a heaviness pushing me down and, and so, the way I would tend to work with that, is just let any kind of language come, you know, any associations with feeling and I would say them out loud and it might be a random stream of things that I would say and just see if something happens to the way I feel when I say a particular thing and then just following that, just letting that lead me rather than me trying to take it down a particular route and often I find myself thinking or pre-thinking before I start doing it: 'it must be about this' and suddenly realising, you know, that it isn't about that at all and very quickly being able to let go of that and just follow the…almost like follow the breadcrumbs of what this feeling is trying to tell me. What I find difficult is disentangling the felt sense and I don't know whether I mean this I have trouble disentangling it intellectually the felt sense from the emotional intensity of something…hidden behind a layer of language and intellectual abstraction and whatever and that actually when I lift those things or

> peel back those things and there it is. Whereas the emotional stuff feels like more reactive.

David described his process in analysing a dream in which there was a sense of carrying a burden and also a detail about some green fibres. Both of these details were the subject of enquiries from his Focusing partner:

> So, she offered some sense of you know this carrying a heavy weight: 'Do you feel like you've been…is there something in life that you've been carrying?', you know and I was sort of 'oh yes' - I could feel it, I could really feel it. And she says: 'is it in any way linked to the green fibres that you're sweeping up?' and, you know, it seemed like a really logical thing to say in a sense, and then I realized that the green fibres were fibres of a jumper that belonged to somebody that had become very special to me. And as soon as the connection was made, I mean it just…the emotion was just, just poured out in this kind of putting down of a load.

It would seem appropriate to view this last moment as a process by which David was able to access a primary adaptive emotion that allowed him to feel some relief from emotional pain.

A number of research participants in this study articulated the ways in which the Focusing process seemed to facilitate acceptance and expression of basic or primary emotions and the positive effects of this. In this, their processes seems to mirror some of the descriptions in Greenberg et al's work. In a similar way, Gendlin included a chapter on 'catharsis' in his 1996 book.

An emphasis in the account of emotional processing within research participants' narratives is the importance of accepting and 'being with' emotion and bodily experiencing, however surprising or painful. Alongside the parallels with EFT ideas about emotion, 'being with emotion' is also a key element within the practice of mindfulness as discussed in chapter 2. Mindfulness practice would seem to mirror the process within Focusing in which human experiences (including bodily felt processes) are accepted and explored in a 'decentred' way. This is seen as leading organically to processing of emotional experience. Within EFT, there is a sense in which emotional processing is guided by a prior understanding of what different emotions are and of the ways in which they are worked with and resolved.

Sub-theme 2.2 <u>There seems to be a lot about insight and understanding here…</u>

Sub-theme 1.3 elaborated ways in which emotion and emotional change seemed to lie at the heart of the Focusing process for research participants. In tandem with this, I am inclined to emphasise a different theme that emerged strongly in research participants' accounts of their experiences. I have described this in an impressionistic way: that there seems to be a lot of insight-and-understanding language here. In his 1996 book, Gendlin has a chapter entitled 'Cognitive Therapy' (1996:238-246), which presents his own view of the significance of sharing cognitive insights in therapy. Gendlin's views on this matter differ from those offered by classical Cognitive Therapy practitioners in that he urges therapists to offer insights that arise from their own perspective on their client's difficulties. An example would be that offered by Friedman in his account of his own therapy with Gendlin:

> I remember starting one of our early sessions by saying "I feel as if I have ruined my life". Gene responded that he had this principle that a person had the right to ruin his life as many times as he needed to. (Friedman 2005:50).

This example shows the way that Gendlin advocates responding cognitively to client material. Gendlin argues that a cognitive intervention is aimed at reframing destructive negative material. In this case, the idea of a person ruining his or her life is reframed as a human right. Gendlin suggests that such insights can be offered occasionally and that they may have an 'experiential effect' i.e., they may affect a person's whole felt sense of a situation.

On this account, one might expect to find research participant material that sounds *cognitive* or *insight-based* rather than being *emotion-focused.* Such cognitive or insight-based material would be oriented towards experiential change and not 'just' cognitive change.

Keith described working on a dream:

> I'd reflected on it quite a bit. It happened a couple of weeks prior so I'd thought about it, I had my own kind of ideas about what it might be related to. But when we got into it in the session and I think with your help especially, kind of a few of the

> questions you asked and a few of the responses you made to me, it kind of opened something up, it kind of gave me like this flash. I had this moment of stepping into the dream and seeing it in a different way that I hadn't before, and I felt it was quite useful

The dream related to a polar bear that seemed scary and dangerous:

> …what changed was my relationship between me being separate from the polar bear and I think coming to recognise the polar bear's aspect of myself…that switch in perspective was really illuminating for me. I mean I think that's helped me with at least one or two clients where a dream has come up and I've been able to kind of ask similar questions to get them to kind of look at something a bit um some more. It's just having that experience myself of going into a dream and it kind of getting a different perspective on it, you know it's really useful.

In a similar way, Sally describes arriving at an interpretation of a dream:

> …but you know it all just the meaning that the Focusing enabled me to get from it was a really, um, deep meaningful, ah, yeah, richness which you know if I'd just gone with the decapitated baby and crashing into it, you know, I would never have…it was just...a revelation that there could be this whole other sense of meaning to it

Gendlin advocates the use of questions in relation to dream work. The person would arrive at their own interpretation of the meaning of a dream based on open questions that were posed and dropped if they didn't help. His approach to the offer of meaning in dreams is different to the offer of reframing that is advocated in his 1996 book. This latter method, where a person states what has occurred to them in relation to material that the focuser brings, is illustrated by Fiona's account, referred to above, of how her Focusing partner offered an interpretation that arose from her own perspective on Fiona's dream.

Rachel described a combination of a statement or observation in relation to the detail of a dream, in this case, the brass parts of a pascal candle, which she returns to collect in the dream (rather than leaving behind), with the taught concept of 'life-forward direction'. The notion of life-forward direction (Gendlin 1996:259-263) is described as the opposite of what is pathological in human experience:

> Pathology is only what is in the way. But in the way…of what? That (whatever you call it) must have priority. It is what leads out of the swamp. I call what is blocked by pathology the life-forward process.

Gendlin suggests that all human experience will possess some element of life-forward directionality and that this element may be denied or negated by human experience and so it is useful for the companion or therapist to focus on the parts of human experience that seem to be possible ways forward. He suggests that these elements are often not obvious or logical but that a person can look out for cues or clues of what in their experience has a life-forward quality and concentrate their attention on that. Rachel pointed out that she was able to revisit the dream with the benefit of the life-forward direction concept:

> I missed, I didn't see that there was any life-forward in it, in the way I looked at that dream, was that I was trapped. I was, I felt like I was going round and round, you know, why, why have I gone back and retrieved something? You know there's unfinished business. I didn't see it as a life-forward. But it absolutely was. But it took me a while to get there with it.

Sub-theme 2.3 Behaviour Therapy is Psychotherapy

Gendlin includes a chapter on action steps in his book on Focusing-oriented Therapy (1996:227-237). In this chapter he contends that:

> Inner and outer change go together and require each other. We may be convinced that inner change will lead to outer change, but it may not always be sufficient.

He goes on:

> Some clients are inclined to wait until their feelings have changed *entirely* before beginning a small new action. But inner change is hard to complete without at least some concrete outward action…[a]…small act, therefore, insignificant in itself, has the potential to shift the whole inner complexity of a problem. (1996:227-8)

Gendlin made explicit links with traditional ideas about behaviour therapy that derived from the work of a colleague Israel Goldiamond (1996:230). He concluded:

> There is no true opposition between *psycho*therapy and *behavior* therapy. In a human being the inner and the outer are two sides of the same life process. (1996:237).

Gendlin offers a perspective on planned and implemented behaviour change as an integrated part of human personality change. Research participants did not comment explicitly on the behavioural component of Focusing-oriented Therapy, although Rachel described a behavioural change that had arisen as her experience of Focusing helped her to get in touch with her 'truest instincts':

> But I think I've, I've got to the point where I think "stop! do not…" like I'm a list-maker, I've stopped doing list-making. That's a major thing for me, I stopped doing that…

Rachel's behaviour-change in this quotation followed on from the 'inner' changes that Focusing had facilitated. From the outside, stopping list-making might be considered a rather insignificant change, however, the smallness of a particular step of change accords with Gendlin's notion that larger steps often create a resistance within the person and can be less effective. Following Goldiamond, Gendlin recommends a programme of carefully planned and discussed small steps that work towards the life change that a person is seeking. Gendlin quotes a client:

> It would have made a lot of difference years ago. It's too late now, but you have to do those things anyway. If you actually do them, the body *gets* that you mean to be different now. (1996:229).

On Gendlin's account, the life changes that Rachel had experienced would have been less significant if actual behaviour changes had not followed from the change in her feelings.

Other examples of the use of behaviour strategies in the accounts that research participants provided pertained to the physical movements that were associated, for some participants, with attempts to address the issue of divided experiencing. Keith had described the effect that the action of physically moving between chairs had on his whole sense of the issue that he was addressing. He commented:

> But to physically do it from two different places gave me a different experience of how that could work. I guess I had a physical experience as opposed to just a cognitive one. So just the simple act of physically moving between the two chairs gave me a different experience than I'd ever had before…

Gendlin had argued that the essence of Behaviour Therapy was that a person would find her/his self physically doing things, however small and insignificant to the outside observer,

that would 'cut into' or go against an established pattern of feeling and responding. This was a way in which the direction of therapy or therapeutic change would alter, in that the direction could be from the outside in, rather than from the inside out. I have emphasised this part of Gendlin's integrative model of Focusing-oriented Therapy and made reference to research data in support, because I consider that the integration of behaviour therapy with psychotherapy is a key part of the project of psychotherapy integration that I am arguing for. A further aspect of Gendlin's account of the behaviour therapy part of Focusing-oriented Therapy is his suggestion that small steps of change should be rewarded or reinforced swiftly. Gendlin argues that:

> The operant principle of working with *immediate* consequences is very sound indeed. The usual rewards are good and should be used. But the best way to avoid the self-punishment is to develop a specific positive self-response as the reward. A bit of private celebration does just that. Like other rewards it must be planned in advance and done as soon as the step is completed. (1996:233).

Gendlin's joint emphasis on the smallness of the steps of change that a person would decide for themselves and the need for each step to be explicitly acknowledged or reinforced provide valuable guidelines on how this part of an integrated therapy package can work. In addition to the use of small steps of change that are reinforced, there is a large element of 'exposure' in the behavioural strategies that research participants identify, which also contains the idea of (radically) accepting and 'being with' difficult thoughts and emotions that have been identified as key outcomes of mindfulness practice within MBCT and MBSR.

Super-ordinate Theme 3: Focusing involving a range of processes

Sub-theme 3.1 <u>Key concepts and ideas</u>

I wish to elaborate, in summary form, a number of key ideas or concepts that arose during this research study.

Eight of the eleven research participants made positive reference to the experience of working with <u>curtailed experiencing</u>. This concept, which was derived from Purton's 2004 book, was a combination of Gendlin's experiencing concept with the theme of unfinished

business that is familiar within therapy and which has been subjected to research within the Emotion-focused Therapy (EFT) tradition (Elliott et al 2003:243-266). Exploration of curtailed experiencing entails identifying times when one was not able to experience or express something that was personally or emotionally significant. Such experiences often relate to significant personal relationships. Within EFT, a therapist might suggest using an empty chair and imagining the significant person sitting in the chair and then expressing to the person what should, ideally, have been expressed in the past. Jasmine described her exploration of curtailed experiencing and found this to be one of the most significant parts of her Focusing experience. Similarly, Owen discussed the ways in which whole areas of his adolescence was characterised by curtailed experiencing that he would wish to explore further.

Supressed experiencing was a theme that three research participants discussed. Supressed experiencing was a phrase that was derived from Purton (2004:121-122) in which a pattern of experiencing was not permitted or allowed to occur. This is similar to curtailed experiencing although there is a difference in the concept that relates to the sense that supressed experiencing is in some way frozen or disallowed rather than just being stopped at some specific point. It is as though one would need to do something that was never possible. Fiona discussed above the notion that parts of her personality were supressed by significant care givers and that approaching such experiences created 'huge anxiety'. Similarly, Sally discussed an interpersonal situation from 20 years previously which she had avoided approaching because it was so painful. She concluded that the experiencing was suppressed.

A significant theme for a number of research participants, and particularly Sally but also Fiona, was the topic of the inner critic. Gendlin included a chapter on the idea of the inner critic, entitled 'A process View of the Superego' in his 1996 book (1996:247-258) and the theme is discussed in Purton's book (2004:116-119). An inner critic is an experience of internal criticism and Gendlin suggests that this is a very common experience for people involved in counselling, indeed he argues that the experience of an inner critic is universal. He suggests that there are typical features of an inner critic 'attack' that can include physical feelings and also a sense of a voice or a thought which is 'speaking' critically within the self.

Typically, an inner critic is characterised by what are termed 'negative automatic thoughts' in CBT (Beck, 2011) and, as such, it is an important area of work within counselling more widely. Gendlin suggests that people can come to recognise the 'voice' of an inner critic, including some of its characteristic features (such as distinguishing between a critic and one's conscience) and that one should not engage with an inner critic. Gendlin argues that a person should be supported to set an inner critic to one side and return their attention to constructive inner processes. Alongside the technique of setting the critic aside, Gendlin argues for some other techniques: he reported to Friedman that an inner critic is not something that Focusing can work with (Friedman 2005:49) and advocated an approach that involved the suggestion that Friedman should assume the role and act out the voice of the inner critic within the context of the therapeutic relationship (Friedman shouted accusingly at Gendlin and pretended to stab at him with a toy knife which lay to hand). This strategy was based on the idea that the critical element within one's personality can possess a great deal of energy which a person can harness by becoming the voice of the critic and expressing what it is 'saying'. Each strategy which Gendlin advocates, therefore, entails departing from the typical way of relating to one's experiencing during Focusing.

As noted above, Cornell (2007) advocated approaching an inner critic in an open manner with radical acceptance, alongside other distracting and negative aspects of human experience (2007:105-125). Gendlin *had* written positively of a client who became able to enter into an inner dialogue with the critic and who began to perceive the intention or reality behind the harsh negative voice of the critic (1996:255-6) but he did not regard such an approach as psychologically safe for many people until they had become strong enough to do so. Cornell regards the inner relationship that she advocates as a safe way of accepting and working with all areas of experience including the inner critic. This entails sensing what more is there in the voice of the critic, just as one might with any experience, and typically involves listening to a critic and discovering that it has something useful to say about hurt or pain that has been denied and that the critic was covering up or protecting the person from. Treating a critic as a person in this way is characteristic of the whole manner of inner relating that Cornell advocates.

Fiona discussed her exploration of the inner critic during her interview and related it to the person-centred notion of 'conditions of worth'. This is the idea that many people grow up from childhood with a sense that they can be of worth to caregivers only if they fulfil certain conditions. In other words, people's love can be experienced as not being unconditional. Fiona related her inner critic to parental attitudes and judgements. As reported above, Fiona described the way that the inner critic appeared to be a suppressor of primary emotions. She expressed a need to bypass that suppressive function to be able to explore the emotions that she had previously failed to acknowledge.

Clara discussed her understanding of the inner critic in the following:

> …the inner critic stuff we did, and that's something which has really stayed with me in terms of thinking around the Focusing aspect of it, you know the notion that there's a protective quality to it as well as a harsh critical quality and that's, I mean that's there now in my understanding when I work with people, so that stands out quite a lot.

Sally discussed at length her experience of inner critical thoughts and explored an insight into the critic that came to her while driving home:

> It was always there, that's why I was so shocked, I think, by it because it was…I'd realised 'oh my God this thing had always been there', like it was just pretty constant, you know, there and I think that's what was shocking but then the relationship with it changed, and I think genuinely it just happened. I think it happened while I was just driving home one day from the course and it…I actually felt empathy for it. I felt compassion for it because I knew it was just trying to protect me. It was there because it was like looking after me [sheds tears] I'm sorry I'm...It makes me really emotional.

In all, five of the eleven research participants discussed the theme of the inner critic. In general, those that commented, discussed the concept in relation to an attitude of acceptance in the manner of Cornell. In addition, there was some attention given to treating the inner critic as a part of the self that one could dialogue with as was the case with the theme of divided experiencing.

I have referred above to the concept of divided experiencing. This is an idea that Purton developed from Gendlin alongside research from within the EFT tradition (Elliott et al 2005:219-243) and ideas developed by Cornell & McGavin (2002:155-186). Gendlin had written about 'role play' in a chapter in his 1996 book (1996:192-198). This chapter advocated some of the active therapeutic methods practiced within the Gestalt therapy tradition, in which a person might become aware of a distinct part of themself and might become aware of that part's urge to do something or act something out that was different to their normal pattern of behaviour. Gendlin argued that a person might be helped to act this out (as Friedman had been urged to do, see above) or might remain static but try to get a sense of what that part might feel and want. Gendlin emphasised that the essence of this was to spend time feeling differently from the perspective of the other part of their self: 'the essential irreplaceable contribution of role play is this role reversal, living and feeling something from the other side. No other avenue of therapy provides this.' (1996:193). Gendlin de-emphasises the use of two chairs to enact a dialogue between two parts of the self, as described by Greenberg (Elliott et al 2005) and argues that people should spend time with the other part of their self and seek to feel what it is within themself. EFT draws on a series of research studies (Greenberg 1984) that focus on the idea that the key dialogue within the human self is between a less dominant 'experiencing self', sometimes termed 'the underdog', which is identified with needs and wishes, and a more dominant part of the self, known as the 'top dog' which is seen as being identified with society's values and judgements. The experience of a person who would benefit from this technique is typified by a feeling of dividedness, of a conflict between these conflicting aspects. Two-chair dialogue for conflict splits is intended to enact the conflict and to achieve resolution. Greenberg argues that resolution of this psychological difficulty occurs when the dominant critical part of the self begins to soften, and the less dominant experiencing self becomes more assertive. Purton (2004:119-121) drew on the research that Greenberg et al had conducted but somewhat de-emphasised the use of chairs as props. He made reference to other concepts of dividedness within the human person, such as Freud's notion of the self as being made up of 'ego, superego and Id' (Purton 2004:121) or the related idea of adult, parent and child from Transactional Analysis to suggest that attention to divided

experiencing might not be as simple as two parts or two chairs, i.e., there might be more parts and there might be a need for more than two chairs if one was using the props.

Seven of the eleven research participants made positive use of divided experiencing either in terms of their own process or that of their partner. One participant, Denise, made links between the topic of divided experiencing and Cornell's notion of 'presence' – that the problem with different parts of the self arises when a person is identified with a part and that the self in presence can sense different parts without being adversely affected by inner conflicts:

> You know divided experiencing things like that, So, she [Cornell] talks about we're different parts of us which we did in, um, in Dave Mearns' stuff about the parts, er, configurations - that's the word and um so with her, she talks about presence and impartiality, um. So, whenever we're in presence, we are the, the 'I', the observing ego thing, you know, impartial - knows everything about us and the rest of it.
> But once we start identifying with all the, you know, the 'worry me', the 'angry me' the 'scared me', the different, the different parts; that's the problem that we're going to partiality with that and that becomes the problem. It's not that, you know, there are parts of us but once you start identifying, overwhelmingly, on a regular basis and for some reason with one of those parts or all of those parts for some time then you know we're not in presence and we need to come back into presence and you know how do I…how do you hope to do that? But Focusing does that because it brings you back into presence.

Keith described his use of two chairs (see above) and Owen described working with his Focusing partner as she moved between the two chairs to resolve two conflicting parts of herself. Tessa, David and Rachel made positive reference to their use of techniques to resolve divided experiencing. Sally described her experience of this theme:

> That was, that was hugely helpful I think I had literally, like, six chairs or something, I really did. I went to town on that. I didn't think I would, but it really just, yeah, all these different parts of me really and the different reactions I had to this, this person…I had a lot of chairs out, yeah. And it was great actually to be able to hear all the different voices. um...Yeah all the different parts that needed to be heard

because it wasn't just one…I would just feel a different, a different part needing to say something or to be vocalized. So, you know, I'd be with the nice Sally and then I'd kind of be with that and say what that needed to say, and then...and then, like, the, you know, the bitch would then…[So she would express some harsh stuff or whatever] yeah, yeah [and then there would be something else would come] Yeah, would then come forward but it was just and I would say, um, you know I need to, I need to get another chair, I need to go back to this one now, I'd just feel it [was **** getting confused?] She was, she was really good actually and she would help me she would say, you know, as well 'is that all that this one needs to say at the moment or is there something else coming up?' I think it was a mixture of her facilitating that and me also saying: 'I need to leave this one now and this new one needs to come out or this...

Sally described the flexible use of a number of chairs and the role of her Focusing partner as facilitator but also of her own internal sense of what moves she needed to make. Her example dramatizes the aspect of using props for this type of work. Purton had suggested that drama students might wish to use the chairs but that many people might find the use of chairs somewhat strange and off-putting whereas the essential element is to give time to be with and experience denied or de-emphasized parts of the self (Purton 2004:122-124). It would seem that there needs to be further research to establish more fully how significant on an ongoing basis the use of chairs is and how one operates with larger selves, beyond the two parts of 'traditional' two chair work. It would seem, though, that this concept of divided experiencing was a significant theme within this research.

Sub-theme 3.2 <u>Dream a little dream for me…</u>

The topic of dreams is an interesting and distinctive aspect of Focusing. There are a number of notable aspects of the Focusing approach to dreams:

(1) Dreams are seen as meaningful and possibly helpful for the person who has the dream.
(2) Dreams require a process of interpretation.
(3) Only the person who has the dream is seen as able to understand or interpret their dream.

(4) Dreams are approached in a Focusing way i.e., the person approaches the dream while they are Focusing, and the narrative of the dream is recalled and explored while the person is Focusing.

(5) It can be helpful to explore a dream in a Focusing partnership, where the partner poses helpful questions.

(6) A Focusing partner may well acquire an emotional holding significance in relation to the focuser as they explore their dream. As Fiona reported above:

> …if you're doing that kind of work you know the dream work the relationship almost needs to be very, very secure because I think without that it would be so, so ridiculously risky, those kind of dreams are so personal and you know such a precious thing isn't it?

Similarly, a Focusing partner may acquire a role as the person who holds the dream – recalling elements of the narrative and referring back to parts that seemed significant.

(7) There are a number of helpful questions that a person might ask themselves (and unhelpful questions would be dropped) (Gendlin 1986:9-17,165-192).

(8) Possible lines of enquiry that derive from different traditions of therapy (e.g., Freudian, Jungian or Existential) are offered as questions that a person can use as the focus of their exploration.

(9) An explicit focus in dream exploration is features of the dream that are odd or counterfactual (Gendlin 1986:45-57).

(10) Focusing with dreams involves the 'bias control' in which the dreamer explicitly reviews those parts of the dream that seem unpleasant and distasteful to see what there is to learn in those elements (Gendlin 1986:59-84).

(11) Focusing with dreams is oriented to self-development and growth and is present-centred.

(12) Often characters in dreams and other elements seemed to represent the self.

All research participants were interested in Focusing with dreams and reported on that part of their learning during their research interview. Some stated that the issue of remembering a dream was a concern. All research participants discussed dreams and ten of the eleven participants expressed surprise and discussed ways in which they had learned from and

benefitted from that part of the course. I have frequently referred to research participants' elaboration of their dream experiences above.

Exploration of research participants' discussion of dreams highlights certain key elements of their experience:

- Previously unconscious material. Research participants discussed parts of their experience that they had not been conscious of before exploring their dreams. Interpretation of the dream seemed to unlock material that was new and surprising. For example, Fiona explored a dream that had felt very disturbing, which involved her butchering and cooking her dog (Fiona is a vegan) and she described the effect of the suggested interpretation by her Focusing partner:

  > …my husband was there and she kind of said 'maybe it is about your relationship' and I think probably it was to do with her knowledge of me in the work that we had done previously that helped her, but she sort of said 'you know what? I've got this sense of you examining everything and perhaps the butchering of the dog was actually you examining your relationship' I was like 'oh it is!' you know if someone gets it right it's just, you think, it just all, all the threat completely melted away, I didn't feel threatened at all anymore, didn't feel horrible about the dream anymore so I knew she had it, you know because it just felt 'yes that's it'…

- Emotional exploration. Research participants explored emotional experiences that were personally significant and often related to important personal relationships. David described a complex dream the processing of which was highly emotionally charged for him:

  > …there was a part in the dream where it related to some green fibre that I'd been sweeping up but didn't want to throw away and this was back in my old house or something and I was like 'what's all these green fibres you know sweeping up and uh anyway I carried this really wet heavy towel, for some reason, to a friend who used to be at school who had decided my mum had said that they could sleep in this other bedroom. I put the stuff down and there is something about the putting down of this thing and the connection [the wet heavy towel?] wet heavy towel yeah and then

there was the green sort of green fibres and ****** really kind of stayed with me on that. I wish I could say [what she said]. it would be great to have recorded that session. So, she offered some sense of, you know, this carrying a heavy weight. 'Do you feel like you've been. Is there something in life that you've been carrying?', you know, and I was sort of 'oh yes' I could feel it. I could really feel it. And she said 'is it in any way linked to the green fibres that you're sweeping up?'. And you know it seemed like a really logical thing to say in a sense. And then I realized that the green fibres were fibres of a jumper that belonged to somebody that had become very special to me. And as soon as the connection was made, I mean it just, the emotion just poured out in this kind of putting down of a load. And. It was like I was doing that in this Focusing session like you know identifying what those fibres were and what they meant to me and why I was so reluctant to clean them up because I was thinking 'why, why should I have to?'...and then it was this sort of like putting down this thing and the kind of 'ahhh' and it was the combination of the two things in this kind of way that I just. It just took me completely gave me access to something that felt so true to me. The truth, the thread of truth that wove its way throughout this dream in such a, such a symbolic way I suppose just suddenly became apparent to me and it was very powerful. And there was just a real sort of weight of emotion which came out and it did feel I could sort of put down that burden in that moment in some sense.

- Exploration of themes, ideas and meanings. Often the process of dream interpretation involved reflecting on and exploring further novel ideas and insights. For example, Sally discussed a traumatic dream which contained a novel meaning:

  it was quite graphic because I was, I can recall it but I was in a car, but I'd crashed into this, into this house through the front room and, like, in this accident this baby had been decapitated and everything, so it was quite like gruesome and disturbing and then this, the companion with me was kind of my best friend but I didn't know her but I felt really close to her and everything. So, just having this dream and those things happen in that sequence but then focusing on it and the actual, like the meanings that came out of it were not all about you know the actual actions of the dream if that makes sense. [So, the meanings weren't to do with car accidents or...]

No. You know they weren't to do with anything like that, and yeah I just got so much out of it because and also I realized that the companion was me, you know this person I didn't know but [this person sitting next to you] in the car and and it was kind of, who was my best friend but I'd never seen him before in real life. You know it's just this person I can't even distinguish what their face looks like. But I knew I had the feeling that I was really close to them like they were my best friend and that turned out…that was actually me in the dream [oh sorry, so it's not that the person in the dream was your best friend in real life]. no, no I've never seen this person in the dream before but in the dream, I knew that I've never seen them before so it was weird like I was aware that this person wasn't familiar to me, but I knew that they were my best friend. So that was me…like that very strongly came through that that was me in that dream. I mean I suppose that's the thing about Focusing with dreams is just how, how it just came, how the meaning came and it just felt right when the meaning was there. So, when I discovered that that person was me like I knew that that was me.

- Connecting with self. Focusing with dreams seemed to involve exploring and experiencing things that felt very self-connecting. For example, Keith described a dream involving a scary polar bear:

  …and so it became a bit more about me that that Polar bear, that fear, the whatever…there's a bit more scenery…it [you were in the stands] yeah [looking down] I was looking at it, yes, it was sort of down there from the bleachers [on the bleachers and you look down] Yes, [and there were family members and so on] No other classmates [classmates] from the course was down there, I think…how kind of you know [Yes being eaten by the…] not being eaten, they would be [oh sorry] yes no the polar bear was not being aggressive. The polar bear was just playing in the pool. But people were getting hurt because the polar bear is big, it was just doing its thing. I think that what changed was my relationship between me being separate from the polar bear and I think coming to recognise the polar bear's aspect of myself…

- Unfinished business. Often Focusing with dreams involved exploring and completing old unfinished parts of a person's experience. Tessa described her interpretation of an old dream that seemed to be about unfinished business with her Grandmother:

  > I brought an old dream, a really old dream. I'm a dreamer, I dream every night, so it's not as though I didn't have to bring an old dream, but I brought an old dream because it really had still sat with me, about my grandmother. When my son was very little, when he was a baby, so this is like twenty-seven years ago and it is huge, you know, shouting at my grandmother which I would have never done and we've never in real life shouted at my grandmother. And really angry with her. And she really was difficult during that time. And I interpreted that dream for myself as being well I can't, I haven't got it in me to tell her how I feel, so, I'm dreaming it. This seemed to make sense but actually when I focused on the dream, that wasn't it, it seemed that I wasn't angry with her at all. I was angry, I was angry with me so…and it, it really made sense and it was a little bit like 'oh, so this dream has been bugging me all this time maybe it's been bugging me because I've come up with an interpretation that actually isn't right and it's not about my grandmother. It's about the situation I was in and my feeling of you know failing as a, as a mother you know not doing what I should'.

There were no research participants who completely negated the dream work although Greta expressed doubt as to whether Focusing with dreams actually was 'a method'.

There has not been a great deal of critical discussion of dreams or Focusing with dreams. Purton produced an interesting paper; 'When is the Dream time?' (2006) which considers some ideas derived from the philosopher Norman Malcolm and which argues for the view that dreams are not events that occur while the person is asleep but rather occur while the person is waking up and are, as such, formed at the interface between being asleep (and actually unconscious) and being awake and conscious. Purton argues that Malcolm's ideas help to make sense of dreams in relation to Gendlin's account of the unconscious as the implicit.

Sub-theme 3.3 Is 'clearing a space' a very focusing thing to do?

I have made reference, above, to 'clearing a space' (CaS) and offered a brief explanation as to what a person might do when they enact that part of the Focusing process. I have also referred to the element of controversy surrounding this practice since Cornell has argued that clearing a space is not something that should be seen as mandatory or as the necessary first step of Focusing. As well as arguing that CaS is not 'a very focusing thing to do', there is the issue that some people have reported that CaS does not 'work'. There is, therefore, a practical (or phenomenological) issue and also something of a theoretical issue.

Research participants made reference to CaS (and three participants made reference to the work of Cornell). How did this feature of the Focusing model function in the experiential processes of the research participants interviewed for this study?

Eight of the eleven research participants mentioned using CaS and described the technique in a reasonably positive way. Two participants did not mention CaS and one made passing reference to CaS in the sense that she described using CaS on those occasions when there did not seem to be a specific issue that was calling for her attention. Most of the time it seemed that this was not required for her.

Keith stated that CaS was the one part of the Focusing process that seemed to work for him. He described using CaS as a prelude to continuing with the meditation practice that he was very familiar with. Within this context, a fairly typical version of CaS in which problematic issues or concerns are imaginatively placed to one side was a prelude to the next phase in which the participant would find that he entered into a meditative state. Keith referred to an article by Friedman (2000:279-301) that advocated that kind of practice. It should be noted that Keith judged that his progress in learning Focusing was stalled by not 'getting past step 1'. He discussed possible reasons for not experiencing anything beyond step 1 (CaS), including the issue of whether he was so used to going to a meditative state that he perhaps was unable to work with his experience in a different way. Keith also wondered if his Focusing partner was a factor in this issue and whether trying Focusing with a number of different partners might have made a difference to his experience.

A number of participants described using a type of visual imagination to place issues into boxes and placing the boxes at a distance from the self in accordance with what felt appropriate. Tessa, who described herself as not being a visual person, described her process:

> …I mean boxes was the first thing you ever suggested and it just absolutely was right up my street. [There was an issue and it would be in a box] Yeah and I found it… [what did you do with the boxes?] on a shelf on shelves in the geography room. So, I would just put them on the shelves, I would have boxes and they would be different sizes and sometimes different colours and then they would go onto the shelves and leave the space for me to pick the box and I would always take the box back down that I was going to focus on so it would have been put away in order to make sure that the space was completely clear. There's nothing left there and then I'll go. 'I'm ready to pick and I pretty much knew...I wouldn't know in advance, but it would be very clear to me once I cleared a space which one was shouting out.

Tessa went on to add that she would do the CaS stage even if she had a pre-chosen issue to focus on, in case there was something else that 'was shouting out'. She also made clear that CaS would create some sense of relief in and of itself, even though the technique was being used strictly as a prelude to the rest of the Focusing process. The key part of CaS for Tessa was that placing each 'box' on a shelf meant that she was not consciously choosing her point of focus – each thing was on the shelf and the issue that 'shouted out' would be the issue that required her attention.

Fiona also identified CaS as a source of relief from everyday concerns as a prelude to Focusing:

> …you know there's the children, there's this…I might be worrying about there's school sports day or something like that, you know…I've got that list of stuff in my head and I cleared all of that out of the way and then, right at the end, wow! that's the power…I immediately felt the power of clearing that weight of cognitive level stuff and then the images would come that quite often helped my experience.

Clara also described her approach to CaS in a similar way:

> Yes, yes, if there were a few things on my mind I'd use the time to kind of touch base with them and then decide which one I felt I wanted to focus on…kind of going in, exploring and kind of coming out again.

For most research participants, CaS functioned primarily as a way of checking in with themselves and judging what issues were there and might need attention and seeing which one needed attention first. No research participants reported any negative experiences with CaS although it should be noted, as stated above, that two participants made no reference to CaS in their interviews. Another function of CaS was a heightening of participants' use of visual imagination of personal issues and concerns and the use of spatial imagery to represent a sense of distance from problems and concerns. Also, of interest is that some participants reported that creating a space and creating distance from problems in the way that have been described seemed to have positive psychological effects.

Super-ordinate Theme 4: Relationship dynamics and practical aspects of Focusing

Sub-theme 4.1 The partnership is fundamental

Participants who volunteered for this research study had received Focusing training in which participation in a 'Focusing partnership' was required. All participants commented on the significance of this part of their experience. Most commented on the value, significance and crucial importance of this relationship. In addition, five participants commented on negative aspects of a Focusing partnership and the impact of this on their experience of Focusing and on their personal development.

A Focusing partnership (FP) is intended to be a specific kind of social relationship in which two people agree to meet regularly for a specific time period and in which the time is divided between the two of them. The first person would use the time in whatever way they wished, and the second person would be an accompanier in whatever way the first person found helpful. The first person might ask for a specific kind of response to their use of the time and the second person might, over time, learn what was the most helpful response to the first person's process and visa versa. Typically, the intention within a Focusing

partnership would be that a person would practice Focusing during their half of the time, but guidelines associated with the international Focusing community (http://previous.focusing.org/partnership/partner_info/about_partnership.htm) suggest that a key part of the FP pattern is that a person should be free to use the time as they wish. Gendlin has written about the FP relationship as follows: 'My half of the time is for me. I need not use it for Focusing or listening. I use it as I wish', he went on 'This basic principle gets past the sectarian character of most self-help networks today. Usually just one single process is shared, and anything else is considered out of bounds' (Gendlin 1987:61-62). It was a principle for Gendlin that one did not have to focus in a Focusing partnership: that freedom was of the essence during an individual's half of the time. Gendlin himself had provided useful guidelines for therapeutic listening in his 1978 book on Focusing (135-167) and there are other detailed guidelines from Focusing teachers such as Friedman (2000:135-167) and Cornell (2005:143-182). A related guideline was that the division of time should be adhered to quite rigidly and that an accompanier should offer a time reminder so that the person in the Focusing role should know how much time they have left. A further related guideline was that all of the rules could be broken if that was agreeable to the two participants (including the rule about dividing the time equally) (Gendlin has 'instructions for not following instructions' 1986:137-8).

Within the Focusing classes at their university, Focusing partners might meet to focus in the actual Focusing class (which occurred fortnightly) and would then be encouraged to meet on their own in the intervening week in a location of their choice. Some people met in locations on the university campus, others met in each other's homes. Sometimes people met in the open air or in an attractive venue. For participants who had attended a weekend based Focusing-oriented Therapy course, some FP meetings were conducted via online platforms such as Skype and some FP meetings occurred over the phone.

Eight of the eleven research participants commented on ways in which their FP was fundamental to their experience of Focusing. Fiona reported of her FP:

> …to have a really amazingly patient, dedicated, wonderful Focusing partner who was so gentle with it all and kind of, it was just amazing and I actually credit that work to **** entirely.

Fiona referred to her FP's offer of interpretative responses in relation to difficult-to-grasp-or-understand material that she was bringing to the sessions. She commented that her FP's response to her description of a vivid (and traumatic) dream in which: 'she just said 'I think it's you examining, examining your relationship' and I said 'you're absolutely spot on, how did you do that?''. Fiona commented that her FP:

> …was very cautious obviously but I, I've no idea how it came. No, I've no idea. And I think it's because of the work we'd been doing and she's so patient and so very involved and such a thoughtful partner and so aware of everything I've been doing but we would offer each other, you know we would offer each other sometimes just, sort of an observation: 'you know what I know that you, you mentioned this before or could it be?', you know, so we would, we would be brave enough to offer those things, so that feels important too I think a way that kind of the relationship if you're doing that kind of work you know the dream work the relationship almost needs to be very, very secure because I think without that it would be so, so ridiculously risky, you know, since those kind of dreams are so personal and you know such a precious thing isn't it?

I have quoted Fiona at some length here as she tries to work out how her FP was able to offer an interpretation of something that she brought that seemed to be correct and so helpful. Fiona pointed out that this was a pattern that the two of them offered such insights or suggestions to each other. She suggests that the offer of insight of this kind would appear to have arisen from the FP being 'so involved' and 'aware of everything I've been doing'. Fiona spoke of her FP's personal relational characteristics alongside the offer of 'observations'. Both of these elements were essential parts of the Focusing process.

David also spoke of the personal relational aspects of the FP relationship. He described 'just a calmness about that presence and assuredness that that was really: 'ah, I don't have to worry about that, I can just do this'. And that was her, that's part of the relief I think was, was her kind of calmness in companionship'. Similarly, Clara spoke of the personal characteristics that her first FP brought to the Focusing relationship: '…and what made it so valuable was ******'s gentle or nurturing style. A really light touch that she had. Very serious very respectful'. Rachel used the concept of 'holding' to describe the effect of her FP's relational style and interventions:

> I think with...I think it was because we trusted each other and that we were prepared to experiment and try things out, get them wrong. But he would ask me questions. So, I don't know if that would be guiding but certainly it felt like a gentle holding.

Rachel wonders if 'guiding' is the wrong word for what an FP offers but is sure of the overall effect of their shared willingness to experiment in the Focusing process together. Rachel spoke of being in the 'dark' as a focuser. This term had a literal and a metaphorical meaning in that she felt uncertain and confused as she explored her experiences during Focusing and also that she kept her eyes closed. An aspect of this FP was that both participants kept their eyes closed and so: 'I described it as feeling like I was grappling about in the darkness but with a sense that he was in there with me, you know that I could, I'd a really strong sense of his presence in there'.

Six of the eleven participants described an experience of modelling where they were learning quite directly from their FP while they themselves were in the accompanier role. For example, Denise observed: 'I don't know in a way. She seemed to take a lot more time, I think than me so maybe that was it. Maybe I was rushing. Now, when I think about it now, she is, she needed a lot of time before she ever spoke. You know just silently with her eyes closed'. Denise believed that her first FP had been a 'better' focuser than she was and was keen to see what it was that she was doing and to learn from that.

Some key words and phrases that seemed to capture research participants' sense of what an FP should be or could be (and actually was) are encapsulated in some quotations from Jasmine. She spoke of her FP:

> I trusted her with my deepest, darkest thoughts and she witnessed me going to those places. And I did with her too. So, there's a mutual trust which goes back to what I ascertained in my dissertation is, you know, the relationship is key: if the relationship isn't right with your focuser, you can't in my mind have a good Focusing relationship you can still focus but not to the same level…I'm thinking of other Focusing sessions I've done with other people and I've never gone to anything as personal or as deep with them. So, I think it highlights the relationship and that trust,

> mutual trust, equality are vital for me…so, I think if your relationship is very close and good, it takes you to a deeper level, you get, you're prepared to let yourself go there.

Speaking of the comparison of a counselling relationship with a Focusing partnership, Jasmine observed:

> …but it's not equal in the same sense as a Focusing relationship. So, I think that the Focusing gives it an extra quality, an extra depth, it's that mutuality, it's...you are equal and there's that trust that is very deep.

Jasmine highlights words such as mutuality, equality and trust as key factors in the FP without which one cannot 'go there'. She observes that the Focusing process has an unpredictable quality to it and that the mutual trust which she identifies is crucial to allowing oneself to benefit from the experience that the FP offers.

In addition, Fiona observed that it seemed important that the two members of an FP shared some similar background experiences which aided their connection and aided their ability to be with each other and to offer each other companionship, understanding and insight. This points to a detail that most participants referred to: how they had chosen each other. One participant, Keith, spoke of having chosen the person that he had decided to approach through a 'Focusing' process. He reported that:

> It was more like bringing both of them into it and kind of trying to get a feel for whether or not I felt drawn particularly, whether or not one of them was calling more than the other. And one of them quite clearly, kind of came into my sense of 'this is the person'. I don't know how to explain it, but I felt drawn to one in that space more than the other.

David spoke of identifying the person who became his FP when they both found that they had tears in their eyes after an initial Focusing exercise: ''Oh that's a similar thing to me' and subsequently I found out that she sought me out for her Focusing partner.'. Fiona spoke of having been certain that her FP was the person that she wished to approach:

> Before there was any time to talk of Focusing groups or anything else, I think the very first day someone said we have to have a Focusing partner - that's like bee line ****! [her FP].

It seems worthwhile to wonder about these initial choices since there would seem to be no logical guarantee that a Focusing relationship will work out, in the sense that each participant will evaluate the relationship as having been mutually beneficial, but these research participants were keen to emphasise that in some way, they knew at an early stage that a particular person was the individual that they wished to approach to be an FP. Subsequently, of course, the ongoing relationship was an indicator of whether their initial sense of another person was sound or not.

In addition, to identifying the positive aspects of an FP, research participants also made reference to issues and problems that could occur when the relationship was not conducive to the Focusing process. For example, Greta spoke of experiencing abandonment issues which the course itself accentuated and which the Focusing partnership did not alleviate or resolve. She spoke of: 'this sense of…loneliness and being abandoned and it brought back all the stuff… that I'm carrying from early age.'. For Greta, Focusing was an activity that could feel lonely and the lack of the right kind of emotional 'holding' meant that the older feeling of loneliness and abandonment were accentuated. One part of the FP that could be problematic was the absence of the sense of mutuality and sharing that Jasmine identified above. In a similar way, Clara spoke of the contrast between her first FP experience which she regarded as 'gentle' and 'nurturing', as well as 'serious and respectful' with a later Focusing partnership that was hindered by: 'language difficulties', issues with conducting an FP via skype, as well as what she identifies as issues with her FP's background and training '…and the sort of attitude of the partner [which] was a bit different'. Clara expressed affection for her second FP but was keen to offer the view that relationship issues had a deleterious effect on the Focusing experience.

Research participants would appear to confirm Gendlin's suggestion that Focusing is always different in the presence of another person, even when that person is silent. Gendlin argues for the theoretical view that 'human nature is inherently interactional' (1987:76) and he observes that: 'human beings are inherently, essentially interactional. When there is no other person, one's whole interactional way of being gets stuck, becomes permanent, and seems to fall into oneself as if it were one's individual trait'. Gendlin's research suggestion

and theoretical view is partly based on his own experience of receiving therapy from Dr Carl Rogers. In a 1990 paper, Gendlin observes that:

> …many clients are convinced for a year or two that nobody could possibly like them or understand them, and the process works anyway and eventually changes their perception. How would they ever get around to perceiving that the therapist *did* actually understand? That is a change. I know, because I was that kind of client. I always knew that this nice man could not possibly understand my stuff. It took me a long time before I noticed that when I walked into the room, I was already different. The interaction affects you, long before you can think about it. At least sometimes. It is in the interaction or as an interaction, that these steps come. (Gendlin 1990:213).

Focusing was presented in Gendlin's 1978/2007 text as a self-help procedure that people could follow alone, by using the book as a guide, but, at the same time, Gendlin's own experience and teaching suggests that a relationship or an interaction is essential to the success or value of the technique – and this receives support from the data collected herein. Research participants' evidence suggests that the inward process of Focusing should be considered as the internalisation of an external relationship. This point is adumbrated by Purton in his suggestion that human beings are only able to respond to themselves *because* they have been responded to by other people, he argues that human experiencing… '*begins* with the mother responding to the infant and *later* the infant learns to respond to itself. Responding to oneself is a subsequent, sophisticated development'. (2007:49 his italics). This suggests that Focusing as a technique should be presented as something that is practiced in a relationship first and foremost and that the use of Focusing in the self-help context is a later development or capacity that a person may acquire.

Sub-theme 4.2 Time and Space matter

Alongside the general issue of the relationship that people share within a Focusing partnership, research participants discussed some of the practical arrangements for meeting. For example, Clara spoke of meeting in rooms which she was able to book on the university campus, she observed that:

> …if the weather was okay...we sat outside but that wasn't so good because people would come past and wonder what on earth we were doing. So, yes, some, and then... [was the Environment important would you say?] privacy was important, yeah but the actual environment, I don't think so. I mean [the university's] not the nicest environment always, is it to be in and do stuff like that, but we've always got through that.

Clara judges that the environment itself was not especially significant but that factors such as privacy and convenience were important because of the process that was being undertaken. In a similar way, Jasmine observes that:

> I mean I know we had some Focusing sessions in the classroom…and the emotions were quite sort of, yeah, high but I think when we were in the privacy of ****'s home or my home, because it's a really safe space we could really just let yourself go. That is to me I think a really important thing - the Focusing space has to be right.

Jasmine suggested that the space had to be right in the same way as the relationship had to be right if one is to 'let oneself go'. This indicates that there is an interaction with the environment - that helps or hinders the Focusing process – in the same way as the interaction with another person that either helps or hinders the Focusing process. One might imagine that Focusing is the sort of process that could be relatively indifferent to outward physical or situational elements, but evidence here would seem to indicate that the outward interaction with the environment is a factor in what one experiences or discovers. Jasmine described her experience of a Focusing space that was 'right':

> I think partly because with **** we were in her own home, so, it's a quiet space, the environment was right. I could let myself go I could cry, swear, all the stuff I'm normally quite reserved about, so maybe a certain sense on that day was right…I mean I know we had some Focusing sessions in the class room where you were present and the emotions were quite sort of, yeah, high but I think when we were in the privacy of ****'s home or my home because it's a really safe space we could really just let yourself go. That's to me I think a really important thing - the Focusing space has to be right.

Alongside space, time has been a factor that participants frequently commented on. Guidelines for Focusing partnerships, discussed above, identified time boundaries as an

important part of the FP relationship. Alongside the rule that Focusing time should be divided equally, participants received the further rule that all of the rules should be broken if both participants identified a need and agreed. Research participants commented on a number of occasions when time boundaries had been broken and that that seemed like the right thing to do. There was a process of checking that the individual person needed to continue for a longer period of time because their process seemed to require that. Jasmine describes the process:

> I recall we got to the point where she sort of said: 'you know we are due to finish but do you want to carry on?' I sort of said 'Yes I do'. I am quite an organised, structured person, I like the structure of Focusing, the clear sort of defined steps, a time limit... It's very boundaried. So, almost, you can go into that space, focus on it and then sort of close the door and walk away and go back to life normally without having any residual feelings.

Jasmine reports that the time boundary aspect of Focusing partnerships, alongside the structures associated with Gendlin's presentation of Focusing 'steps' or 'stages,' possessed the possibility of creating a specific kind of 'time-space' in which a person could become accustomed to allowing different kinds of relatedness-to-self to occur without that process affecting the rest of life in dysfunctional ways. Jasmine recalled addressing a particular relationship issue that concerned her and that required a dual focus on her own emotional needs and had the potential to destabilise a relationship. She valued having a defined time and place to address the concern such that there was no requirement for this to be taken into what she termed 'the outside world'. Alongside the structure and the boundary, Jasmine identified the need to be able to breach the boundary when a person's process required that. David and Rachel described the same process of stepping outside the time boundaries when the process demanded it.

Research participants' concern with space and time boundaries chime with writers in the psychoanalytic tradition that have struggled with initial rules or guidelines about the number of times in a week that an analyst or psychotherapist would meet with a client (4 or 5 times for an analyst and 2 or 3 times a week for a psychotherapist) (Thummel 2015) and how flexible they can be within that particular tradition while preserving an understanding

of what the offer of a specific time and space for a person to occupy as they wish can mean to a person's own unpredictable process.

Super-ordinate Theme 5: Learning Focusing has particular characteristics

Sub-theme 5.1 Experiential learning needs experiential learning.

More than half of the research participants commented on their first contact with Focusing. In addition, more than half of research participants discussed forms of prior learning that appeared to form a background to or preparation for learning about or experiencing Focusing. One participant, Clara, referred to the pre-reading that was suggested alongside the initial presentation of ideas that formed an introduction to Focusing. Each of these elements of prior or early learning appeared to be significant for participants in relation to their appreciation for Focusing and subsequent grasp of it.

Four participants made reference to an initial exercise in which students were asked to call to mind two people in turn and notice their feeling response to those two people. One person was someone about whom they felt positive and the second person was someone about whom they felt negative. As they noticed their own felt reaction to these two individuals, students were asked to consider any word or phrase that captured or symbolised their felt response. This was then discussed in pairs and people were invited to share anything in a plenary discussion. Sally observed that this simple experience enabled a process in which she was able to:

> …get to something but then…could actually use that to go down into something else so it just kept going into different layers of meaning and maybe like changing as well.

This participant also commented that this process 'just…felt as well that it had always been something that I had been aware of in me, um, but not aware of if you know what I mean'. The exercise appeared to connect with prior experiences but also to initiate the experiential learning that would occur in group sessions and Focusing partnerships throughout the year.

A number of participants referred to prior learning in regard to areas of experience that seemed connected to Focusing. David discussed his prior experience of Mindfulness based

Cognitive Therapy and made links between this prior learning and his subsequent learning in Focusing. He described how Focusing has:

> …an aspect of mindfulness to it in a way which, which, you know, I was able to harness a little bit more. Having done mindfulness before and then utilizing it in a sense of kind of really…of allowing the breath and then sort of the thoughts to sort of come and just very gently kind of be with them in a different kind of way than I might have been feeling. So, what comes up? Um, it was just a different feel to it all.

David described building on the earlier learning and noticing connections between attention to his body in mindfulness (and what one did with one's thoughts) and attention to the body in Focusing. He stated that this prior learning was an essential foundation for his appreciation for Focusing.

Contrariwise, Tessa described her prior experience of meditation as not being 'about my body it was about clearing my head', whereas she observed that 'when we talk about clearing a space through Focusing, it doesn't feel like clearing my head it feels like clearing my body'. She observed that Focusing seemed to build on her previous learning of meditation but that a key part of learning Focusing altered her sense of the purpose of the previous experience.

The above examples offer an insight into how participants made use of experiential learning. Clara commented on initial reading which she did and the initial teaching about Focusing. She noted that her: '…first introduction to Focusing was in the summer before we started the diploma reading the Campbell Purton book that was on the reading list'. She went on to report that:

> …I was really excited by some of the ideas in it but I didn't have any kind of context to kind of understand it in. So, that was it. So, when you…I remember you talking in our first Focusing lesson, talking about connection, and Gaia came into it and all kinds of sort of aspects of how do people feel, and what connects them and where does actual change take place in the body or in the world or the mind you know. So many ideas coming up but were really, yeah, I'd never come across anything like it before.

For this participant, this pre-reading and initial teaching was a foundation and 'beyond that I mean there's the whole process of learning with…[her]…Focusing partner.'.

The title for this theme is 'experiential learning needs experiential learning'. The participants identified above noted that their experience or grasp of Focusing needed the right kind of experiential beginning. The final example chosen illustrates the contrary point that ideas, pre-reading and teaching can form a useful backdrop to such experiential learning, but the latter needed to follow on from that. Other Focusing writers, such as Cornell, have commented that initial Focusing teaching needs to connect with people experientially. Cornell notes that she 'needed to show people in one session how Focusing could be useful to them or they wouldn't be coming back' (2007:31). In a video presentation, Friedman commented that it is contradiction to conduct a Focusing workshop in which people do not have some experience of Focusing (Focusing Teachers – Individual styles and approaches DVD). In a general way, more than half of the research participants suggested that Focusing worked or works when there is a firm experience of the specific techniques and strategies that are suggested or recommended and that this must begin at the beginning.

Sub-theme 5.2: How do you combine a structured curriculum with a natural, spontaneous process?

Research participants had learned Focusing through a structured curriculum within a University setting. This curriculum combined an understanding and practice of the basic Focusing technique as described by Gendlin and others, with paying attention to different types of experiencing process that people might undergo. Fortnightly classes would begin with a check-in within which students would be encouraged to share any experiences of Focusing, including within their FPs, in the intervening week. There would then be the teaching component, followed by a time to practice their Focusing skills either via trying out a new technique that had been described or through using Focusing time to be with themselves in whatever way was useful for them. This was followed by a coming-together or plenary at the end in which people would be encouraged to share any experiences that seemed relevant and pressing. Within intervening weeks there was an expectation that FPs would meet up. This class structure and the specific type of curriculum that students

followed, based, on Purton's and Gendlin's texts, was similar to and different from the types of workshops and classes through which Focusing was and is taught (websites such as the international Focusing Institute and the British Focusing Association describe these). A difference is the attention that is placed on different types of experiencing (curtailed experiencing, suppressed experiencing, divided experiencing) and on particular areas of attention such as on dreams and on the idea of the inner critic. Typically, a Focusing class would concentrate on the basic Focusing process and not attend to the larger curriculum described here. In addition, a Focusing class or workshop is an entirely voluntary experience that people do not feel they *have* to attend. With the research participants interviewed for this project, there was the additional dimension that their Focusing class was part of a course which was contributing to a post-graduate qualification. This was, therefore, an additional difference. It would seem worthwhile to consider the wider issue of how a structured curriculum relates to a technique such as Focusing that is seen by its creator and by many practitioners as a natural spontaneous process (Gendlin 1996, Friedman 2000).

Three research participants identified positive aspects of the structured curriculum approach to learning Focusing. Rachel expressed a wish to:

> …talk a bit about that because I did enjoy that sort of week by week and new aspect of you know Focusing theory which I wasn't aware of and I tried not to read ahead as I wanted it to be a fresh experience in that week so that I came at it without having done all my stuff up here [pointing to her head]

Rachel was describing the particular way in which she had tried to ensure that her approach to the course was experiential and fresh, rather than narrowly cognitive in the way that was characteristic for her. Rachel regarded the 'week-by-week new aspect of Focusing theory' as a positive approach to learning Focusing. Rachel described this as something that she shared with her FP:

> …we've both made a real effort to attune ourselves so the experiential learning you know we did, we did make an effort to put it into practice in the stuff we were doing…

Sally described the curriculum as according almost perfectly with her process during the period of the course. She commented:

> I found that really worked for me because I feel that they're all, they're all that slightly, you know they're all nuanced differently so there's something for me, there was something new to gain from each way of looking at it, so the suppressed experiencing, the curtailed, the divided, they were a different ways that, that Focusing, you know, using those, you know, those headlines just helped me to access things in a different way or work with different experiences that match them.

In this instance, different types of experiencing and different Focusing strategies accorded with her week-by-week experiencing and learning process in the sense that the introduction of a topic or theme, such as the topic of curtailed experiencing would allow the possibility of going into something that might be useful.

Jasmine spoke of finding that the topic of curtailed experiencing arose quite naturally during a meeting with her Focusing partner between class sessions. The topic of an unresolved or unfinished relationship issue seemed to come from nowhere:

> I don't know why it had come into my forefront, but it had to be dealt with and It was the Focusing, I really focused on that, worked my way through it, took it to bits, almost resolved it, put it back in the box and it's done now.

Jasmine did not identify this process as in any way prompted by the class curriculum (although the way of dealing with the issue was defined by class content) and was surprised by the sudden emergence of that issue. In this instance, there was something of a mismatch between structured curriculum and 'natural, spontaneous process'. Jasmine also identifies an issue with the possibility that the structured curriculum might mean that something would be 'forced':

> …so, again It's almost like forced Focusing here, trying to force yourself to focus in a certain direction as opposed to letting it happen organically and naturally. It was this or I could try and focus like this...No it's not happening So, I think that…have that theoretical knowledge - that is a good basis.

Jasmine described valuing the theoretical knowledge that comes from the curriculum but described the process of trying out or practising techniques as unhelpful in that it could create 'forced focusing'.

Greta spoke of a contradiction between the 'natural tendency towards doing this' that she identified within herself and the structured approach to Focusing on the course. This would appear to be a straightforward statement of the contradiction between having a structured curriculum to teach a natural, spontaneous process.

Clara points out that…

> …what really stands out now with a few years sort of distance from it is that the basic process and the soft topics kind of merged a bit [merged a bit] yeah they have.

She points out that the different kind of course that she later participated in, in which a whole weekend could be devoted to a 'soft topic' (Clara's phrase for different experiencings and different strategies) had worked better for her:

> …we came and we had a chance to spend a whole weekend on a subtopic and already had some experience of Focusing to build on.

The inclusion of the topic of Focusing with dreams seemed to have brought this theme to a point of focus. Students were asked to bring a dream to the class which they might explore. It would seem that many people do not recall dreams and, contrariwise, many people recall and are fascinated or perturbed by their dreams. The focus of the class lay in how one would work with a dream that someone had recalled, either recently or in the past, and how Focusing could assist with the process of exploring the dream. A number of participants described having a concern that they would not recall a dream and ten of the eleven research participants derived value from the process of Focusing with dreams. It would seem that this topic is a generally discrete sub-topic that can be taught in a structured way and that 'works' for people even if they haven't or hadn't had a recent dream that was a concern.

This theme of structured curriculum and natural, spontaneous process brings into focus Gendlin's original decision to present Focusing as a series of steps. It would seem, from the perspective of research participants, that a structured curriculum can work well alongside a natural spontaneous process as long as there is clear permission and encouragement for persons to follow their own process and not allow themselves to be 'forced'. This theme is

relevant to the issue of the implications of this research for ongoing practice in relation to Focusing in the context of professional training in Counselling.

Super-ordinate Theme 6: Professional learning for one's counselling practice

Sub-theme 6.1 Is Focusing a part of regular counselling practice?

For all of the research participants in this study, Focusing training was part of professional training as counsellors. The main role of the Focusing part of their course was to facilitate their personal development and also to provide an insight into the ways in which counselling clients might experience change. There was no suggestion that, as counsellors, they would be expected to offer Focusing as a taught procedure to their clients. It was, of course, possible that Focusing might inform their work in less overt ways.

Five of the eleven research participants made reference to ways in which Focusing had featured in their client work. Keith had described ways in which he had more confidently responded to clients who wished to discuss their dreams. Denise spoke of a client who seemed to take to Focusing very naturally and she had supported him with this. Similarly, Jasmine reported that a client had used Focusing and she had worked with him with this in a responsive way. Clara described the ways in which her whole perspective on counselling and on ways in which people change and in what is going on for people had been affected by her participation in Focusing training and her role as a Focusing partner.

Gendlin suggests that Focusing is a practice that informs and provides orientation for counselling practice. This would not, on his account, typically look like a taught Focusing session. Focusing would inform counselling practice in quite subtle ways. Within the practice of other Focusing practitioners, such as Friedman, Focusing might have occurred as a discrete practice within regular therapy sessions alongside Focusing guidance interspersed with more regular responses and other techniques. The aspect of Focusing within counselling practice was a theme within this research study but was not a key part of the responses that research participants made.

I have elaborated six super-ordinate themes that capture sixteen minor themes that emerged from the data collected for this research study. I have made reference to issues and ideas identified in chapter two, where I reviewed the relevant literature for this study. In chapter five, I will draw conclusions from analysis of the data contained here in dialogue with the conclusions from chapter two.

Chapter Five: Discussion

In this chapter, I will discuss the six super-ordinate themes that emerged from interpretative phenomenological analysis of the data and make links between these themes and the review of literature in chapter two (Smith et al 2012:112-113). I will focus on the research aims identified in chapter one.

Super-ordinate Theme 1: Change arises mysteriously from within

Gendlin's main texts on Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy (1978 & 1996) advocate the view that Focusing is a relatively structured process that helps the individual person to access a feeling-process that 'comes to be self-propelled' (1964:100-148). This study provides evidence for that characterisation of Focusing (as illustrated by Greta on pages 88-89). Whether the process is described as one of self-discovery (and the peeling away of layers that are not-self) (David p. 95) or of the resolution of unfinished business, Focusing is a feeling-process in which new experiences appear unbidden but possessing a directionality of their own. It provides evidence that this is a bodily process (Fiona p.98-99) without offering assurance of the contrast that Gendlin seemed to create between the body and the brain within the human person. It provides evidence for the inclusive perspective on this that Cornell, among others, advocates (2007:225), where the felt sense is a complex phenomenon which different people may experience in different ways (Denise p.103). This study demonstrates that practitioners of Focusing typically focus their 'attention there, where…[they]…usually feel things' rather than just thinking about their difficulties or being lost in overwhelming emotions (Gendlin et al 1968:239 & Gendlin 1996:8-15), but do not dogmatically specify that this is about their body rather than their brain. It shows that Focusing offers access to experiences of personal change and self-discovery that seem mysterious and surprising. Gendlin had proposed that features of one's environment which create barriers or blockages become the occasion for the emergence of newness. He illustrates this with reference to the behaviour of ants:

> Merleau-Ponty described a bug whose legs were cut, so that it walked in a new and more complicated fashion. Similarly, I observed an ant on my fuzzy rug, walking in a complicated wiggly way that was obviously quite new to the ant. In these examples

> we see that a new and more complex process can form immediately... Since the organism is always already part of the environment, the previous organization comes out in a new way in a changed environment. (Gendlin 2013:88)

Gendlin has linked this concept of the emergence of newness to ideas about the evolution of species. One part of this thinking is the idea that newness or change is ubiquitous, and that fixity is, therefore, the factor that requires explanation. It rather suggests that many people find the spontaneous emergence of unplanned change to be the surprising anomalous factor. Afford's advocacy of McGilchrist's thesis about brain asymmetry (2014) offers a useful perspective on this point. In an article on 'focusing in an age of neuroscience' (2012), he observes that:

> Fresh experience arises in the right hemisphere; McGilchrist again. He says the left hemisphere deals with its own virtual world of representations of things, which it juggles, refines and puts in order. But for something new to enter our mental world, the right hemisphere, with its connectedness to body, others and environment, is needed. All the fresh and new stuff of our minds arises on this side of the brain. The problem for us is that the left hemisphere cannot know what the right hemisphere knows, and it functions more efficiently if it doesn't have to deal with the right hemisphere's conflicting version of the world, so it tends to blot it out. But if it doesn't let the right hemisphere in again soon enough, it will find itself going round in circles that are stale and dull. (Afford 2012:8)

Afford's take on McGilchrist offers a useful perspective on what I have termed 'the emergence of newness' in human experience – that grappling with personal difficulties and with feeling 'stuck' can lead to emotional, cognitive and behavioural changes that can feel spontaneous, surprising and mysterious and that this response arises partly because anatomical features of the human brain (the inhibitory function of the corpus callosum) mean that new thoughts, feelings and bodily states are not integrated into current structures of knowledge.

Super-ordinate Theme 2: Focusing involving emotional change, cognitive insight and behaviour change

This study suggests that Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy typically involve the processing of emotional responses in ways that are familiar from the emotion theories (and related practices) propounded by EFT practitioners such as Elliott et al (2005) and proponents of mindfulness-based practices such as Kabat-Zinn (2012) (Sally p.108). On the basis of the evidence presented in this study, it would seem that the variety of emotional processing proposals that Purton identified (2004:96-142), derived from Gendlin (1996) and Cornell (2002) alongside the research that informed the work of Elliott et al (2005) offer a useful way of characterising the range of emotional response processes that Focusing encompasses.

The study also provides evidence for the view that cognitive change is a key component of personal change. I discussed Gendlin's ideas about reframing as an intervention within cognitive therapy (1996:243) and observed that much of working with dreams within Focusing seems to involve a process of interpretation on the part of the focuser and by the Focusing partner (and the significance of these) (as illustrated by Keith and Sally p.110). The study also provided evidence that Focusing can involve insight and understanding of self and of personal difficulties (rather than 'just' feeling changes). In a similar fashion, the study provides evidence for Gendlin's view that behavioural change including change processes that entail physical movement can be seen as crucial to an understanding of what Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy entail (Jasmine and Keith p.112). An aim of this study has been to evaluate and develop the integrative aspect of Focusing-oriented Therapy and of the experience of Focusing itself. A key part of this endeavour is to understand afresh the ways in which emotion, cognition and behaviour are interrelated and integral aspects of the human person such that personal change strategies will, typically, include all of these elements.

Super-ordinate Theme 3: Focusing involving a range of processes

In addition to the sense that the model of Focusing that emerges from this study supports an integration of emotion, cognition and behaviour, this study supports the idea that Focusing within Focusing-oriented Therapy, and within the self-help context, is a plural phenomenon. The experience of Focusing captures a range of human change processes.

Evidence from the data collected and analysed here demonstrates that Purton's expansion of the Focusing model to encompass a range of therapeutic change processes is both valuable experientially and offers an integration of ideas and practices that holds together the range of change mechanisms that different clients of psychotherapy might wish or need to access at different points in their therapeutic 'journey' (Jasmine, Owen, Sally, Fiona p.113-126). Within this context, some particular experiential processes appear to stand out. For example, Purton wrote of 'curtailed experiencing', and evidence presented herein suggests that Focusing with 'unfinished business' is a large part of what Focusing is about for many practitioners. A part of this is that curtailed experiencing often links to disruptions in significant personal relationships and resolution of curtailed experiencing seems to be significant for a good number of practitioners (as illustrated by Jasmine p.89). Similarly, working with what Purton terms 'suppressed' experiencing (where some expressions of emotion or of living were disallowed) and the related experience of the 'inner critic', were significant patterns of Focusing activity within this study, alongside, of course, working with dreams (Fiona and Sally).

The plurality of experiences that Focusing can be, suggests that therapy training could profitably offer trainee therapists the opportunity to work with different, clearly differentiated, patterns of experiencing in the ways that this study evidences. Recommendations that follow from this conclusion are developed in chapter six below

Super-ordinate Theme 4: Relationship dynamics and practical aspects of Experiential Focusing

Many studies of effective therapeutic processes point to the significance of a positive relationship between counsellor and client as crucial to the success of therapy in effecting personal change for people. The person-centred tradition, from which Focusing-oriented Therapy derives, emphasises relational dynamics almost to the exclusion of other processes. This is the significance of the notion that Carl Rogers' therapist conditions of empathy, congruence and unconditional acceptance are both 'necessary and sufficient' to effect change in the life of a client who is aware that they are incongruent at the beginning of the therapy process (Rogers 1957). Data collected for this study confirms the significance of

relational factors within the process of personal change. The specific kind of therapeutic relationship that can exist within a Focusing partnership is described by research participants as crucial, in spite of the fact that Focusing can be seen as an individual self-help procedure. The study highlights the importance of safety within the Focusing relationship but also points to the importance of equality – the sense that the two participants are engaging in a shared endeavour where neither participant is in charge (Jasmine p.130-1). It seems significant that these relational factors were emphasised by research participants in the context of Focusing as a self-help procedure which is frequently and rightly compared with mindfulness (MBCT & MBSR) (which is not typically delivered in a relational (1:1) context). I noted in chapter four that Gendlin argues for the inseparability of an individual process from its environment, including, in particular, the relational environment. He argued that Focusing with another person would always be felt as different even if nothing is said and the person seems to be just being with themself. It supports that perspective. Research data also suggests that relational factors are crucial in that problems in the Focusing partnership relationship can adversely affect the whole experience of Focusing itself (as illustrated by Greta p. 132).

In addition to the significance, positive and negative of the relationship between focuser and companion, this study points to the therapeutic significance of what can seem peripheral factors such as time boundaries and the arrangements by which such boundaries can be breached at times and of the place(s) where people meet for Focusing. These factors provide additional corroboration for Gendlin's view that individual processes are always part of an environment (1997). This perspective finds support from the notion of contextualism within the ACT tradition (Hayes at al 2012).

Super-ordinate Theme 5: Learning Focusing has particular characteristics

An aim of this research has been to evaluate and develop the teaching and learning model that informs the delivery of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy within the context of professional training in Counselling/Psychotherapy. This study provides direct and indirect insight into this topic. A key part of this theme was the importance of experiential learning for learning experientially. Research participants described ways in which their prior

experiential (and conceptual) learning fed into the training in Focusing, that early experiential exercises had ongoing significance and, crucially, that a repeated pattern of theory and practice, with no requirement that a particular technique should be tried out if it did not immediately seem to 'fit', was successful as a teaching and learning strategy. The experiential practice elements of the training were experienced by the majority of research participants as an open space that could be filled with practice of particular techniques or could be filled with personal exploration that 'worked' at that moment. Some found that the pattern of new learnings within a predictable lesson pattern worked almost magically (Rachel and Sally p. 139-40). From the perspective of the researcher, teaching spontaneous experiential processes within a structured curriculum was a challenge. Data collected here indicated that this worked. I argue below that a conclusion from the data is that the range of experiential processes that research participants commented upon could profitably be taught in counsellor training as possible aspects of a model of practice with counselling clients rather than 'just as' an aspect of their personal development curriculum, and this would seem to follow from their observations about the teaching and learning style of the courses as well as an outcome of the review of literature conducted in chapter two.

Super-ordinate Theme 6: Professional learning for one's counselling practice

As stated above, an aim of this study has been to consider the significance of teaching and learning Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy for the ongoing personal and professional development of counsellors and psychotherapists. There have been a number of studies of the effect of personal therapy on the personal and professional development of therapists and psychologists (e.g., Rake & Paley 2009), and this study provides good evidence of the effectiveness of Focusing within a Focusing partnership as a personal development tool. The experience of research participants was not one of learning Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy as part of the skills training component of their professional training. As noted in chapter four, just under half of research participants observed that Focusing had featured in some way in their client work. Learning Focusing within Focusing partnerships seems to create an implicit understanding of Focusing-oriented Therapy and an implicit understanding of some of the skills involved in facilitating the experience of Focusing when a person is functioning in the companion role. These implicit understandings had an effect

on some trainees' work with clients. Recommendations for initial (and continuing professional development) training in therapy that flow from this are developed below in chapter six.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this research study has been fourfold:

1)To develop the theory of Experiential Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy in light of criticisms and limitations raised by theoreticians and practitioners of other related approaches to therapy.

2) To evaluate Focusing-oriented Therapy as an integrative model for therapy.

3) If appropriate, develop a theory and practice for the integration of therapy.

4) To evaluate and develop methods of counsellor education that incorporate insights from the practice of Experiential Focusing.

Chapter 2 of this study was an analytic review of the literature associated with Focusing-oriented Therapy and related therapeutic disciplines. That analysis led to a number of conclusions that I will summarise here:

1. Focusing-oriented Therapy should be understood and taught as a relationship-oriented approach to therapy that prioritises the offer of an unconditional therapeutic relationship where the client takes the lead. The offer of strategies and techniques on the part of the therapist occurs within this relationship and should not be the dominant element. This is what is meant by Gendlin's statement that Focusing-oriented Therapy 'is client-centered therapy' (Gendlin 1996:301, his spelling).
2. Within the therapeutic relationship, Focusing-oriented Therapy offers a plurality of techniques and strategies that are an integration of human experiential responses with Focusing at the centre. In order to offer these strategies in the context of a client-centred relationship, trainee counsellors would benefit from participation in a regular Focusing partnership within which experiential strategies are shared, an equal, unconditional relationship is created and the person in the Focusing role takes the lead.
3. Focusing itself is best understood and taught as a process of human responding or experiencing in which people may or may not prioritise physical bodily processes. Cognition, emotion, bodily feeling and movement and behaviour changes are understood and experienced in an holistic way. The analysed data

presented within this study demonstrates that the Focusing process can be life-changing and transformative. The research basis for Focusing remains the original research conducted by Gendlin and surveyed by Krycka & Ikemi (Krycka & Ikemi 2016).

4. The range of strategies that Focusing-oriented Therapy offers can all be seen as facets of Focusing – this is part of what is meant by therapy being Focusing-*oriented*.
5. Focusing involves an attitude of radical acceptance of human experience(s) as the basis of processes of change. As such, Focusing involves an approach to human experiences that is formally and practically similar to that taught in mindfulness classes. Learning mindfulness should be understood as part of what Focusing-oriented Therapy can offer in line with client need and wishes.
6. Radical acceptance of human experience within Focusing involves innovative uses of language to create the right relationship with the self. Learning Focusing and practising Focusing-oriented Therapy entail becoming adept at different facilitative language strategies including those developed within ACT.

A number of key recommendations for further research and development of practice flow from the analysis of data summarised in chapter 5 and the review of literature conducted in chapter 2:

1. Further research into each therapeutic avenue identified in Gendlin's 1996 book and developed in Purton's 2004 and 2007 books. This would include:
2. Review and analysis of all versions of any particular therapeutic strategy (derived from different traditions) in order to establish the essence of such strategies in the ways that Gendlin described. Purton's reformulation of Gendlin's ideas provides an essential starting point for this.
3. Development of a task analysis for each avenue in the ways that Rice & Greenberg describe ((Rice & Greenberg 1984:124-146). This would include identification of task 'markers' for each avenue.
4. A particular focus would be development of the Focusing-oriented versions of the cognitive and behavioural models of therapeutic change. As with (a) above, different therapeutic strategies associated with CBT, more generally, and ACT in particular, would be reviewed and developed via a task analysis, with use of task

'markers'. I emphasise the cognitive and behavioural models since I consider that these avenues (in spite of their inclusion in Gendlin's book) have been neglected in the development of Focusing-oriented Therapy since 1996.

5. A second point of focus would be the development of the Focusing-oriented therapeutic avenues that explore 'the life-forward direction' and 'values' (Gendlin 1996:259-275). This would be an integration of therapeutic attention to values within different traditions.
6. Development of a therapist training model that builds on the research study conducted here but including the additional detail that arises from (a), (b) & (c) above.
7. Research into the whole integrated model of Focusing-oriented Therapy.

Points 1 – 7 above are aspects of the development of a middle-range theory of Focusing-oriented Therapy as an integrative model of therapy, with recommendations for further research activity that flows from the work undertaken here.

Discussion of the analysed data in chapter 5 fed into the development of the middle-range theory and the understanding of Focusing-oriented Therapy as an integrative discipline but retained a key focus on the significance of Focusing practice within counsellor education. Further conclusions and recommendations that flow from the analysed data are as follows:

1. The learning context for counsellor training needed to mirror what clients would experience in that different change processes needed to be offered and facilitated without being forced. Interpretative analysis of the data showed that trainee counsellors could come to experience the change processes of Focusing and some of the theoretical ideas that underpin this work when the learning environment was suitably facilitative and allowed lots of space for exploration and sharing within partnerships. So…
2. …part of the conclusion from the analysis of data is that the curriculum for Focusing within professional training needs to be broad and there needs to be the flexibility for trainees to access these change processes within their own experience and not just at a theoretical level.

3. The plurality of experiences that Focusing can be, suggests that therapy training should offer trainee therapists the opportunity to work with different, clearly differentiated, patterns of experiencing in the ways that this study evidences. There are three parts to this recommendation;
4. Trainees would benefit from having the opportunity to explore different patterns of experiencing (in the Focusing and companion role) as described in this study. This will mean that people can come to acquire an internal understanding of what, for example, curtailed experiencing is and feels like and of its resolution.
5. Trainees could receive training at a theoretical level about the different patterns of experiencing and their resolution.
6. Training courses would benefit from including training in the identification of what EFT trainers term 'task markers' (Greenberg et al 1993:167) as discussed above in chapter two.

These latter points can be summarised as follows:

7. As stated above, a useful recommendation from this study would be that training programmes make explicit the implicit learning identified in this study and extend the learning to include the identification of task 'markers' and careful extended training in how therapists can work confidently with counselling clients in the ways identified in this study. This latter point does not mean that therapists should learn a series of skills and techniques that are applied mechanically but that the learning should include sufficient exposure to the plurality of different (focusing-oriented) responses to human patterns of experiencing so that therapists can confidently and sensitively respond to the variety of material that counselling clients bring into the therapy room.

I have drawn conclusions that relate to the research aims identified in chapter one and I have placed emphasis on the development of a middle range theory of Focusing-oriented therapy. A part of the research data that emerged from interviews with research participants in this study related to the experience of Focusing outside of the therapy context. Research participants were counselling students, but they were not being therapists in the context of the Focusing partnerships that they participated in. They provided valuable insights into Focusing outside of the therapy context.

One of my conclusions, therefore, is that Focusing as a self-help or peer support procedure outside of the therapy context was a successful therapeutic intervention. Participants maintained Focusing partnerships for lengthy periods of time and discovered that the processes that they engaged in were therapeutically valuable and, in some cases life-changing. On the basis of this research, it would seem important that Focusing should be disseminated in the ways that different Focusing bodies have tried to disseminate since the creation of the Focusing movement in the 1970s. I would recommend the following:

8. Focusing can be taught and practiced in a version of the group context described by participants in the research here where a range of Focusing techniques were shared within a permissive context (i.e., people did not have to practice the specific techniques but could choose to use Focusing time in whatever way seemed helpful to them). Research participants described a university class setting but key parts of the learning and practice environment could transfer to other contexts where people wish to explore personal issues and personal responses.
9. The Focusing class that research participants were part of involved a pattern of learning that was oriented towards their personal development but also had a curriculum that included the different patterns of experiencing/responding that Purton had identified. This gave participants the opportunity to explore these different 'focusings' without any element of prescription. There was always an option 3, where people's practice would be whatever worked for them in the moment. This combination of a structured curriculum with freedom is a good model for Focusing classes and groups away from the formal therapy setting.
10. The Focusing relationship pattern, as described by research participants, is a main way of practising and learning Focusing whether as part of a class or group or through some sort of other means (such as an online resource). The relationship is essential to this and it is likely that there would need to be a teaching and supervisory arrangement to support Focusing partnerships on an ongoing basis. Focusing partnerships are an effective form of peer support that could be widely disseminated. The freedom for each person in the partnership to use the time as they wished and the discipline of asking for whatever response or

support the focuser discerns that they need means that Focusing partnerships can be a major therapeutic resource outside of the formal therapy setting.

I will go on to discuss proposals for developments in the practice of psychotherapy and for related practices that arise from this research, discussing the limitations of this study and conclude with proposals for future research activity that would follow on from this thesis.

The thesis demonstrates that the strong unconditional relationship that has characterised the therapeutic alliance within Focusing-oriented Therapy is exemplified in the relationship that is created within a Focusing partnership. This relationship appears to be a condition of the success or failure of the focusing process as an agent of personal growth and change. The Focusing partnership pattern is a unique open and inclusive peer support pattern. This relational pattern holds lessons for other contexts and situations.

In addition to the above conclusions, the thesis has shown that the kind of group learning environment that research participants described offered a facilitative kind of experiential learning that translated into the experience of focusing partners. For some participants, learning the theory elements of focusing was crucial. The person-centred group setting with permission to diverge in terms of the practice that people opted for was highly facilitative.

The thesis demonstrates the effectiveness of the approach to teaching and learning described by research participants and the implications of this for ongoing training in Focusing-oriented Therapy and, indeed, psychotherapy more widely. The integrative model of therapy based around different Focusing processes reconceptualised as different but related human responses should be taught as an experiential process (as described by research participants) as a guide for practice.

As discussed above, teaching of Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy should be based on the group format assessed within this thesis, with a permissive inclusive learning environment that offers participants the whole suite of techniques and experiences that Focusing-oriented Therapy offers.

The Focusing partnership pattern should be disseminated as widely as possible as a personal growth strategy.

I am aware of a number of limitations of this study that future work would rectify. The sample size for data collection was quite small and was limited to one cohort of people from one institution, so while the study provided a rich source of data, it is an ideal springboard for future studies. With that in mind, a wider sample and the opportunity to return to the field to follow up areas of interest as the research developed would improve the data and broaden the scope of the study.

As regards future research activity;
I would recommend a widened use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) within counselling research, which is still overly dominated by outcome measures and would benefit from the close attention to individual cases that IPA facilitates. This is a general point, but further IPA based research into Focusing-oriented Therapy and ACT would be especially beneficial.
I would also recommend the development of a wider culture of practitioner research in relation to the counselling field in order to widen the field of 'evidence-based practice' that counsellors can draw upon.
In addition, counselling research would benefit from following up some of Gendlin's suggestions as discussed in this thesis. Small-scale projects that address specific human difficulties and problems and examined techniques and solutions would accord well with the larger project suggested above. As Gendlin argued, small scale projects can point out areas that need further work and eliminate initiatives that do not have promise.

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Appendix One: Research Participant Transcript - Tessa

Some annotations:
FP = Focusing Partner
F = Focuser or focusing
G = Gendlin
NF = Neil Friedman
exp = experience
Q = question
Intro = introductory
CAS = clearing a space

Transcript one - Tessa:	Exploratory notes:	Emergent themes:
Researcher It's recording. **Researcher** So, I'm interested in your... fundamentally I think your experience of focusing, in the sense of how it's been for you, your experience of focusing is being over the course of this last year. Obviously if there is any prior experience of focusing as well but, you know that's what I'm interested in: your experience of it. Can you say a bit about that? **Participant** I hadn't done any focusing before, although I had/have been meditating for a while so I had become used to maybe sensing how I felt in my body. I remember the first experience of focusing was just in the, in the introductory week and you gave us a little taster of it and I think I found it quite surprising how, how the impact it had on my feeling about the thing. I think you asked us to think about a person, it was just very interesting and not just for me but I was	Link of F with meditation identified. Meditation offers sensing in the body Exp of F in intro week 'surprising' that simple exercise was powerful Lots of people affected by intro week F ex	Basic Focusing exercise on people I like vs people I don't like worked for people including this individual Group learning environment – uncertain how to characterise this.

aware that it seemed that a lot of people within the group had been surprised by just that 10 minute sort of experience. So I was really excited by the idea of the focusing classes or tutorials and open to exploring more and when we had the sessions, even though initially I felt as though there was quite a barrier between my focusing partner and I, the experience of focusing came, being able to sense sense what was going on inside me and being able to package up those feelings and put them to one side and then to focus and drill down on one came very quickly to me and I realised that this was something that felt significant and I was really pleased to be able to have had that experience and I suppose I...after that I would say that focusing became absolutely my number one thing and I was really open to whatever **Participant** the sessions could bring. I liked, I used to get frustrated with this, we weren't focusing enough. We talked a lot about [I remember you saying that, yeah] and I really wanted to use some of the sessions to do the focusing. And then it it shifted and we did. We did use	Short 10 min ex. imp of short ex to 'sell' F Ref to classes or tutorials - differences? Barrier with FP Ease of sensing what is going on 'inside' Able to package up feelings and put to one side Then 'drill down' Very quick ability F process felt significant – why? My 'no. 1 thing' Open to it Not F enough in class (NF spoke of workshops where you don't get to focus…)	Relationship with FP big factor – can be a barrier – hard to define and needs work Some people have an immediate engagement with and 'success' with the F process Frustration with not enough F in an F class Learning pattern/exp with different elements worked for a participant.

the sessions for focusing and I really enjoyed that balance,		Use of G term avenue worked
Participant I really enjoyed the balance, being able to just talk, you know, briefly about a technique or you know an avenue to explore and then to be given the choice to or not have a go at that and then have a go and come back either to share what had been going on and I found it fascinating listening to the experiences of other people. So not only was I really fascinated in my own experience and thrilled by what you know experiencing it but also just hearing how different people's perceptions were and actually learning, learning quite a lot about how difficult it was for some people to feel	Enjoyed pattern of brief talk about technique, then have a go or not, then come back to share. Use of term 'avenue' for particular experiencing processes. Fascinated in own exp and other people's too – value of sharing in class Interesting that other people struggled to feel	Group context for sharing valued Some people can't seem to naturally feel in their body what an issue is for them – not felt in the body Surprise at different experience – lack of bodily feeling – curiosity – what is that about? Big Question for participant – what is going on for people? – very curious
Participant and that I suppose...I suppose surprised me.	Surprise at others' exp (not feeling)	See above
Participant It made me question what was going on for them, you know, what was it that they, why was it that they weren't able to tap into	Big Q Why can't tap into bodily feelings?	Why so easy for some people? Issue of other people's frustration

those, those bodily feelings. You know what [you were].		Fp great difference in feeling aspects of F
Participant	Q self – why so easy?	
Yes. What is it? What's going on? How come it's so easy for me to do that. And how come and I could see the frustration in their, you know, retelling of what was going on and I know that a few people just just gave up on that and to a certain extent my partner found it very very difficult.	Others' frustration noticeable Partner's difficulties – very, very difficult	Dynamics of an egalitarian therapeutic relationship Trust in fp relationship can take time and effort
Participant		On both sides
And the first few months we. It took us a little bit of time to develop a friendship and to learn to. Trust one another.	Trust in fp slow to develop	
Participant	Other's trust slow to develop	Big issue of experience not shared in egalitarian relationship
I think probably for her it took her longer to trust me than for me to trust her but it was a slow process. And at one point I felt.		
Participant	Real issue that other not exp the same stuff 'compromised' by it	
Compromised by the fact that I really enjoyed focusing and wanted to do it and I seem to get so much out of the sessions		Shared commitment to accompany

whereas [she wasn't] she wasn't. And how do you how do you carry on that partnership with somebody who had no certainly. **Participant** At no point made me feel she didn't want to accompany me but I didn't feel I could do the same for her because she wasn't getting what I was getting out of it. **Participant** So that was that was, that was hard for a while. But then but then she started to. And it was a little bit, and it was lovely because she would say that actually she was able to let herself because she was witnessing what was happening to me. So, in a way having me modelling what was going on enabled her to start getting in touch with her the feelings that were going on for her and to release a lot of emotions. It wasn't just that she was also receiving counselling you know there were lots... She was changing so much during that time but there were all sorts of reasons why she mightn't have been able to tap into to those, those feelings but it felt really reassuring that by halfway through the year	FP wanted to accompany her Struggle to accompany when no exp the same – difficult to accompany when other's exp so different Fp started to exp same f process a little bit Significant of FP having witnessed what she had exp Modelling has positive effect on partner F process leads to release of emotions in FP Success of F linked to being in counselling too FP was changing so much All sorts of reasons why she couldn't tap into feelings Took until halfway through the year to make progress Best when it was an equal exp in Fp relationship	Need to commitment to accompany when exp not shared Time can alter inner dynamics of F exp. What time frame? What sort of commitment is required? Being witness to other's exp makes a different and can further effort and commitment, an FP can be a model. F process leads to release of emotions in FP F is part of overall change process alongside other avenues Different reasons why people can't ap into feelings – what are they? Time frame (see above) can be 6 months?? Best FP exp is equal exp (as well as equal commitment)

it was an equal experience and there were times when I **Researcher** So, in terms of you being a companion, say. **Researcher** [Yeah] then so there was that thing of feeling this doesn't feel right because I'm kind of having this experience so to speak and she's not, that bit [yeah]. And then, but in that earlier phase when you were being in the companion role [yeah]. How was that? for you to? **Researcher** Did that feel strange to to. **Researcher** I mean yeah **Participant** it		

Participant at first it felt awkward but quite quickly.		FP is not about having and agenda or pushing – sensitivity to how far a person can go is essential
Participant Quite quickly it was fine inasmuch as I just had to be really sensitive to how long how, how, how far she could go and, and how long she would want to focus for. So it might be, it grew over time so to begin with she always had her eyes open, didn't want to close her eyes and really was so in her head it was so...That it felt like a conversation and I would be following the pattern of being the companion but, but actually it still felt like a conversation and then it got to a point where she would automatically want to close her eyes and feel what was going on but it would be a short period of time for her um and she wouldn't necessarily want to explore all the different things going on for her.	Part of comp/accompanier role was to be sensitive to how long or how far she (FP) could go or want to focus for Fp had eyes open at start – significance?? Eyes open means 'being in one's head', (not in one's feelings/body) – it felt like a 'conversation' Shorter period of eyes closed and feeling and wouldn't want to explore 'all the things that were going on for her	Eyes open vs eyes closed in F process (and FP process) – one idea is that eyes closed is in the body and eyes open is in the mind. What is this contrast? People can be reluctant to all the things that are going on for them. This can be associated with the nuts and bolts of the F process as in eyes open and so on. People choose what to focus on and some people will not choose up front what to focus on. F process can have a spontaneous quality where an issue 'arrives' or 'chooses itself', what does this mean? Where does the choice come from? It does not seem to be random, but it is not chosen in the traditional way, so what drives the choice process?
Participant She would decide before we'd even started focusing, what she was going to be focusing on. Whereas for me, I didn't know what I was going to be focusing on it would, it would arrive. Whereas it was clear that she wanted	FP would decide focus in advance – contrast to F For F, topic would 'arrive' in process of Focusing For FP, choice of topic and limit of time on topic partly because she would become 'very emotional'	

to talk about this and then it might only last for five or 10 minutes or she would become very emotional and then I would know that there was only a certain amount of time she would want to feel those emotions so we would need to. **Participant** So, it was about I suppose as a counsellor it was it was giving me practice in really being sensitive to the other and and not sort of pursuing a pathway just because that was the pathway that I seemed to think I wanted to pursue but absolutely responding to her, what was going on for her. Although I still carried on feeling guilty because I still felt I was getting more out of it, as a companion I didn't feel, I didn't feel too awkward about that. **Researcher** so, It's kind of, it's an okay thing to have that, to be in a companionship and to have a partnership, rather, and to have that difference. [Yep] but that it, there are attendant kind of feelings that come with that: feeling guilty perhaps feeling awkward or.	– then she would only want to feel those for a limited amount of time FP relationship meant as a counsellor being very sensi to other's different needs <u>Not</u> 'pursuing a pathway' as an FP but going with what FP wanted 'absolutely responding to her' Guilt feelings but not too awkward	Reluctance in regard to the F process can be linked to the sense that one might become too emotional. FP relationship builds counsellor competences <u>Not</u> 'pursuing a pathway' as an FP but going with what FP wanted 'absolutely responding to her' A range of different feelings when FP does not share F exp different to describe or characterise feelings – guilt, no,

Participant Yeah, and both of those things aren't both of those words aren't quite right. But it's a w...Something I've found out.. This is not about feeling guilt. It's almost like wanting, wanting your partner to have the same experience and feeling bad for them that you're really experiencing something so much more than they are and that not feeling right, not feeling fair somehow. **Researcher** So, for you personally then what was your, So you said that before you started this experience of sensing in the body. [Yeah] in the context of meditation for example, when you did that initial thing in that first week whether it is focusing on someone that you feel okay about or a person that you feel negatively about. and Something struck you about that... Feeling it. **Researcher** So what was that all about for you then?. That business of feeling in your body about things. What? How would you kind of.	‘guilt’ and ‘awkward’ aren’t quite right words Not guilt but wanting the other to exp this and feeling ‘bad’ that they are not. Not ‘fair’, not ‘right’	Or awkward…no… ‘not right’, ‘not fair’, feeling ‘bad’

Researcher What was special about that or? **Participant** I think it's, it's noticing the sensation in the body. **Participant** is the first step. And so, when, when you think about when you let the thing that you are going to focus on or whatever sit with you and just notice, notice that feeling in the body or the tension. And for me. **Participant** There are, there are images as well... Noticing them was always. **Participant** was a nice Recog... Recognition of them is a nice thing to do but what focusing does is it takes it to another step and I think that when you meditate or when you feel something often you can feel the feeling, feeling will	Significance of 'noticing the sensation in the body' Pattern of 'thinking about what you will focus on and then notice 'feeling in the body' or 'tension'. Also, <u>images</u> Recognition of images was nice	F involves noticing sensation in the body (for some people?) F can be started by cognition – thinking about what I will focus on and then turning to the body – feeling and tension in the body. Also images – what's the significance of that?

come quite quickly. But we don't give yourself time to then sit with the feeling or let it speak to us. **Participant** And um and again working with clients it's so obvious when they feel something but it's, they're so quick to then just push it to one side and we're so used to doing that. **Participant** And so what was happening with focusing was that that recognition was then allowed to move to to seeing it properly it's not just a fleeting recognition but it is looking at it and feeling it. **Participant** And then just letting it speak to you without any conscious pushing, you're not trying to understand it consciously. **Participant** Yeah. So [letting it speak to you] yeah.	Significance of 'sitting with feelings' and 'letting it speak to us' Observation of clients feeling something, then pushing to one side quickly. 'we' are used to doing that F involves recognition leading to 'seeing it properly' – 'looking at it' and 'feeling it' 'letting it speak to' vs 'trying to understand it consciously'	Significance of 'sitting with feelings' and 'letting it speak to us' in F process Contrast between above and common process of feeling something and pushing it to one side – counselling clients can be observed doing that and so can other people in life. F involves 'seeing it properly' – 'looking at it' and 'feeling it' 'letting it speak to' vs 'trying to understand it consciously' what does this mean?

Participant And it's that, we talk you know you talk to us and you know Gendlin talked about sort of edge of awareness and it's that letting it letting your brain take a back seat and letting the image or the feeling somehow by being with it and for me I thought I would be one of the people who would put words, I'm a wordy person so I thought I would be a person to put words to feelings but I wasn't I wasn't. What happened was I would end up with an image, not a metaphor but a shape, a colour, a shape and then by letting by, by kind of looking at it almost [you'd have your eyes closed] I would have my eyes closed and the shape. **Participant** I'm not a visual person at all. So it was a surprise that it was a visual thing but it almost wasn't a visual thing it was, it almost was I couldn't see it. **Participant** It just was a sense of a shape and the sense of a colour and sometimes there would be a scene coming through it or a different or	Ref to Gendlin (and ML teaching) Link to concept of 'edge of awareness' Letting 'brain take a back seat' Letting image or feeling by 'being with it' <u>Not</u> putting words to feelings Exp of image – shape and colour 'I'm not a visual person' Not a visual thing, I couldn't see it almost A sense of a shape, sense of a colour, a scene coming through it	Participant uses concept of edge of awareness in relationship to F. This is phenomenological concept and also technical vocab Idea of letting 'brain take a back seat' – what does this mean? It is a phenomenological concept but what does it mean in reality? Is is meaningful? Is it letting the left brain take a back seat? I.e. the right brain comes to the fore. This is a mode of mind idea. Not actual anatomical separation (they are linked by the corpus calosum) but diff modes of mind or styles of processing by each part of the brain F process does not mean putting words to feelings – or does it? Is it that we do that and the feeling decides that the word is right? Imp that part with quite visual exp of F described herself as not a visual person. What is visual and non-visual experiencing? Real?

different quality to the, to the shape. You know sometimes it would feel as though it was almost moving and sometimes it would feel quite solid but there was something around the quality of the shape that I couldn't see but sort of could see that by focusing in on that and linking it with the thing. So I wouldn't be abandoning the topic of focus. **Participant** It would still be there sort of almost represented by this thing and then something about just let letting it looking at it being with it I would somehow come to an understanding or some kind of resolution or a just it moved me somehow to to knowing something more about myself in this thing. **Participant** You know this is **Researcher** so so when there is this notion of finding the right word for it or something of that sort you could have imagined that that would have been what you would have done [I	A different quality to the shape It might be moving Sometimes quite solid The quality of the shape – significance (what? Why?) Couldn't see but sort of could see Focusing and linking it (the shape) to the topic or issue Shape would mean that it was still there and I would 'somehow' come to 'an understanding' of some kind of resolution' or it 'moved me somehow' and or knowing something more about 'myself in this thing'	Important data – F exp 'A sense of a shape, sense of a colour, a scene coming through it' Participant describe phenomenon of a shape 'seen' and the shape 'moving' sometimes the shape is solid – what does that mean? Visuals v unclear – can see/can't see Focusing and linking it (the shape) to the topic or issue Shape would mean that it was still there and I would 'somehow' come to 'an understanding' of some kind of resolution' or it 'moved me somehow' and or knowing something more about 'myself in this thing'

thought I would that would be what I would do] and in fact it wasn't that [no] the symbolization if that's the right way of putting it was. **Researcher** If anything slightly visual visual but not seen **Participant** yeah almost felt like yeah like something you'd watch in 'The Deep'...(laughter) like some Kind of thing at the bottom of the really deep ocean some kind of not like a scary creature but some kind of i don't know yeah those colours and that. **Participant** That feeling, that atmosphere. **Researcher** Are you able to give an example of a particular time you focused and what, how it went or what it was about or... **Participant**	'seeing it' is like something from 'the deep' in terms of colours and feeling and atmosphere, not a scary creature as in the film	seeing an image can be like colour, feeling and atmosphere – like in a film

Yeah I think there was one that really did it um a time when I was focusing on. **Participant** Mike my my ex partner and really finding it hard hard to, to understand my feelings about, about him and not wanting to be in that relationship any more. And, and it was, it was a difficult time because he was very unhappy and so I was causing him unhappiness and it was it felt awful to be, to be to be so vague about, to not understand my own feelings to come to know that I didn't want to carry on in a relationship but not really know why. Just know I didn't want to and that's and so we focused on that and where were we? we were in the student in one of the student union bar upstairs the grad graduate student but one of those rooms and we'd never focused in there before and it was so powerful. What happened was I brought this as a, I let it be I didn't come with it as a thing. **Participant** I always come with several things that might be the topic for focusing but it was insistent it would be and then and then I let, felt let	Starting point for F was relationship issue and 'hard to understand feelings about' (a person) and about the relationship, and a wish to end it Concern over effect (of own ambivalence) on partner/ex-partner Not wanting to continue with Relationship but not knowing why Significance of location (link to Neil Friedman on topistics?) Did not choose issue as a point of F 'I didn't come with it as a thing'	Staring point of F e.g. an issue that is hard to understand one's feelings about… feelings as in emotion about F addresses complexity e.g. knowing what one wants but concerned over effects on another person… Also starting point is knowing basic feeling response to situation but not knowing why… complexity Is there a significance of location for F (link to Neil Friedman on topistics?) Issues not chosen in advance in F

the feeling be in my body and then from that feeling the image was of a kind of flat stone large stone shaped dark amber shape that was wood wood wood wasn't hard. **Participant** It was probably you know soft to that touch and, and that seemed to represent my feelings about Mike. But then there was in it. um um a really. vivid red dark red gash a **Participant** Seam in it. **Participant** That really represented something not okay. And it was, it felt as though all of the all of the positive was that Amber sort of shape but this, this seam of and it made me feel when I when I focused in on it it made me feel so hurt and and almost disgusted by it. I I rejected it absolutely this seam. It felt like a seam and and it seemed to represent what was not okay about, not about our relationship but Mike as a person. This seam that was so much part of him that was something I didn't like, i didn't I didn't	F brings several things that might be the topic – but 'it' was insistent – how does that work? What is happening there? Feeling about it in the body then image (of a flat stone, dark amber, wood, soft to touch) Symbolic link between soft to touch and feelings about ex-partner (dark red gash, seam in the wood) Symbolic link between dark red gash and feeling hurt and disgusted Emotional reaction – 'absolute rejection' of the seam.	F brings several things that might be the topic – but 'it' was insistent – how does that work? What is happening there? Order of Focusing (for participant) = feel in body, then image (with colours and type and texture) Phenomenon for participant – link seen between softness of texture and emotional response to person in real life Phenomenon for Participant – specific feature of image reveals significance for person in their life Strong link (phenomenologically) for participant between image detail and emotional response participant – personal emotional response to aspect of image

respect it. I didn't I couldn't accept it about him as a person and it was really, it really struck me. And I found it quite upsetting. but It clarified for me that actually what it was was I love this person and there is so much about him and our past that is really good. But this bit just is never going to be all right. **Participant** It's never going to be okay and it is part of who he is and I can't get over it. It is absolutely embedded in everything and I obviously can't get past it. **Participant** So it's it kind of I suppose it reinforced for me the experience of focusing and the image or all that that whatever you'd call that clarified for me, it gave me a sense of certainty that um I was moving in the right direction. **Researcher** and prior to ascending to the room/toilet Upstairs in the .	Seam represented what was not okay about ex-partner Images and textures all symbolised features – good bits of person (and rel) and aspects of person that were disliked 'It will never be alright' Seam showed that feature was part of who (he) is – absolutely embedded F process created certainty about her direction in life (re: relationship)	Images and textures all symbolised features – good bits of person (and relationship) and aspects of person that were disliked Outcome of F was clarity about life situation

Researcher student union you you wouldn't have necessarily chosen to speak about that. [No]. **Participant** I think I think what was what was the issue was more about why is it that you know why can't I make up why can't I make a decision? You know why. Why is it. What this is really hard and I don't know what the right way is. Whereas afterwards I kind of felt like okay so it's still really hard. **Participant** Still looks still painful but actually it feels pretty certain that that's not going to change [the quality to that certainty]. **Participant** Yeah yeah **Researcher** and your partner was kind of just reflecting as you were going along or? [Yeah].	Issue for F was why can't I decide? Outcome – still really hard and painful but new certainty	Outcome – still really hard and painful but new certainty – not about superficial emotional response (not happiness trap)

Participant My partner was, having a partner is really key to the focusing experience. I've tried focusing on my own and I do occasionally try focusing on my own. But, it's okay, it's quite useful but it's completely different - somehow having the partner there, I don't know, an energy or there's something magic going on. So but having said that I used to get so annoyed with my partner and because she would just say the wrong thing and kind of be annoying when she was accompanying me (lucky to be) so by this time our relationship was really strong so I could (gestures with a palm) [I just remember her describing your use of the Palm] just shut up. **Participant** I think, yeah. **Participant** So she was really important but I almost didn't need her to say anything **Researcher**	Having FP reflecting is key to the F process Has focused on own but it is 'completely different' – what is that difference? FP offers 'energy' FP offers 'magic' Issue of FP saying 'wrong things' and being 'annoying' Stronger FP relationship meant that palm gesture could shut FP up Fp really imp and almost no need to say anything	FP is key to process for participant F Has focused on own but it is 'completely different' – what is that difference? FP offers 'energy' FP offers 'magic' Typical dynamics of relationship in FP – being annoying – saying wrong things and being corrected by F – Presence of other v imp – words often not nec – what is that effect? G ideas? Inter-relationality…Phenomenological concepts? Heidegger etc

right okay, so her being there her being willing to kind of accept your needs as it were and respond in a way that was not unhelpful. **Researcher** [Yeah] was important [yeah]. And in one way if she was just there and didn't say a thing. that would be still really important. **Participant** Yeah definitely. And you know there were occasions when she would say something and it would be helpful. But more often than not you know my overwhelming feeling is usually I didn't want her to say anything [but you wanted her there?] .definitely **Participant** something about it there is some kind. **Participant** It's not just facilitation it's I mean obviously you describe it being able to describe in words the image that is really useful and one wouldn't do that oneself, you know you	Minimal definition of what was needed for FP: being there, accepting F's needs, respond in not unhelpful ways… Saying something helpful was good Most of the time – unhelpful stuff	Minimal definition of what was needed for FP: being there, accepting F's needs, respond in not unhelpful ways… individual F participant view Not negative view only – of FP response participant F - Saying something helpful was good Using words to speak to FP about describing image – really useful – on

might do it internally sort of look at it but somehow yeah just using words to describe what was going on. **Participant** But also but it's much more than that. It's having a companion. It's it's feeling that that person is with you to experience it. **Participant** Much more than just be a canvas to paint a picture on [it's sometimes described that way isn't it that you when you physically write something or physically represent or draw something and then you can then look at that and it's there it's kind of there in front of you. So, in one sense a person who is receiving what you're saying is kind of like that] Yeah [but what you're saying is it's much, much more than that] it's much more than that. **Participant** It's about the connection that you have with the person. During that time and having them feel what you're feeling somehow the empathy that it brings.	Using words to speak to FP about describing image – really useful – on own would 'internally look at it' – not as good Imp of having a companion – someone who is there to exp it with you. Having a companion is 'much, much more' than having a person who is like a canvas upon which you can write	own would 'internally look at it' – not as good Imp of having a companion – someone who is there to exp it with you. (see above on significance) Participant Focuser individual - Having a companion is 'much, much more' than having a person who is like a canvas upon which you can write - It is about connection with a person The FP feels what you're feeling – empathy

Researcher It is and I don't have any sense of this being the case is it that sometimes it's felt unsafe for you, your process and therefore having someone there helps and as I say it's not that I [no, no, no I understand it, I really can't I find it hard to answer that question because my my immediate response to that is 'no' but I don't think that's true (laughter) I don't think I realise that I'm thinking it's unsafe but somehow. So for example we've just had our the PD group and. **Participant** One of the things that I hardly ever talk about is my son because if I talk about my son you know I'm very. and today I did but I didn't plan to and I touched on something that I really needed to talk about but I didn't know that I needed to do that. So, and I think I wonder if it was the safety of the group that enabled me to do that. **Participant**	It is about connection with a person The FP feels what you're feeling – empathy Safety of Fp relationship could be the issue in that approaching own exp in F can make you feel unsafe but you might not realise that it is unsafe or that you feel unsafe beforehand – that wasn't identified by F as an issue previous to the FP relationship but, in retrospect, possibly the safety of the relationship makes it poss to go into unsafe things which you hadn't previously realised were unsafe or extra sensitive	Safety of Fp relationship could be the issue in that approaching own exp in F can make you feel unsafe but you might not realise that it is unsafe or that you feel unsafe beforehand – that wasn't identified by F as an issue previous to the FP relationship but, in retrospect, possibly the safety of the relationship makes it possible to go into unsafe things which you hadn't previously realised were unsafe or extra sensitive

So I wonder if that's the same with focusing. I wonder if I don't realise it but maybe it is and I will I will push myself to do that. **Participant** In focusing it's hard you know **Researcher** because you don't in retrospect, you don't recall. **Researcher** Unsafe things as it were **Participant** no it's not as though I I can feel a reluctance to talk about something does it. Is it because it's unsafe? **Participant** Maybe that's the wrong terminology maybe it maybe it's not about safety maybe it's about something else that's sort of...	Because the FP is safe, the F pushes herself to go there into unsafe stuff – maybe Is reluctant about unsafeness – hard to know	Because the FP is safe, the F pushes herself to go there into unsafe stuff – maybe – individual participant F exp Individual participant – unsure about safeness/unsafeness as concept

Researcher I think I only asked about it because sometimes counselling more generally it's like I, there's something I've got to do and I've got somebody else there on the other end of the line as it were and they were a kind of a safety thing. I've got to do the work, though, if you like, whatever that is you know feeling an emotion or thinking about something that I avoid or whatever. Here is this person, sort of... My safety line. **Participant** Yeah. I don't really feel that, it's a different thing that they're providing. It's almost like a motivator. What they're doing is providing an energy to do it rather than holding almost like they're there [in the context of counselling?] And focusing and whatever. It almost just for me it's not that it feels unsafe and here is somebody who will be able to [who makes it safe] yeah it is more that here is a person that will give me the energy to look at it. Somehow that person being there is...It isn't that they're accompanying me, it's more that they're like challenging me almost [just by virtue of the fact that they're there] they're there [in that shared endeavour].	Maybe unsafeness is the wrong word or concept FP is a 'motivator' – not mainly about safety FP provides 'energy' Not unsafe	FP is a 'motivator' – not mainly about safety FP provides 'energy' Role of FP - The person will give me the energy to look at it (personal or difficult stuff)

Yeah [it's not that they're saying 'come on now'] no [for God's sake give a bit of attention to] but somehow I'm doing that because that they're there. I'm ... **Participant** going right 'come on then come on then go there, do it. **Researcher** On this on this particular learning of focusing that you've had, one of the characteristics is that there, he talks about different avenues and things so it's kind of cut up into different bite sized bits if you like. So there's the basic thing of the focusing steps and all that. And then there are all these topics, different kinds of experiencing and that kind of thing. How was that aspect of learning focusing for you?. **Participant** So, I liked that and I looked forward to what we've come to and I liked it. I mean I could if I could have just read it all for myself but it was it was. What's the point to that? You know it's kind of felt like it kind of felt like	The person will give me the energy to look at it (personal or difficult stuff) The Fp challenges the F to proceed – but not explicitly Fp provides a strong motivational force in the shared task of F	The Fp challenges the F to proceed – but not explicitly

we've got the basics and then here is a way of using here's an avenue you can explore and it was just nice. It was just nice to do that together as well and have that sort of little bit of a little bit of a chat about it and just oh yeah that's nice and question it or you know think about it then and then have a go if we want to. I really liked it. If we'd have just been doing it wouldn't have made sense not to have done that throughout the year. **Participant** We had to have something new to think about and yeah **Researcher** in terms of having a fortnightly class you have to have something new to say yeah yeah yeah yeah. So those sorts of topics are obviously one of them is focusing with dreams of course. [Yes]. How was that for you? I **Researcher**	‘Nice’ to have ‘avenues’ to explore Nice to explore together	Individual participant on group learning context - ‘Nice’ to have ‘avenues’ to explore – elaborate concept of avenues (from G??)

Say that as though I don't have a sense of it you know - how was the focusing with dreams?. **Participant** I mean for all of us it was really significant I think it was it was. And even for people in the group who weren't so you know passionate about focusing they at that particular session I think was was quite revealing for them and afterwards there was quite a lot of talk amongst that group as a whole about that particular session and how significant it had been and I think people were surprised people. **Participant** People had brought a dream not knowing what was going to happen. And for a lot of people they wouldn't have been able to predict what was going to happen. **Participant** It had had significance you know impact on them.	F with dreams was really significant for all of us F with dreams was revealing for sceptics People were surprised Unpredictability of dream work was a key factor	Participant's view - F with dreams was really significance for all of us. - F with dreams was revealing for sceptics - People were surprised Participant's view - Unpredictability of dream work was a key factor. Significance' and 'impact' of dream work

Researcher how was.. **Researcher** that for you personally that kind of...? **Participant** focusing on dreams. **Participant** I brought an old dream really old dream [not a right, previous night] no. I'm a dreamer. I dream every night so it's not as though I didn't have to bring in Old dream but I bought an old dream because it really had still sat with me about my grandmother. **Participant** When my son was very little whenever he was a baby so this is like twenty-seven years old and um huge you know shouting at my grandmother which I would have never done and we've never in real life shouted at my grandmother [you were saying about]. And	‘Significance’ and ‘impact’ of dream work Exp with bringing old dream coz it was a dream that had ‘sat with me’	Participant’s view - Exp with bringing old dream coz it was a dream that had ‘sat with me’

really angry with. Her. And and she really was difficult during that time.		Participant's view - Event in dream different to real life
	Event in dream different to real life	
And I interpreted that dream for myself as being well, I can't, I haven't got it in me to tell her how I feel. So, I'm dreaming it seemed to make sense but actually when I focused on the dream, I wasn't it, it seemed that I wasn't angry with her at all. I was angry, I was angry with me so...Sorry and it, and it, over oh it really made sense and it was a little bit like oh so this dream has been bugging me all this time maybe it's been bugging me because I've come up with an interpretation that actually isn't right and it's not about my grandmother. It's about the situation I was in and my feeling of you know failing as a as a mother you know not doing what I was [so, the anger you feel in the dream towards your grandmother]	Person in dream was different in real life and shouted at in dream but wouldn't have done this in reality (didn't) Significance of F with dreams in this session was switch from what would not have been credible in real life (confronting grandparent) was actually about being angry at self.	Significance of F with dreams in this session was switch from what would not have been credible in real life (confronting grandparent) was actually about being angry at self. How do you 'know' that that was right interpretation?
Researcher [Yeah] is anger that you are feeling towards you [yeah].	Significance of F with dreams was alternative interpretation	Significance of F with dreams was alternative interpretation Link to Wittgenstein view of therapeutic philosophy – providing alternative views and standing back from stuck view of situation
Researcher		

so, how did you get to that?. **Participant** I think by that time I'd got in to I'd sort of developed this pattern I'd kind of learnt how I focus. So, I can remember it being a similar a similar thing but this shape was a different this shape felt more like a like if we go back to the bottom of the sea like a sea anemone you know at the bottom there's a really sort of vivid um, um... **Participant** Orange, dark reds so that colour obviously symbolizes something for me that yeah yeah yeah exactly. So it's so so but the whole thing was I can I can remember it was it was kind of spiky and then and really feeling it in my body as well. **Participant** So the feeling and the image and that and the dream and the and the anger towards my grandmother and just letting it letting it sort of just being with it. And I can't remember what. What happened or how the realization came but somehow somehow my	Exp of F with dreams entailed exp of shape and colour and atmosphere and	Participant - Exp of F with dreams entailed exp of shape and colour and atmosphere and Participant's view - F with dreams = feeling, image, emotion + letting herself feel it and be with it – led to

grandmother just receded and it was I realized it was about me somehow focusing on that image or that shape how.. I realised anger wasn't about her. It was about me and maybe not about me but maybe about the situation I was in and those [several years ago] Yes yes those that that those feelings have not you know not knowing what I was doing and being. So it was she just receded . She just receded so maybe maybe the focusing didn't help explain what exactly I was angry about but somehow it wasn't about my grandmother anymore. **Researcher** and that was crucial [Yeah it just like let it go]. So there was there was a narrative associated with what you imagined so to speak in your dream x number of years ago. [Yeah]. And then there's the focusing you were doing now. [Yeah]. and that focusing now was connected to that dream [yes]. **Participant** Yes. And the focusing. I mean I can remember feeling really touched after it because I felt as though I didn't have to be angry with my grandmother so it's almost	F with dreams = feeling, image, emotion + letting herself feel it and be with it – led to transformative interpretation (I was angry at myself) 'somehow my grandmother receded' Also – further layer – maybe not angry at me but about the situation I was in Significance was that the anger wasn't about granny – not sure what it was about, so resolution was about letting anger at granny go	transformative interpretation (I was angry at myself) Direct exp effect - 'somehow my grandmother receded' Also – further layer – maybe not angry at me but about the situation I was in Significance was that the anger wasn't about granny – not sure what it was about, so resolution was about letting anger at granny go

like somehow she was different in my memory. **Participant** She's been dead a long time but somehow I felt warm more warmth towards her. **Participant** By not holding on by or by letting that dream somehow interpreting it differently. **Participant** But I mean the logical interpretation was the one that I'd come up with in my brain of oh this is obvious you know you are angry with her because she's doing this this this and this and you can't share [and you kind of were] I was she was dreadful but but actually it wasn't about that [because I mean I think there is the suggestion that all of the people that one encounters in dreams can be, might perhaps be oneself] yeah [and that can be posed as a question if you like if these other people in your dreams were you what would that mean therefore? that kinda notion...But it doesn't feel as though you did that kind of	Really touched that I didn't have to be angry at my granny anymore She was different in my memory – reconciliation Warmth towards her Dream interpretation (in F with dreams) v significance Contrary to logical interpretation	Really touched that I didn't have to be angry at my granny anymore Dream interpretation (in F with dreams) very significant Contrary to logical interpretation

self-questioning]. Oh no I went into it thinking it was about her and not about me. **Participant** And it was [it came directly from the feeling of it] yeah I was surprised so I definitely didn't go in it with that question. **Participant** I just wanted to see what it felt like and then was surprised that it actually if anything I almost imagined by focusing in on the dream somehow I would somehow I would be able to look more closely at her what had happened I don't know get that feeling back or you know be able to I really thought that it would intensify the feeling about her. But it but it went in a different direction altogether. **Researcher** i see so that would be...There would be a logic to that here is this thing in the past - this event and then this dream in the past. [Yeah]. And by focusing now on that it kind of connects me to that more. [Yeah yeah]	Posing the qu 'is this about me?' can be a standard interp qu in F with dreams but this did not occur, the insight came directly through the normal exploration process of F applied to F with dreams Did not use qu. (as per G's guidelines) Motivation to 'see what it felt like' Thought that F with dreams would intensify the feeling (of anger) about the grandmother… Where did alternative direction or alternative i interpretation come from?	Posing the qu 'is this about me?' can be a standard interpretation qu in F with dreams but this did not occur, the insight came directly through the normal exploration process of F applied to F with dreams Did not use qu. (as per G's guidelines) Participant - Motivation to 'see what it felt like' Thought that F with dreams would intensify the feeling (of anger) about the grandmother… Where did alternative direction or alternative interpretation come from?

and actually that really wasn't what occurred at all [no]. **Researcher** Thank you. Are there other? Any other sort of bits of the kind of packaging of how focusing with um suppressed experiencing, curtailed experiencing all that sort of stuff. Were there any other particular parts of it that struck you or that you might recall or that you kind of went somewhere with or...is there anything that?.... **Participant** Yeah. Every, every time we went down a different avenue. My partner and I did try that out and she's very generous to me. **Participant** I always wanted to you know and she just kind of 'oh alright' and I it was good to have a go at those and the ones that is it is it suppressed, it's not suppressed and it's not curtailed. **Participant**	FPs Tried out each avenue	Learning process involved trying out each avenue – that worked for Participant

It's a different one. It is the one where parts. **Participant** There were parts [divided] divided that's the one I wanted divided experiencing - um that one was really significant. **Participant** But it's interesting that in my memory it was significant it didn't. We tried. **Participant** No no I... It was significant for me it was significant for me personally but it's hearing everybody else's. **Participant** So when when when I think back to our sessions it is when people have been able to share and it's been a significant experience for them that that's really impacted on me as far as my... **Participant**	Really significant to have explored divided exp	Divided Exp was a key avenue for individual participant Participant – sharing process with Fp was very significant in divided exp avenue

So I suppose what's interesting now is that it's having a group to do it is important, was important for me in that I really I liked talking about my experiences but I was really interested in hearing about other people's really wanted to know and I felt I learnt a lot about focusing but a lot about focusing for a lot about how focusing is so different. **Participant** Depending on who you are and how you feel. And I found that fascinating. **Researcher** so, there's an energy that comes from having a partnership say and then there's a whole , there's a further thing, a whole other thing to do with being in that group and hearing different people's experiences really. **Participant** The other thing I would say is that I had two experiences where my partner wasn't there and I focused with somebody else and on both of those occasions I didn't focus. I was the companion and I found both of those experiences moving um they were really	Significance of sharing process in regard to divided exp – sharing process was very significant Group context to learning Diversity of exp of F among group was key learning Was 'fascinating'	Participant – group context for learning self-development and therapeutic processes worked well – diversity of people's exp was key to learning and sharing in group context – was fascinating for participant

they were really one was with Ali and the other was with Gabby and neither of them say have said that they're particularly you know focusing was easy for them and yet both of them was it was very moving with both of them and both of them Ali in particular was very tearful moved by his experience and I enjoyed having that opportunity to focus with people other than my partner. You know my partner became the key person but it was really nice to be able to focus with other people and I focused with Justine asked me if I'd do some focusing with her as well and so I focused with her and that was again really really moving experience. **Participant** And I remember at that time with focusing with Justine I'd got into a habit of when I was the companion feeling as though I wanted to close my eyes and for a while with ****. And then when I did that with Justine it felt like I had to close my eyes as well which wasn't part of the brief almost [in the companion role] yes in the companion role but somehow it felt right to me to do that. And and I suppose I've always I've done that since[I see so initially]	Moving to be a companion to a different Focuser (diff to usual FP) Diff exp of F with diff people really moving – companion role…	Exp of different Focuser with different FPs was very good experience for participant – described as 'moving' For participant - Having eyes closed in companion role felt significant (as well

Researcher Insofar as you could say there was a brief there then the idea was that the focuser might well have their eyes closed but the companion wouldn't. [Yeah] and they would kind of be present to the other person [yes and it almost felt naughty to have my eyes closed almost as though I was denying the visual] so what does that do then when you have your eyes closed in the companion role? **Participant** I felt as though I was feeling. **Participant** I felt as though I was much more in tune with their experience almost felt like I could feel what they were feeling. Somehow it seemed I could do that better with my eyes closed than with my eyes open and they didn't know because their eyes were closed so [their eyes were close anyway so...yeah I see] but I did worry that they would open their eyes - **** did know that I used to do that	Having eyes closed in companion role felt significant (as well F having eyes closed) Having eyes closed in companion role enhanced feeling the feeling It 'felt like' she was more in tune with the F's feeling	as F having eyes closed). Having eyes closed in companion role enhanced feeling the feeling. It 'felt like' she was more in tune with the F's feeling

Participant (.laughter together) **Researcher** I see so it changed with **** - with the others it occurred and you kinda changed it with **** as it were. Anything else about it? With the kinda clearing a space thing how was that for you? **Participant** Oh I like that clearing space thing it um [what did you do with clearing a space?]. I had boxes. **Participant** I mean boxes was the first thing you ever suggested and it just absolutely was right up my street. [There was an issue and it would be in a box] Yeah and I found it [what did you do with the boxes?] on a shelf on shelves in the geography room. [of course the geography room] so I would just put them on I would have boxes and they would be different sizes and sometimes different	CAS entailed imagining boxes	

colours and then they would go onto the boxes and leave the space for me to pick the box and I would always take the box back down that I was that I was going to focus on so it would have been put away in order to make sure that the space was completely clear. There's nothing left there and then I'll go. 'I'm ready to pick and i pretty knew... I wouldn't know in advance but it would be very clear to me once I cleared a space which one was shouting out **Researcher** So would you sort of always do that then?.[Yeah I would always do that.] **Participant** And I know **** didn't often, often she would come with something she definitely knew she wanted to focus on but sometimes I would say I think I know what it is but I still want to do the clearing a space thing it's important to do that. **Participant** Just in case it's not	Imagining boxes being placed on shelves in a room (a specific room that she worked in) Imagination in F – boxes with different sizes and colours CAS entailed all issues being in boxes on the shelf so there was a clear space, then taking one down Issue would not be picked in advance and she wouldn't 'know', in advance, what would be picked. But after CAS, an issue would be 'shouting out' Issue would 'always' identify itself FP would come with an issue	For participant, Imagination in F – boxes with different sizes and colours. CAS entailed all issues being in boxes on the shelf so there was a clear space, then taking one down. Issue would not be picked in advance and she wouldn't 'know', in advance, what would be picked. But after CAS, an issue would be 'shouting out'. Issue would 'always' identify itself. Contrast to Fp - FP would come with an issue. Going with wishes of FP (taught pattern) worked for this partnership Imp to do CAS even when there was a sense of what issue would be point of F

Researcher so. The thing of you would definitely do things your way **** would definitely do things her way. And, therefore, the responsibility so to speak of the companion to go with the wishes of the focuser that kind of pattern kind of worked for you two? [yeah.] **Researcher** I mean as I recall it it feels as though it worked. But you know what I mean yeah yeah yeah. **Researcher** Why was that clearing a space stage important then? **Participant** I think I quite liked it. I liked it a lot. I liked to be able to explore all the different feelings inside me and sometimes I would, I would think that something might be there and it wasn't.	Imp to do CAS even when there was a sense of what issue would be point of F 'just in case it's not' (link to G idea about layering of issues in personality change article) Going with wishes of FP (taught pattern) worked for this partnership	'just in case it's not' (link to G idea about layering of issues in personality change article) Why was CAS stage imp? Liked to explore different feelings Also unexpected findings from CAS and exploring different things

Participant So I didn't even have to clear it. So again what was happening in my head and what was happening my body weren't necessarily in tune. But somehow it released, it really did clear a space in me. There was some symbolism of doing that really did mean. It was put to one side and I can all you know even talking about it. I can almost feel that sense of oh that's moved. Is there anything else? **Participant** And sometimes clearing the space I would know there was something else - there's something else but I don't know what it is but it's there and I would just kind of focus on it a bit and almost go 'I think it's this but it needs to go as well put it put it away [I see] and then I'm clear I'm free [and there's a moments of clearness] yeah [as a prelude to picking one]. **Participant** Yeah.	Why was CAS stage imp? Liked to explore different feelings Also unexpected findings from CAS and exploring different things Difference between 'what was happening in my head' and 'what was happening in my body' – what does that mean? CAS released things. CAS meant that things 'really were put to one side' CAS meant that she would 'feel that sense of 'that's moved', 'is there anything else?' Strong visceral counterpart to imaginative aspects of CAS CAS could be a quite open exploration – there would be 'something else' there but unsure what it is yet…explore or just sense it further and then identify what it is and then put it to one side as well	Difference between 'what was happening in my head' and 'what was happening in my body' – what does that mean? CAS released things. CAS meant that things 'really were put to one side' CAS meant that she would 'feel that sense of 'that's moved', 'is there anything else?' Strong visceral counterpart to imaginative aspects of CAS CAS could be a quite open exploration – there would be 'something else' there but unsure what it is yet…explore or just sense it further and then identify what it is and then put it to one side as well (as a discipline) and then a moment of clearness – function of CAS

Researcher How long were you clear for? Not long [because it would always be 'a nice feeling' . I can feel it now I'm just talking about it. but 'A nice feeling'. But then it would be then this whatever one would be picked with 10 backstage. **Researcher** Oh because there's a there's a focusing author Neil Friedman he talked about sometimes you'd clear a space and things that would be okay. **Researcher** And then he would meditate do you see what i mean it would be clearing a space would be enough to then just give some time in that cleared space. [nice idea] **Researcher** So, overall then it it's been very significant for you and are there any overall things about what it's therefore done for you as a person?	(as a discipline) and then a moment of clearness – function of CAS CAS created a 'nice feeling' NF pattern of CAS, then meditate was a 'nice idea'	CAS created a 'nice feeling' NF pattern of CAS, then meditate was a 'nice idea'

Participant I think that the understanding that, that my body might know things better than my brain does giving, giving that a chance to explain. **Participant** You know so it's in my body giving, giving my body more credence than my cognitive thought. **Participant** That's switched now. So I suppose it has. It is quite significant. **Participant** Trusting, trusting in my bodily feeling knowing yeah rather than and I think it makes me a better counsellor as well. So, I think somehow, somehow I don't know [because you're doing that you mean? or because you'll pick up on when clients are doing it?] yeah. Because when, when I'm with clients I'm really aware of my body. And so i, i, I feel like there are when when something happens I feel that my body tells me when something's really significant with	Imp of idea that the body knows things that the brain doesn't More credence to body than cognitive thought Imp of 'trusting' bodily feelings	Imp of idea that the body knows things that the brain doesn't More credence to body than cognitive thought Importance of 'trusting' bodily feelings Being aware of the body and trusting bodily feelings makes me a better counsellor

the client and you know or how or how things are I suppose maybe it's another form of empathy I don't know. **Researcher** [But] embodied empathy or some such [yeah] okay so if I'd met you, i did meet you two years ago - if I'd met you five years ago say you would have thought of yourself probably as being more of a cognitive kind of individual. Yes you yes you had a bit of experiences of meditating and so on.... **Participant** Yeah yeah. I think I would I would have said that even the meditation wasn't about my body it was about clearing my head. So I think it was opening it up the chance of being able to feel more in my body maybe towards the end i was more but it definitely started with clearing my headspace whereas when we talk about clearing a space through focusing doesn't feel like clearing my head it feels like clearing my body. **Researcher**	Being aware of the body and trusting bodily feelings makes me a better counsellor The body tells me when something's really significant in regard to what a client is saying Bodily feeling is another form of empathy – uncertain interpretation by P Meditation previously was about clearing the head, not about the body. F was a real change in how exp was processed – brain to body	The body tells me when something's really significant in regard to what a client is saying Bodily feeling is another form of empathy – uncertain interpretation by P Meditation previously was about clearing the head, not about the body. F was a real change in how exp was processed – brain to body For participant CAS in F is clearing the body no clearing the head (headspace)

So completely different. [Yeah]. um we're getting towards it's 5 to 2. [i'd better go] so, are we okay then? . [It's a real pleasure. I really enjoyed doing it. thank you so much] It's really nice.	CAS in F is clearing the body no clearing the head (headspace)	

Appendix Two: Research Participant Transcript – David

Some annotations:
FP = Focusing Partner
F = Focuser or focusing
G = Gendlin
NF = Neil Friedman
exp = experience
Q = question
Intro = introductory
CAS = clearing a space

Transcript two – David:	Exploratory notes:	Emergent themes:
Researcher So, um, with regard to focusing, I wish to kind of hear about your experience of focusing and of the kinds of things, I suppose, you've kind of brought to it. and what you've done with those things if you see what I mean. So how it's been experientially for you. [Okay]. And if there's anything that I kind of, there are one or two things that I wanted to ask about. So, if they don't come up naturally then I'll ask them towards the end if that's alright [okay no that's fine]. Okay [yeah that's fine] and I am not going to sit here mute, I mean I will, will engage in a conversation as it were **Participant** Yes, that would be helpful because it's been a while since I've been doing it, so I think that would just sort of bring it back a bit more as well [Yeah] help me focus I suppose you could say. [try to give you a bit of focus] **Researcher**	No longer practising F	No longer practising F

So, your experience focusing over the course of the year, the classes, focusing partnership, that, that stuff. Yeah, yeah. So, what was that? how was that? how could you describe any of that? **Participant** I suppose it's just a completely new way for me of accessing what something is in there in a very sort of light way without it being too heavily kind of analytical or cognitive. So, for me that was quite a different process to try and really sort of settle in with what's there and not sort of force something in but just let it be and kind of get to grips with I guess what came into focus when I allowed myself to do that. **Researcher** So before previously when we talked back in the day I think you had some kind of awareness that there was a thing called Focusing, this was back in those halcyon days of CBT, kind of thing, [um] but back then if you were processing things you would be what? thinking about it or what? what would you have been doing back in the day if you were..?	F as a completely new way to access what is going on in the self Described as a *light* way of accessing – in contrast to heavily analytical or cognitive F = 'settle in with what's there" F = not 'force something in but just let it be' F = 'get to grips with what came into focus when he allowed himself to do that'	F as a completely new way to access what is going on in the self Described as a *light* way of accessing – in contrast to heavily analytical or cognitive F = 'settle in with what's there" F = not 'force something in but just let it be' F = 'get to grips with what came into focus when he allowed himself to do that'

Participant I think I'd have been doing a lot more analysing um trying to see things from different angles in a cognitive... From a cognitive perspective. Trying to get some sense of control of it, I suppose in terms of naming what it is in my, in my head rather than sort of trying to force something to come rather than letting it come coming from a bit more with me within my body. So, I wasn't allowing my body to inform my..my sense of it, if you like I wasn't tuned into that as much as I have learned to be through, through doing focusing. **Researcher** So, it changed as it were, it was different. It was **Participant** It's just about another access point really, it's, and I think that's been, that's obviously been quite fascinating and it's almost like it gives me permission to sit with myself you know in a way perhaps that I hadn't practised enough before. So, there's an	Previously would have analysed things from diff angles form a cognitive perspective Previously trying to 'get some sense of control of it' Contrast to letting things come from the body – F = allowing my body to inform my sense of a problem or situation or issue Previously not tuned into what the body was telling me F = another access point F = giving me 'permission to sit with myself' There's an aspect of mindfulness to F	Previously would have analysed things from diff angles from a cognitive perspective Previously trying to 'get some sense of control of it' Contrast to letting things come from the body – F = allowing my body to inform my sense of a problem or situation or issue Previously not tuned into what the body was telling me F = another access point F = giving me 'permission to sit with myself' There's an aspect of mindfulness to F

aspect of mindfulness to it. In a way which, which you know I was able to harness a little bit more. Having done mindfulness before and then utilizing it in a sense of kind of really just kind of allowing the breath and then sort of the thoughts to sort of come and just very gently kind of be with them in a different kind of way than I might have been feeling. So, what comes up? Um, it was just a different feel to it all.	F enables harnessing of Mindfulness a bit more Mindfulness as allowing the breath, and the thoughts come and gently be with them in a different kind of way than I might have been feeling. F = 'so what comes up?' F has a different feel to it.	F enables harnessing of Mindfulness a bit more Mindfulness as allowing the breath, and the thoughts come and gently be with them in a different kind of way than I might have been feeling. F = 'so what comes up?' F has a different feel to it.
Researcher So, mindfulness when you did it back in the day was reasonably new.		
Participant Yeah it was new. I mean I've done it a few. I've had a few raisons since the first time. And I think, you know, it's, of course it's a process and it sometimes takes practice. I'm mindful in certain ways but they are easy to forget. To do. under the stresses of life, I suppose. And again, I think it then can mean that I get caught back up in old ways of trying to process it all in my head and not allowing myself to feel it properly in my body.	Some experience of mindfulness Mindfulness takes practice Easy to forget experience of mindfulness and practice of mindfulness under the stresses of life Forgetting mindfulness meant that one can get caught in the old ways of trying to process it in my head rather than feeling it in one's body F = feeling it in one's body	Mindfulness takes practice Easy to forget experience of mindfulness and practice of mindfulness under the stresses of life Forgetting mindfulness meant that one can get caught in the old ways of trying to process it in my head rather than feeling it in one's body F = feeling it in one's body

Researcher So, when you processed in your head, would you say that some of the time it wasn't helpful? **Participant** Yes because I think it kept me distant from my emotion. I do think it didn't allow me to really tune in. I think naming, naming what it is rather than being a blur of anxiety and thinking difficult sort of. You know rather than trusting to the inner kind of what comes up. I was I was you know it was all just a bit of a scattergun sort of feeling in my head like I couldn't really get a grip on it. And be frustrated that a bar of soap all the time. And I guess just tuning into my body it's allowed me to. Almost go to the emotion first you know what. what am I feeling? you know what's, what's there in that way? and then for that to almost evolve from where it does to what it becomes is just it being a really natural sort of evolution of going to the emotion. What am I holding in my body that's all been quite, quite new in lots of ways.	Cognitive processing kept 'me distant from my emotion' Cognitive processing (CBT) did not allow me to really tune in. F = naming what it is rather than a blur of anxiety F = trusting the 'inner kind of what comes up' contrast to scattergun sort of feeling in my head which I couldn't get a grip on (like gripping a bar of soap) F = tuning into the body – allowing me to go to the emotion first – 'what am I feeling (emotionally)?' Awareness of what is to where it will go is 'a really natural sort of evolution' F = going to the emotion, what am I holding in my body? F = quite new in lots of ways	Cognitive processing kept 'me distant from my emotion' Cognitive processing (CBT) did not allow me to really tune in. F = naming what it is rather than a blur of anxiety F = trusting the 'inner kind of what comes up' contrast to scattergun sort of feeling in my head which I couldn't get a grip on (like gripping a bar of soap) F = tuning into the body – allowing me to go to the emotion first – 'what am I feeling (emotionally)?' Awareness of what is to where it will go is 'a really natural sort of evolution' F = going to the emotion, what am I holding in my body? F = quite new in lots of ways

Researcher So, you would, how would you tune in to your body? in mindfulness I suppose there was the business of giving attention to your breathing and perhaps doing a body scan or whatever, yeah I don't know what your particular sort of oh right and there were the, there was the kind of walking meditation all that sort of the different aspects of **Participant** mountain meditation that I've done I had CD of from before um but more trying to be mindful in the moment. I think. Not so much that I have to sort of sit somewhere and be perfectly kind of comfortable and still and have. Let the world kind of fade away almost. But that I could be more mindful of being in the moment. **Researcher** Of whatever was there in the moment. **Participant**	Mindfulness = trying to be mindful in the moment Mindful attention to the moment can include or does include 'what's there in my body in the moment?'	Mindfulness = trying to be mindful in the moment Mindful attention to the moment can include or does include 'what's there in my body in the moment?'

Yeah. And therefore, what's what's there in my body in this moment. I feel like it could access that. More as wherever I am... a sense of what's going on there rather than. What's what's kind of clattering around up here is the sort of sort of just turn the volume down on the thinking and just sort of turn the volume up on the feeling bit. And that's really, really helped my process in so many different ways accessing what's really kind of holding me. Getting to the root of it if you like. [So, we're focusing with that sort of. Beginning with. with that Sort of pre bit of mindfulness you would kind of as it were be centring yourself]. **Researcher** And seeing what's there in a kind of a feeling in an emotional way. So, it is about emotions it is. [Yes or physiological kind of sense of something]. **Participant** Just whatever came first whether it was a tension whether it was a where was it. What did it feel like. Does it change just sort of really. Like the scans you say like almost like a body scan. Sort of the naming of it focusing	Mindfulness included turning down the volume on what's happening in one's head and turning up the volume on the feeling bit. Tuning into the feeling bit has helped me to access what's kind of holding me. P use of term access for what F offers M and F = trying to get to the root of it	Mindfulness included turning down the volume on what's happening in one's head and turning up the volume on the feeling bit. Tuning into the feeling bit has helped me to access what's kind of holding me. P use of term access for what F offers M and F = trying to get to the root of it

I think I'm getting handle on it. That really then. Formed the bridge. Between what, what I was feeling physically to then what perhaps emotion was, was sort of the main sense of what that was about. Whatever that might be sort of it formed. I learned it started to form bridges between physical sensations and emotional feeling. **Researcher** So, it's not that you go in and there's an emotion there. It's that you kind of, so to speak, go in and there's some sort of perhaps unclear feeling there, and then when it gets, when you get it, some sort of description for it. So that then becomes a definite a.. more definite sort of emotion, perhaps… **Participant** I think it. I think as you're saying that I think what it allowed me to do sometimes is. **Participant** If maybe in some distant way I kind of knew what something was about as well on some	Naming creates a bridge between physical sensations and emotional feeling (what sort of names?) 'in some distant way I knew what something was about, as well as not knowing' Concept of Edge of awareness (ref)	Naming creates a bridge between physical sensations and emotional feeling (what sort of names?) 'in some distant way I knew what something was about, as well as not knowing' Concept of Edge of awareness (ref)

level that I'm not... At the edge of my awareness almost or. **Participant** Through going in via focusing I felt like it really came forward to me in a very clear way that I could. **Participant** I kind of couldn't ignore it, it became very present and obvious [and somewhere or other you kind of sort of knew]…. **Participant** There's something that something that feels kind of uncomfortable and I don't let it form maybe necessarily through that through that means or maybe I don't entirely know what it's about. [no] I've got I've got sense that it might be around this something about you know. And then it and then it kind of like Oh then there's a link it might be something that hadn't even. **Participant** Put the two and two together.	With F 'it' came forward in a way that couldn't be ignored 'it' became very present and very obvious Process – something that feels kind of uncomfortable and I don't let it form or I don't know what it's about or maybe a vague sense that it may be about… then, with F, there's a link – it might have been something that hadn't even…	With F 'it' came forward in a way that couldn't be ignored 'it' became very present and very obvious Process – something that feels kind of uncomfortable and I don't let it form or I don't know what it's about or maybe a vague sense that it may be about… then, with F, there's a link – it might have been something that hadn't even…

Participant if That makes sense. **Researcher** So on that neuroscience stuff that . **Researcher** Peter Afford writes about this stuff that you have with your left brain and your right brain and you don't you almost screen that off as it were part of the brain screens off the other part of the brain. **Researcher** And then he sort of suggests in focusing you allow the other bit to, do you see what I mean? but you don't do it directly you do it through the body. [Yes]. Yeah. But there's sort of something going on there. But you don't know what it is. or... **Researcher** you don't really know it fully [or a bit wary of it]. Yeah [you know whereas I think the	Researcher makes links to Afford and McGilchrist	

focusing thing for me wasn't necessarily about about being overwhelmed by it but even if it was just noticing it kind of like it in whatever sense it came to me visually whether it was a looming something and a sense of something then I'd start to kind of. Maybe sort of think about that and try and kind of. Understand what that was and know what distance away from it I needed to be].	F = not about being overwhelmed by things previously but noticing it if it came visually – maybe a looming something – starting to think about that and what distance it needed to be	F = not about being overwhelmed by things previously but noticing it if it came visually – maybe a looming something – starting to think about that and what distance it needed to be
Participant		
um I didn't necessarily find that I went in and it became overwhelming to do that.	Not previously an overwhelm problem	Not previously an overwhelm problem
Researcher		
Because that you, because you could imagine certain things being overwhelming [I think I think maybe there is a concern that's why I hadn't gone towards it so much in my awareness I haven't wanted necessarily to to let it become something which might might In combination with whatever else is going on in my life at the time be something that I then it would tip the balance it would be the straw that broke the camel's back].	But aware of the possibility of overwhelm so not going there (because of concern over what else was going on in his life)	But aware of the possibility of overwhelm so not going there (because of concern over what else was going on in his life)
Participant		

That kind of thing. **Researcher** So, it's not necessarily that it is overwhelming. it's That it, in the context of other things [potentially] perhaps would be a bit destabilising. **Participant** yeah like i, there is an element of self-care in recognising my limitations or feeling like I knew that might be a bit too much right now. You know to offer myself time to to kind of let a couple of other things just have more energy to sort of be in relationship with it I suppose. **Researcher** And that isn't about repressing. that Isn't about saying I'm not going to look at that, that's too much, i'm gonna push it away. It's not about that,it's about something different to that. This is me checking [yeah I think in a way. it Was it was an acknowledging of. and a sort of respect. With. And I suppose just a sense that I could see something as being over there].	Managing potential overwhelm was a big factor for F temporal element and (with CaS) letting other things to have more space or attention Use of phrase 'be in a relationship with it'	Managing potential overwhelm was a big factor for F temporal element and (with CaS) letting other things to have more space or attention Use of phrase 'be in a relationship with it'

Participant In a way and not and not sort of like oh like this. I could see it sort of putting things out as it were and clearing a space and that aspect of things that it felt good to sort of slightly externalize myself from all of that, it felt safer to have a bit of distance and to to sort of see it and to see how I felt about being in relation to that at that point. **Participant** You know could I could I invite it a little bit closer. **Researcher** It could be that you'd be still be keeping it and it could be that you'd be inviting it [just to see where I was with it at that moment]. **Researcher** So very much about in a moment in a part, at a particular point in time what feels right at that particular point in time to be doing as it were doing something with [yeah] that kind of... [Not necessarily just kind of feeling like I	CaS and 'putting things out' F and CaS entails 'slightly externalising myself from all of that, it felt safer to have a bit of distance and to sort of see it and see how I felt about being in relation to it at that point' F = having distanced myself – invite it a bit closer F = having distanced myself, just see where I was with it at that moment	CaS and 'putting things out' F and CaS entails 'slightly externalising myself from all of that, it felt safer to have a bit of distance and to sort of see it and see how I felt about being in relation to it at that point' F = having distanced myself – invite it a bit closer F = having distanced myself, just see where I was with it at that moment

have to be, have to sort of let that just psychotic option to just be all that there is and I guess there is. There would be a feeling like. **Participant** It would be overload to have that alongside everything else at the same time. **Participant** But it isn't, it isn't just the sum of all those parts rather than that particular part necessarily being the one thing that destabilises but [I see so it's about life being I guess partly what you're saying is that life last year. With the diploma course and so on had a particularly kind of **Researcher** Intense sort of quality to it. and I guess that other times in life that can be the case as well. and in each of those contexts last year and in other contexts there can be this thing of something else coming along could be a bit overwhelming	Use of the term 'psychotic option' to indicate possible overwhelm in a context of other life events etc	Use of the term 'psychotic option' to indicate possible overwhelm in a context of other life events etc

Participant spinning enough plates already. like One more thing would be. They will drop and **Participant** Whatever that looks like [you mentioned clearing a space so what is that. **Researcher** What is that what's that like for you?. What does that consist in for you, I say because I know that for people it can be different if you see what I mean. [As a focus... As a focuser myself] yeah. [It's a sort of a...] **Participant** Laying out I suppose of of what's there. **Researcher** and Those things what are they? are they? visualised or what? **Participant**	Big part of experience of F was about managing emotions and potential overwhelm in the context of multiple plate spinning on a full time diploma course CaS was ‘laying out what’s there’	Big part of experience of F was about managing emotions and potential overwhelm in the context of multiple plate spinning on a full time diploma course CaS was ‘laying out what’s there’

Yeah I tend to I tend to sort of visualise them maybe I certainly see them as separate to myself. Visually so there's a definite distance there's a sort of a stepping back from and a placing down so there's something in the putting down which feels significant, kind of a lightening almost in a way and an ability to kind of 'oh right, so there's that.	CaS entails some visualisation of things and seeing them as separate to myself Definite distance and stepping back from, a placing down of things Placing down is significant – has a lightening effect – 'oh right, so that's that'	CaS entails some visualisation of things and seeing them as separate to myself Definite distance and stepping back from, a placing down of things Placing down is significant – has a lightening effect – 'oh right, so that's that'
Participant And I guess focusing kind of encourages you to think about what's what's stopping you from feeling okay. Whereas I have used it to look at what's helping you feel okay as well, it is interesting because it's. I think sometimes you know, of course it's good to work on.	Significance of F question to think 'what's stopping you from feeling okay?' Also qu. What's helping you feel okay?	Significance of F question to think 'what's stopping you from feeling okay?' Also qu. What's helping you feel okay?
Participant Things which maybe just require a bit of attention. Sometimes I think it's also nice to be mindful of. What's providing something alternative to that.	Judgement that it's good to be mindful of what's providing something alternative to the negative stuff	Judgement that it's good to be mindful of what's providing something alternative to the negative stuff
Researcher So did you usually see what was not allowing you to feel okay? and then...		

Participant Sometimes yeah yes sometimes there is something I needed to be made to feel like something was there are some sometimes there was something that was so consuming or so so sort of emotionally kind of present that it it was outshining all of that. **Participant** I was okay. I was really okay yeah. **Participant** And that felt good as well. **Researcher** So it felt important to get as it were in the context of focusing to allow space for that or to yeah give attention to that. Say right okay. There's someting important there yeah. [There's a really lovely warm glow from over here as well]. **Participant**	Often F = awareness of what was 'so consuming' and 'so emotionally present' – these things outshone everything else. Important to realise that "I was okay really' and F on positive things helped that – a perspective approach F could involve acknowledging a lovely warm glow over here as well. Interesting effect of F and CaS (link to Friedman's idea that F on positive stuff is useful (ref))	Often F = awareness of what was 'so consuming' and 'so emotionally present' – these things outshone everything else. Important to realise that "I was okay really' and F on positive things helped that – a perspective approach F could involve acknowledging a lovely warm glow over here as well. Interesting effect of F and CaS (link to Friedman's idea that F on positive stuff is useful (ref))

And I feel like I want to acknowledge that [so a sensory quality to you as you kind of speak seeing things..]. **Researcher** So I don't know, you're imagining things in a kind of a visual visual imagination imagining things in your life. [Yes right yeah]. And there's also think that that's fine yes. So there's visual imagination and then there's a sensory quality to it. [Yes allowing it, to allow that to take shape I suppose it's almost like at first there's sort of the mists of you know non-focus and then you know allowing the mists to sort of...] **Participant** Dissipate and then you know what comes forward out from there you know for me, and what's kind of present in my life at the moment and I guess i would say that I'm quite an emotional person, my emotions are quite close to the surface. **Participant**	Visualisation in F entails attention to the sort of mists (of non-focus) which then are replaced by something that comes forward as the mists dissipate. P is quite an emotional person and emotions are quite close to the surface Previously P was 'just emotional' and hadn't named things (and gone further with them)	Visualisation in F entails attention to the sort of mists (of non-focus) which then are replaced by something that comes forward as the mists dissipate. P is quite an emotional person and emotions are quite close to the surface Previously P was 'just emotional' and hadn't named things (and gone further with them)

But I just almost just feel emotional and I don't know that I've really looked into that aspect of that and the naming of that, so, **Participant** It's been quite nice to sort of look at the different, so clearing a space I guess in terms of the things which are stopping me from feeling okay... Yeah I find that really useful in terms of as I say creating a distance from those things and it felt good visually to kind of put them down. [um putting them down] And. Yeah. **Participant** Just to just to sort of unburden myself. **Participant** Of them for. For those for those moments and sit back and think okay a precious moment away from carrying them. **Researcher** So you kind of, it's natural for you to be an emotional person and to have emotions that can be close to the surface. [um] That's your	So, CaS as stopping me from feeling okay, creating a distance from those things, visually put them down, unburden myself…a precious moment away from carrying those things	So, CaS as stopping me from feeling okay, creating a distance from those things, visually put them down, unburden myself…a precious moment away from carrying those things

kind of so to speak your natural state. And so part of what it's meant has been that little bit of thing of saying okay it's there I'm going to put it just over there and I'm going to be over here [yeah] and... **Researcher** that... so, there's a release that comes with that **Participant** yeah and I think I think kind of both ways in a sense because some time yeah. I mean I it's a certain sort of distancing without losing touch with and then it's it's still there but they're there in a different...way **Participant** I feel cal...I feel sort of calmer with them...you know like... **Participant** there's more time it's like slowing down time somehow instead of the thinking going round really quick. It's that sort of a feeling	CaS (and F more generally) entails distance without losing touch with them – they're still there in a different way and I can feel calmer about them F = 'slowing down time' F = alternative to 'thinking going round quickly'	CaS (and F more generally) entails distance without losing touch with them – they're still there in a different way and I can feel calmer about them F = 'slowing down time' F = alternative to 'thinking going round quickly'

thing and it's almost like visually kinda like ah... **Participant** okay I'm offering myself a chance to to just see what's there. And to be really easy about that just let it come naturally rather than...hamper it (inaudible) **Researcher** So the business of like seeing each thing and putting it down. And... **Researcher** allowing it to be at the right distance for whatever that is or at a distance [uh huh] that feels natural? **Participant** It di...I think...[or it had a quality of naturalness] **Participant** it did feel natural, yeah it did feel like it was something I could visualize relatively easily.	F = see what's there, be easy about it and let it come naturally CaS process as described felt natural and the visualisation came relatively easily.	F = see what's there, be easy about it and let it come naturally CaS process as described felt natural and the visualisation came relatively easily.

Researcher And that whole process felt natural it didn't feel sort of, this is me guessing or asking I guess, am I right in thinking that it feels - that natural feeling? **Participant** I think it I think it felt natural with my focusing partner I guess at first it sort of became very natural. **Participant** It felt easy to do. **Researcher** what was it your focusing partner offered that made it natural at first in a way that perhaps it wouldn't have been natural on your own say or with someone. else? what was it that your focusing partner brought to it? **Participant**	Naturalness of visualisation process came from naturalness with FP Calmness from FP	Naturalness of visualisation process came from naturalness with FP Calmness from FP

maybe maybe it was a maybe it's a sort of a calmness and um I was going to say a guide but I don't mean that I didn't know what I was doing it was just that. I could let go a part of myself which would be saying I can't do this or struggle with like. That aspect of it. That someone was there kind of with me and there was no seemingly wrong way of doing it, it was just so lovely and easy to sort of. I think she had just helped me sort of visualise and. **Participant** There was just a calmness about that presence and assuredness that that was really ah I don't have to worry about that I can just do this. And that was her that's part of the relief I think was was her kind of calmness in companionship. **Researcher** In a way that. If you just sort of got a focusing book and said "i'm going to go off and do this" it would have been different as discussed... **Participant**	‘someone was there with me’ With FP No wrong way of doing it Fp helped me to visualise things Calmness about presence and assuredness of FP – I don’t have to worry about that I can just do this Calmness in companionship	‘someone was there with me’ With FP No wrong way of doing it Fp helped me to visualise things Calmness about presence and assuredness of FP – I don’t have to worry about that I can just do this Calmness in companionship

Possibly at the start = I could kind of... **Participant** Maybe pushing too much, trying too hard or yeah it just helped me to really ah I'm not alone in this and that felt reassuring [yeah oh okay] **Researcher** Something about not being alone with it. **Participant** Yeah I think I tend to feel easier when I'm not feeling alone or something. **Researcher** Are you able to offer any sort of example of something that you kind of found and processed or what was there or the emotion or anything of that sort? **Participant** Yeah I mean there are times where I'd sort of tapped into things which I hadn't recognised as being....	P could have 'tried too much at the start' but not being alone in this felt reassuring In general P feels easier if not alone with things F = tapping into things that I hadn't recognised as being quite so emotional – so surprising things	P could have 'tried too much at the start' but not being alone in this felt reassuring In general P feels easier if not alone with things F = tapping into things that I hadn't recognised as being quite so emotional – so surprising things

Participant Quite so emotional as as they turned out to be in the focusing. **Participant** I became very emotional on a couple of occasions one of which was the dreamwork section that we did. And so I managed to piece together sporadic memories of a dream that seemingly made no sense to me. **Participant** And was able to relay those as I remember the best I could remember that they happened. **Researcher** How long was it before the dream to the day when you were looking at it? **Participant** I think it would have been in... it would have been in the last week because I remember thinking I was getting you know I need to get	P noticing times when he became surprisingly emotional – dream work F with dreams – piecing together sporadic memories of a dream that seemingly made no sense and being able to relay them – a gap of about a week from dream to class –	F with dreams – piecing together sporadic memories of a dream that seemingly made no sense and being able to relay them – a gap of about a week from dream to class –

some serious dreams in here and then and then this one did sort of come... **Participant** that was very patchy. **Participant** So it was very very close to when I did the focusing with ****** and I really wasn't sure that what I'd pieced together in my memory was going to be enough. But as the as the as it was explored and as I...as a particular kind of **Participant** so there is a real sense of like really again naming each kind of recalling each allowed me to go into a place where I could almost recall those moments almost as if I was back in in the dream. So it had that kind of slightly surreal quality to. It. But I had a very present mind with...within it then. **Participant** I suppose to feel like I could just rummage a bit more around what that either was or.	F with dreams meant recalling, naming each part (similar to F more generally) and recalling those moments and being back in it (slightly surreal quality) – being very present in it (mindful presence) and FP connecting aspects of it that he wasn't able to see himself – FP repeating bits of it which she had noticed but an effect was clarifying the order of events in the dream and facilitating going back into it and making connections with recent events in life (previous week) in which he had been carrying things (presumably carrying things emotionally) and	F with dreams meant recalling, naming each part (similar to F more generally) and recalling those moments and being back in it (slightly surreal quality) – being very present in it (mindful presence) and FP connecting aspects of it that he wasn't able to see himself – FP repeating bits of it which she had noticed but an effect was clarifying the order of events in the dream and facilitating going back into it and making connections with recent events in life (previous week) in which he had been carrying things

And it was the connecting that she offered between aspects of it. I wasn't able perhaps to see myself sometimes which **Researcher** so she was noticing... **Researcher** She was as it were freely being with you with your dream [yes] kind of 'oh that's interesting' or whatever, I'm just making it up as I say that I don't know what she did. **Participant** She'd repeat bits of it which... **Participant** I'd said [yes] almost to allow me to to re-clarify or yeah re-clarify or slightly sort of you know slightly kind of get it better get it get 'ah yeah' and the order of it in a way and just allowed me to really kind of get back into what what that was and then the events sort of what event in your life has happened recently where this might be so kind of the symbolism which was really became quite	carrying things in the dream and recalling it connected him with it, the dream and the events. And Fp staying with the specific features of the dream – green fibres and a wet green towel and a room where a friend would sleep. And putting things down in the dream and putting things down in life	(presumably carrying things emotionally) and carrying things in the dream and recalling it connected him with it, the dream and the events. And Fp staying with the specific features of the dream – green fibres and a wet green towel and a room where a friend would sleep. And putting things down in the dream and putting things down in life

important. I mean I can't remember the specifics of the dream now...but um **Researcher** they related to something that had been happening or it seemed so **Participant** yeah so yeah there was there was a number of different events that happened which. And it was around carrying this it was around carrying a weight and I was carrying this weight and I it was something I felt that was really important to do and I can feel it even now coming back to it. **Participant** The emotion coming back to the top and there was a part in the dream where it related to some green fibre that I'd been sweeping up but didn't want to throw away. **Participant** And this was back in my old house or something and I was like 'what's all these green fibres you know sweeping up and uh		

anyway I carried this really really wet heavy towel through for some reason to a friend who used to be at school who had decided my mum had said that they could sleep in this other bedroom. I put the stuff down and there is something about the putting down of this thing and and the connection [the wet heavy towel?] wet heavy towel yeah and um and then there was the green sort of green fibres and green, green. And ****** really kind of stayed with me on that. **Participant** And... [what did she say?] I wish I could say... **Participant** I wish I could say it would be great to have recorded, that session **Participant** So she offered some sense of you know this carrying a heavy weight. Do you feel like you've been. Is there something in life that you've been carrying. [Yes yes] you know and I was sort of oh yes I could feel it. I could really feel it. And she says is it in any way linked to the green fibres that you're	Dreams – Fp said you have been carrying this thing in the dream, is there something in your life you've been carrying? And 'oh yes, I can feel it', and what was the signif of the green fibres and actually they were from a jumper that someone special had belonged to and then the emotion poured out in this putting down of a load. Really accessing	Dreams – Fp said you have been carrying this thing in the dream, is there something in your life you've been carrying? And 'oh yes, I can feel it', and what was the signif of the green fibres and actually they were from a jumper that someone special had belonged to and then the emotion poured out in this

sweeping up. [Yes]. And you know it seemed like really logical thing to say in a sense. And then I realized that the green fibres were fibres of a jumper that belonged to somebody that had become very special to me. And as soon as the connection was made I mean it just, the emotion was just just poured out in this kind of putting down of a load. And. It was like I was doing that in this focusing session like you know identifying what those fibres were and what they meant to me and why I was so reluctant to clean them up because I was thinking why why should I have to...and then it was this sort of like putting down this thing and the kind of ahhh and it was the combination of the two things in this kind of way that I just. It just took me completely gave me access to something that felt so true to me.	something very important that was true to him	putting down of a load. Really accessing something very important that was true to him
Participant		
The truth, the thread of truth that wove its way throughout this dream in such a, such a symbolic way I suppose just suddenly became apparent to me and it was very powerful. And there was just a real sort of weight of emotion which which came out and it did feel I could sort of put down that burden in that moment in some sense.	The truth, the thread of truth that wove its way throughout this dream in such a, such a symbolic way I suppose just suddenly became apparent to me and it was very powerful Then emotion and could put down that burden (as had put down something in the dream)	The truth, the thread of truth that wove its way throughout this dream in such a, such a symbolic way I suppose just suddenly became apparent to me and it was very powerful

Researcher So it becoming connected to that emotion. **Researcher** had a quality of being, of putting a burden down as it were [yes it did] It wasn't that I become overwhelmed and therefore I am as it were a burden more it's [yes] sort of the opposite. in a way **Participant** It was an outpouring and that that wasn't I suppose some might consider that as being overpowering you know like actually being in an emotional place to that extent it's a really vulnerable place to be but it was so kind of a visceral kind of the connection yeah. It really was it was in such a strong way, it was such a relief it was like finally somebody had sort of unlocked something for me and just it became I was so sort of light. **Participant**	Emotional outpouring was a visceral connection Relief that someone finally unlocked something for me and it just became sort of light A powerful moment	Then emotion and could put down that burden (as had put down something in the dream) Emotional outpouring was a visceral connection Relief that someone finally unlocked something for me and it just became sort of light

Walking away from that particular experience and I think for both of us. It was a powerful moment. **Participant** We've we've worked quite visually with things in ****** and I and so sort of metaphorical kind of swords and shields and things like that and saying what does that sort of look like to you. To you is it an old or you know what is it you're carrying is it an old sword is it one you know is it it sort of sharp as it dull is it? You know what's the shield and how how do you feel about holding those and just kind of working with metaphor I suppose within within the focusing. **Participant** So different ways of accessing the feelings. This this was i'm just kind of saying it I suppose as it comes to me but this this was and I can't again remember quite which part of it was where we where we went to this place where I had I was talking about about this part of me this compassionate side. Yeah. [Sorry] yeah I was just about a	Within Fp shared activity of reflecting on images and metaphors that had arisen and asking about the things that arose – e.g., swords and shields and things like that – are they sharp or dull or what does it feel like to hold that etc F with different parts of the self – a compassionate side of me	Within Fp shared activity of reflecting on images and metaphors that had arisen and asking about the things that arose – e.g., swords and shields and things like that – are they sharp or dull or what does it feel like to hold that etc F with different parts of the self – a compassionate side of me

compassionate sort of part of me that was kind of identified in there somewhere. **Participant** And. i wish i could remember which...What aspect we were trying out at the time. There's something about the focusing state with your, with my eyes closed and kind of seeing it and it does become a bit like a dream in a way and I can try out what it feels like it's just having a companion and being able to... **Participant** Say ah 'I really connect with what it means to me'. **Participant** 'I know what those images actually what meaning they feel that they have' **Researcher** so the images would come in the context of focusing as it were you weren't making the if somebody said 'I want you to visualise a sword and shield'.	F with eyes closed creates visualisation and it's like being in a dream I can try out what it feels like – some visual thing or some imagined object – signif of role of companion with that F can identify meaning of images in dreams and in F	F with eyes closed creates visualisation and it's like being in a dream I can try out what it feels like – some visual thing or some imagined object – signif of role of companion with that F can identify meaning of images in dreams and in F

Researcher Yeah. Yeah. It's not that ****** said 'right I want you to imagine a sword and shield'. These images kind of came spontaneously. is that what you're saying?		
Participant Yeah, they did. As I say it's a bit random throwing it out there (?? unclear) But I just remember that being something that kind of moved and shifted: at first I had a sword and then I didn't actually, it was the shield that was the thing for me. Didn't even use a sword. It was more this and how it protected me and offered protection to others and you know the sense of compassion so we/you could call it the shield of compassion and it is like [the shield of compassion] and it is like my kind of thing, yeah it was just how it it formed into this kind of named thing and it 'harr' whether it was can the divided self, I can't remember which aspect it was, I can't remember as I go back now at but [sorry, so you mean..]	Visual images were not deliberately invented: they just came during Focusing F images of sword and shield and personal signif of images e.g., shield was signif because protecting self and others Sense of compassion so 'the shield of compassion' Was the visual imagery of the shield and so on part of exploring the divided self??	Visual images were not deliberately invented: they just came during Focusing F images of sword and shield and personal signif of images e.g., shield was signif because protecting self and others Sense of compassion so 'the shield of compassion' Was the visual imagery of the shield and so on part of exploring the divided self??
Researcher		

There was this basic sort of learning about focusing as it were and then there were these permutations of different kinds of experiencing? **Participant** Yes **Researcher** divided um, trying... can't remember them adequately now um...Curtailed experiencing .[curtailed, that's the other one i was thinking of...] **Researcher** um suppressed [Yes] so it was something or other [around those]. Yes. [Yeah]. I see. **Researcher** So there would be yeah okay... [It is a bit kind of randomly thrown out there if I could remember exactly what it's in relation to there's something about that focusing place that's. So conducive to. Things kind of coming into focus and then evolving...]	F and a FP creates a space in which 'things kind of come into focus and evolve'	F and a FP creates a space in which 'things kind of come into focus and evolve'

Participant Almost as you, as I look and understand one bit it's like it shifts and then it becomes something, it's like the layers are coming off it and a kernel of what's there... **Participant** Becomes more apparent. **Participant** And it feels so, I feel like I really own the kernel when I get it it's like ah yeah. So that's that bit of me in there [definitely me]. Yeah it really does feel like I strip all that stuff away and then 'ah that's that really feels like a piece of me'. **Researcher** So there's a journey that you have to go on so to speak to get to the kernel different layers so to speak. **Researcher** And it's all you...	Personal learning in relation to F – 'as I look and understand. One bit, it shifts and then it becomes something, it's like layers coming off it and a kernel of what's there becomes more apparent'. Effect of F 'I feel I really own the kernel when I get it'. 'So, that's a bit of me in there' 'when I strip all that stuff away and then 'ah that really feels like a piece of me'	Personal learning in relation to F – 'as I look and understand. One bit, it shifts and then it becomes something, it's like layers coming off it and a kernel of what's there becomes more apparent'. Effect of F 'I feel I really own the kernel when I get it'. 'So, that's a bit of me in there' 'when I strip all that stuff away and then 'ah that really feels like a piece of me'

Researcher But then when you get to the kernel it's really you [yeah] something like that [Yeah, yeah there's something that feels very very powerful about that that central kind of thing. It's like it reaches to the core [the essential thing] yeah the core of me somehow in some way it touches into a part of me that's very..]. **Participant** Feels very much a part of who I am. **Researcher** Um okay...So part of what it's doing is touching. Fundamental aspects of who you are [yeah...allowing me to really access that. Underneath maybe all the layers of what. I might have thought and this that and the other...it seems as though those layers seem to just fall off if they don't feel right. And. This is this kind of essential thing which seems to be. **Participant** At the heart of so much else.	F process of getting to the kernel 'feels very, very powerful'…'it reaches to the core of me' F 'touches into a part of me that is very much a part of who I am' F = really accessing what is underneath the layers. The layers are what I might have thought and this and that and the other. Those layers seem to fall off if they don't feel right.	F process of getting to the kernel 'feels very, very powerful'…'it reaches to the core of me' F 'touches into a part of me that is very much a part of who I am' F = really accessing what is underneath the layers. The layers are what I might have thought and this and that and the other. Those layers seem to fall off if they don't feel right.

Researcher almost like a primary thing rather than you know what might follow in relation to other things in my life...but		
Participant There's something underneath that which I've maybe never recognised as being there in quite the way that it allowed me to do.	F reveals that there is something underneath that I've never recognised as being there in quite the way that it allowed me to do	F reveals that there is something underneath that I've never recognised as being there in quite the way that it allowed me to do
Researcher And certainly there wasn't a...There wasn't one of the c...So the classes had some of those labels attached to them like divided experiencing or whatever it was. But there wasn't a class that said finding the core of who you are [laughter] do you see what I mean? [yeah] there wasn't a class that addressed that [yeah, may be it was the degree of suppressed experiencing in a sense maybe there was just parts of me had been suppressed by life and experiencing so on and other people] I see okay so suppressed experiencing when you find what it was that was suppressed as it were and then you're	Acknowledgement that there wasn't a class on finding the core of who you are P speculates that the degree of suppressed experiencing – suppressed by life and experiencing and other people – meant that he hadn't known who he was underneath the layers.	P speculates that the degree of suppressed experiencing – suppressed by life and experiencing and other people – meant that he hadn't known who he was underneath the layers.

finding that kind of core of who you are as it were **Participant** Dig, it can dig quite deep and there's just a sense of being no that's not quite so important, that's not quite it. Things that don't quite fit don't feel quite right. Learning to and learning to almost feel in the dark...get A real sense of what this thing is you know what feels what what carries the real what really ties into what's there for me...yeah,yeah **Researcher** In the classic pattern: the six steps there's clearing a space, then it's getting a felt sense and then there's [sorry do you have a tissue mARTIN At all?]. A tIssue I have tissue [THANK YOU, sorry i...] **Participant** colded up this week. Thanks. **Participant**	F entailed digging quite deep Layers fall away easily because they don't feel quite right Learning to feel in the dark Getting to a real sense of what this is and what carries the real, what really ties into what's there	F entailed digging quite deep Layers fall away easily because they don't feel quite right Learning to feel in the dark Getting to a real sense of what this is and what carries the real, what really ties into what's there

So the six steps. [Yes so there's there's the clearing a space, there's the felt sense and then there's the handle so you've referred to kind of clearing a space, you've referred to getting hold of something or giving some attention to something and then the importance of getting the right kind of word for it or handle]. **Researcher** Or whatever. And then there are these further bits that you've talked about forgetting about the six steps now right okay? [Yeah] where there's a process by which things are around and you're kind of. **Researcher** Somehow working with them to get to the heart of whatever it is something like that, is that the right way of saying it? There is now there's a kind of a process of exploring as it were. **Participant** Yes it does. It does feel like sort of just gently kind of delving into my experience as it comes up in the moment. And developing a	Beyond the six steps…	Beyond the six steps…

feeling of what feels what my gut instinct kind of goes with sort of where does that go. It's almost allowing it allowing it to you know not putting pressure on it to. Find something but just kind of feel what does it feel drawn to you know what feels right really tentative really kind of you know there might be nothing that feels right right now but just allowing myself to to go that little bit deeper and the handle I felt felt the naming of it sometimes was so powerful it felt like naming it sort of it's an uncomfortable feeling it felt like a. **Participant** Felt like I'd sort of got it's number a little bit more (laughter) gotcha (laughter) yeah. **Participant** Knowledge is power kind of thing [knowing what it is and having it's name as it were] it's like I don't know. In certain films or stories or something when you, when you know a... **Participant** When you know a sort of I don't know where it was but I read this but when you know it's	F = delving into my expereince as it comes up in the moment (ref to ACT sense of self, not observing self or constructed self) F = developing a gut instinct, developing a felling of what feels what my gut instinct goes with …where does that go? F process = allowing it, not putting any pressure on it F = really tentative Find something but just kind of feel what does it feel drawn to Maybe nothing feels right, right now Naming it (G's concept of handle word or handle concept or handle phrase) is really powerful – it's getting it's number !	F = delving into my expereince as it comes up in the moment (ref to ACT sense of self, not observing self or constructed self) F = developing a gut instinct, developing a felling of what feels what my gut instinct goes with …where does that go? F process = allowing it, not putting any pressure on it F = really tentative Find something but just kind of feel what does it feel drawn to Maybe nothing feels right, right now Naming it (G's concept of handle word or handle concept or handle phrase) is really powerful – it's getting it's number !

name and you can call it's name. You have mastery over it whether it's that the fairy folk or something I can't remember where it was I read it but something like that. So it's a really well hidden thing. But if you if you find access to it then it's somehow like it doesn't ever have quite the same power over you anymore. **Researcher** And. Acquiring its name. **Researcher** So to speak is what helps you to do that or what enables you to do that **Participant** I do, did find it I find it just like ah you know it's like this sort of i don't know just finding that bit of an emotional kind of shrapnel that's lodged in there, that's been really uncomfortable for so long you never quite can get to it and. Gently kind of moving in and you're able to locate where it is and it's like 'ah' gotcha. And then it can make sense of so many different things.	Knowing it's name gives you mastery over it and that's what it feels like. Naming a well-hidden thing Finding access to it (the word access again) then it doesn't ever have the same power again. F as finding a piece of emotional shrapnel that's been lodged in there for so long and that's really uncomfortable – you can never quite get to it	Knowing it's name gives you mastery over it and that's what it feels like. Naming a well-hidden thing Finding access to it (the word access again) then it doesn't ever have the same power again. F as finding a piece of emotional shrapnel that's been lodged in there for so long and that's really uncomfortable – you can never quite get to it

Participant Because it feels like a piece of my own puzzle. You. **Participant** Know a real piece. **Researcher** So there's, there's the part of it which is about finding and feeling your emotions about certain things perhaps in the context of them having previously been sort of a bit nebulous or a bit over there somewhere. a bit inaccessible so to speak but then there is this, and there's this other aspect which is about finding who you are in...Those things - almost like there's sort of two bits there at least that's what I'm asking you. **Researcher** Two bits...At least two bits you know? There's the busines of what are these emotions that are around and what are... **Researcher**	F process – gently moving in and you're able to locate where it is and it's like 'ah' gotcha and that makes sense of so many things… Emotional shrapnel is a piece of my own puzzle. A real piece of my own puzzle F = finding and feeling your emotions Previously emotions had been sort of a bit nebulous and inaccessible (access word/concept) and then there is this aspect of finding out who you are. Two bits to F: what the emotions are and who you are	F process – gently moving in and you're able to locate where it is and it's like 'ah' gotcha and that makes sense of so many things… Emotional shrapnel is a piece of my own puzzle. A real piece of my own puzzle F = finding and feeling your emotions Previously emotions had been sort of a bit nebulous and inaccessible (access word/concept) and then there is this aspect of finding out who you are.

They?. and a part of it is who am I in all of that?. Somehow. **Participant** Yeah there is a and it's a bit of a paradox because there's a something of me which kind of almost worries (??unclear) About what it might be. But. but actually actually the finding it has been. Surprisingly. **Participant** I don't know. Again kind of lightening somehow. And. um and I feel it just.I Feel more and more out about myself in those moments which and. **Participant** [More?] I find out more about myself. [sorry you found out more about yourself] **Participant** Yeah it just feels like I connect with another part of me and being able to do that. **Participant**	P has paradox that he worries about what he will find when the unclear self is discovered. Contrast to fear of self-discovery is surprise and lightening and feel more and more about myself F = connecting with another part of me (being able to do that) – what is that? Right	Two bits to F: what the emotions are and who you are P has paradox that he worries about what he will find when the unclear self is discovered. Contrast to fear of self-discovery is surprise and lightening and feel more and more about myself

I feel like I know me better and and I feel like the aspects which were related to it it's like things click into place like I could almost be able to offer myself more empathy and more self-compassion, have a greater sense of what it is and how that has how I've carried that and that that sort of just allows a bit more access for other things as well. **Researcher** So part of it it's definitely about. Yeah, one part of it is self-compassion, self empathy, self compassion. The. Different aspects of what we looked at, you've **Researcher** Mebntioned the dream work. You've made reference to one or two other things like divided, although... **Researcher** that way of. unPackaging it all, if you like and looking. At all those different bits, did that seem helpful or was that how was that to do that?. unPackaging of all of the different bits so to speak - I'm not saying this	brain, body and mind ensemble, self that is experiencing things in the moment? F process creates possibility of more self-empathy and self-compassion and how he's carried things and more access for other things too.	F = connecting with another part of me (being able to do that) – what is that? Right brain, body and mind ensemble, self that is experiencing things in the moment? F process creates possibility of more self-empathy and self-compassion and how he's carried things and more access for other things too.

very clearly am I?. Different types of experiencing. **Researcher** Including dreams, all of that in addition to the basic focusing process. So how was it to unpackage all of that? **Participant** I think I think I mean I think it's I could I could really feel the potential of how powerful those those that **Participant** Unpackaging could be. And I especially found that as an accompanier that you know with my partner when she was able to visualise. Working with herself in different parts that that was a very visual. Very visual thing that was just like a process totally in motion and it was evolving constantly and new parts kind of springing up and having conversations with parts of the self like the inner critic and things like that. That was a really good one to do actually thinking about it. [But you were in the companion role when you were] yeah yeah sort of where that voice came from	Un-packaging has been so powerful As accompanier working with FP visualising different parts of herself – asking about visualisations, what does it sound like? What are the qualities of that part? Multidirectional partiality (link to Mearns concept)	Un-packaging has been so powerful As accompanier working with FP visualising different parts of herself – asking about visualisations, what does it sound like? What are the qualities of that part?

what it looked like. So again sort of a visual aspect to it. What does it sound like, what are the qualities to it giving, giving a sort of multidirectional partiality, almost, giving voice to both sides. And the the visual aspect of asking one to leave the room. While the other one spoke. And um [how did you know when to do that...tO say, well I want you to leave the room and...?].		Multidirectional partiality (link to Mearns concept)
Participant I think it was in. I think I kind of went with my partner on that one.	As Fp asking a part to leave the room.	As Fp asking a part to leave the room.
Participant And checked in to see what they'd like me to do with that. What would we, what would you like to do with that part?	Directionaility of FP role entailed following partner	Directionaility of FP role entailed following partner
Participant Would you like to listen to that part first or would you like that part. To wait outside? [okay, so you would...]	Checking what partner would like to do with a part	Checking what partner would like to do with a part
Researcher	Strong element of dialogue and initiative with	

Do it sort of in a very, in a deliberately collaborative way. [Yes I think I wanted it to be, didn't want to presume that I knew quite what would be the right thing for her somehow that it was good to check in with what felt right at that time and to actually empower the person to feel empowered by saying 'actually I'd like that to leave the room'. (laughter)	Collaborative role in FP was very empowering for F	Strong element of dialogue and initiative with
Participant that it would be like 'um Okay yeah [let's do that then] rather than just say let's do this and that you know it wouldn't have the same like it came from within the person kind of feel, um...	Importance of FP role as accompanier and facilitator was to try to articulate (in divided experiencing work, for example) what the person themselves wanted and then back it up. Very powerful for the person to feel that it came from them.	Collaborative role in FP was very empowering for F Importance of FP role as accompanier and facilitator was to try to articulate (in divided experiencing work, for example) what the person themselves wanted and then back it up. Very powerful for the person to feel that it came from them.
Participant But the shape that that took literally and the feeling that was in the body and I remember looking at ****** and she sort of really feared sort of 'Oh I'm getting this feeling and it's up here and it's kind of oh it's like this you know or whatever and really work learning to work with the visual, the sort of bodily reactions to things as they come up as well and what sort of colour it was and just just a number of different ways into an	Working collaboratively with FP involved visuals, bodily feelings, colours, naming things, and learning together where things wanted to go	

experience you know that it doesn't have to be about oh who is that? It might be that... Who is that. Is there a name for that. What does it need? or a different access points to this thing you know what the fuck! (?? unclear) what does it feel it needs you know that sort of thing and that could be quite a powerful. It was just it was just a sense of where to go with it that... **Participant** I think we developed as we as our partnership developed that I started to understand a little bit more when she needed me to stay with the body as opposed to anything else and just to to be kind of gently inquiring around that as well. **Participant** And often it... Often even if the question wasn't...was slightly off the response might be 'oh oh no but it's this instead' and it's that classic where you offer one thing but it gives the chance to redefine it get it clearer. [So there's a kind of a learning from her...] **Researcher**	F = staying with the body and gently enquiring around. In FP accompanier role wrong questions worked also since the person would say no it's not that but this is what's needed.	Working collaboratively with FP involved visuals, bodily feelings, colours, naming things, and learning together where things wanted to go F = staying with the body and gently enquiring around.

In the moment as it were...what **Researcher** was appropriate and getting to know each other over the course of time say **Participant** Yeah and if I was straying in a way which was slightly unhelpful there'd be a bringing back to 'I think I need to, I feel like I need to stay with this' so you'd know kind of [get in line with that a bit] just always checking in with each other and you know kind of reaching out and touching...is It still you know we're still here together and she you know we really went places in those times. And it was emotional for both of us. I know. I know certainly... **Researcher** How did you, as it were, find each other focusing-wise? How did you come to be together, I've got no sense of that **Participant**	Fp accompanier role – always checking in with each other and 'reaching out and touching 'is it still?' are we still here together? Shared emotion	In FP accompanier role wrong questions worked also since the person would say no it's not that but this is what's needed. Fp accompanier role – always checking in with each other and 'reaching out and touching 'is it still?' are we still here together? Shared emotion

Well it's it's actually a really really quite a lovely story in a way the first time in our intensive week that we were all together and you came in and spoke about visualising somebody that we're close to [yes] and then visualising somebody we're not so, we don't get on with that well. And both ****** and I had a bit of a tear in our eye and I think you were sort of on, on the left and she was the other side of you and I was kind of this side and we then spoke about our experiences. And I kind of noticed ****** sort of you know.	Choice of fp? Both had tears over initial F exercise of people you like and dislike and mutual recognition.	Choice of fp? Both had tears over initial F exercise of people you like and dislike and mutual recognition.
Participant 'Oh that's a similar thing to me' and subsequently I found out that she sought me out for her Focusing partner.	Fp sought P out	
Participant She said I knew I wanted to be with you...[in view of that]		
Participant In view of that and just her overall sense of me as a as a person. The way I came across		

to her was really she said what she said not to quote her on this but attractive (laughter) **Participant** we didn't focus on that. [So when i next see her I won't say guess what ***** told me. **Participant** Yeah she's said it a bit tongue-in-cheek you know I think there was a sense of connection and Mutual, mutuality about us as being somehow on some level we felt a connection there and [and does it feel that it had to be that way so to speak if it was going to work or...] **Researcher** I don't know I mean was that something you could imagine you were looking for, as it were? **Participant** Well I'll be really honest I suppose when I first was I was looking to enjoy it but there was a part of me that was hoping I was going to land and this is very very being just very	Sense of attractiveness of other person for FP role P had general sense of wanting to get to know FP as a person	Sense of attractiveness of other person for FP role

honest initially I thought wouldn't it be great to do it with so-and-so coz it would be lovely to spend a bit of time with them over the course of this and get to know them I don't know them that well and you know, so I suppose in my mind for some reason I had a sense of who I wanted to do it with. [You got an idea] Yeah I did		P had general sense of wanting to get to know FP as a person
Participant So you know it was an interesting one that actually and I was quite in a way quite intimidated initially by ****** coz she's sort of she's really into it really wants every last drop of it out of it.	Fp was slightly intimidating – so into it and into everything	
Participant And there was me with my own 'I want to get this right' thing going on and but there was just such a lovely kind of compassion about the way we just held each other and and we did...	P had perfectionism wating to get it right thing but also compassion for each other	Fp was slightly intimidating – so into it and into everything
Participant We did find something really special in that, and she was able to say when I'd, maybe I'd stuck a bit with the cognitive side of it rather		

than going into the feeling that but I could hold that and really work with it and not take it personally so it was just a really good [I see so you could have imagined worrying overly much about getting it right and therefore it not being so easy to accept not criticism exactly but, kind of comments about how you would do something...]	If P was too much on the cognitive side, FP would gently remind him and he would not take it personally.	
Participant [Different or whatever]. Yeah. Sort of. hence, I mean we did work on my inner critic as well because obviously there's an aspect of that that hasn't doesn't stray too far from my thinking [the topic of the inner critic is quite a, quite a..].		If P was too much on the cognitive side, FP would gently remind him and he would not take it personally.
Researcher Good one as it were or a useful one.	They worked on his inner critic. A big theme (links to Gendlin idea and Cornell and others)	
Participant Really it really was particularly I think for ******, I mean sometimes it was so we did dare I say it sort of use the full time where we were really in something we were happy to offer each other that moment if we were really in there with that not to have to then		They worked on his inner critic. A big theme (links to Gendlin idea and Cornell and others)

stop and change and. Let that sort of go cold if you like without enough time to. Perhaps we weren't as boundaried and were . **Participant** pushing....(?? unclear) **Researcher** But aside from that like boundary aspect, the business... **Researcher** of having both roles as it were being the focuser with a companion, being the companion with the focuser that aspect, how was that? [It is a kind of...] In that sense different to a classical therapy, therapeutic relationship where you're either as it were the Councillor or the client, you're sort of doing both as it were. **Participant** Yeah I suppose there's an equality to it with that. And it's really lovely to be able to offer, offer the same, you know, offer the same back and and really kind of climb in there	P and FP did not always adhere to rule about equal time for FPs in an hour	P and FP did not always adhere to rule about equal time for FPs in an hour

together. And it, you know there's a deepening of the relationship and almost seemingly inevitable from doing that. But. Also. Access to. Other ways of. Of. **Participant** Offering it. And so I myself might be in receipt of of. A sense from ****** which would be just really illuminating for me and it helped me in my own way develop my own sense of being able to offer things in. You know in other ways as well. So I think we both helped. Each other sort of develop our sense of being able to accompany. [So the, I kind of learning aspect] Yeah it was definitely [learning how to accompany and offer in other contexts for example. In. Some. Sense or]. So she too with regards to the body she would be able to draw me back to that. And I found that really helpful because. That was something I found hard to do myself so. That initially replicated itself in how I was able to be there for her. So in learning how to be there for her it helped me learn how to be with myself [and this was this aspect of going to the body...] **Researcher**	Fp = equality = offering back what you've received = deepening of relationship = access to other ways of offering accompaniment (coz other person did it differently?) Shared learning in how to accompany Fp would draw him back to the body P found it hard to stay with the body	Fp = equality = offering back what you've received = deepening of relationship = access to other ways of offering accompaniment (coz other person did it differently?) Shared learning in how to accompany

And being with it and feeling and all that rather than thinkin [yeah] that sort of idea. **Participant** Yeah. To stay there as well. **Researcher** So the business of staying with things where you could imagine going away from it in other contexts say [um] the business of sticking with it. **Participant** it's the the dedicated space to being in touch with one's feelings and what's going on in there. What is that?. I just think it's. Or it it's hard to imagine that we can do without it. When you've done it because it it feels such a helpful valuing thing to do. It just it just life's so busy. Sometimes you just forget to do it for yourself. So there's something about this the kind of peace it offers as well in some ways to be able to like 'ah I'm giving myself time here to to see what's there for me' and that feels kind, you know and it's...Maybe we forget to be kind. Often enough.	Learning how to be there for her meant that he learned how to be with himself. F (and FP learning process) was about staying with things F and Fp is a 'dedicated space to being in touch with one's feelings and what's going on in there'. Key learning – 'it's hard to imagine doing without it' Issue that life's too busy	Fp would draw him back to the body P found it hard to stay with the body Learning how to be there for her meant that he learned how to be with himself. F (and FP learning process) was about staying with things

Researcher From my point of view I don't think I mean I wanted to ask a bit about just the different aspects of what we looked at not in the sense of wanting you to talk about them but just in the sense that one could learn Focusing primarily just by learning the six steps say or whatever it is but there was this sort of broader curriculum. So I guess i wanted to ask about that or I would have asked about dreams I think but.... **Researcher** so is there anything else about the that experience so far as you can recall it that strikes you or you would be inclined to mention... **Participant** I think it, so much of what. So the curtailed experiencing, suppressed experiencing so much of. What. That. Is about. I could see working really well with clients and people just generally it's common to have so many of those different types of experiencing that somehow not had a chance to process itself	Relief that "I'm giving myself time here We forget to be kind to ourselves	F and Fp is a 'dedicated space to being in touch with one's feelings and what's going on in there'. Key learning – 'it's hard to imagine doing without it' Issue that life's too busy Relief that "I'm giving myself time here We forget to be kind to ourselves

in a way which remains stuck. And so it really highlighted to me that the sheer depth of what you can do with Focusing I guess in terms of. You know the fulfillment of those. Experiences. You know in a different way but it doesn't actually have to happen in reality in reality you know with that person but that you can actually almost you can go to that place. **Participant** And so it becomes uncurtailed. And look at aspects of that which just feels like a really. Like it. You know it can move things. **Participant** It does shift things [so curtailed as in something that didn't get to do what it needed to do back in the day some earlier experience that somehow didn't go [yeah] kind of reconnecting with things from one's past. That...] **Participant** [Need attention] you know whether it's things you didn't say to someone who passed and it just never. It just never	Curriculum felt useful for clients etc Couldn't process so well for self Sheer depth of what can be done with Focusing – the fulfilment of those experiences Signif of F being able to go back to a place and the thing becomes uncurtailed.	Curriculum felt useful for clients etc Couldn't process so well for self Sheer depth of what can be done with Focusing – the fulfilment of those experiences Signif of F being able to go back to a place and the thing becomes uncurtailed.

happened so it's remained stuck in that. Point in time almost like it... And that being still something that's carried. **Participant** That somehow there might be some way of actually fulfilling that moment. **Participant** [curtailed, suppressed, all that] yeah that sort of the unblocking potential of it. And how, how freeing that is and how hard it is to understand just how heavily those things kind of weigh on one's. Mind or soul. **Researcher** So partly it's that they've become free, partly there's a retrospective thing. Say actually that was really, I was really carrying a lot there. [yeah, Again it's kind of naming it almost it's it's really wow you kind of see how much is there...] **Participant** And you are able to dip into it 'oh that was unexpected'. Things get buried in amongst all	Signif of being able to go back to a moment when something was stopped (curtailed) emotionally speaking and somehow fulfilling that moment Signif that things weigh on one's mind or soul	Signif of being able to go back to a moment when something was stopped (curtailed) emotionally speaking and somehow fulfilling that moment Signif that things weigh on one's mind or soul

the rubble really and it's really good to think actually there are some things where I feel like that feels like a curtailed experience to me or a suppressed experience which can be even harder to get to but um...you Know because often it's suppressed for a reason. But but those that the access it can offer if it when you learn to to retain a distance from things so when you're doing things almost in a six steps kind of way without then going into that when you evolve it to doing things like around suppressed experiencing. The kind of sense of your place within that space as a focuser. [Yeah] and how you can how you can sort of be in a sense in a different way with it builds a different relationship with it. That always sticks with me the idea of. Having a different relationship with something, something kind of sitting next to you or wherever it is. you know that It's not like oh it's an overwhelming it's it's kind of next to you. [that's been particularly important for you to get this relationship which in other contexts, perhaps, would have had that...] . Yes, the divided Self and you go on about that fellowship of ***** thing ...(??unclear) Gendlin's kind of sitting around campfire [the fellowship of *****]...the fellowship of *****, yeah And		

how. How I was able to see my different selves at different times and.	Apropos curtailed and suppressed – much of this P processed curtailed or supressed stuff and the key thing was having a distance form things – a relationship with it and sitting down beside it at a campfire – metaphor of the fellowship of *****	Apropos curtailed and suppressed – much of this P processed curtailed or supressed stuff and the key thing was having a distance form things – a relationship with it and sitting down beside it at a campfire – metaphor of the fellowship of *****

Appendix Three: Research Participant Consent Form

Martin Langsdon
PGR Student
[Insert date]

Faculty of Social Sciences
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich NR4 7TJ
United Kingdom

Email:m.langsdon@uea.ac.uk
Tel: +44 (0) 1603 593011

How effective and helpful is Focusing as a therapeutic modality?

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study about people's experience of Focusing as a taught procedure that can be used for their own personal development and within Focusing partnerships. You have been invited to participate in this study because you have received training in Focusing and have been involved in practising Focusing. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about. Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling me that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information for this research study.

(2) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researcher: Martin Langsdon, PGR student, School of Education and Lifelong Learning, University of East Anglia.

(3) What will the study involve for me?

Your participation will involve having one interview with me during the summer of 2017. This will take place in my office (LSB 1.38) or in another neutral venue that is appropriate for you at a time that is convenient to you and the interviews will be audio recorded. You will be asked questions relating to your experience of Focusing, the different parts of the Focusing process and about the sorts of personal issues or difficulties that you have sought to address while Focusing. Parts of the interview will be quite structured and parts of the interview will be unstructured. I will ask some specific questions as well as seeking to engage in a broader, less structured discussion about your experience of Focusing. If you wish to decline to answer any of the questions, you are, of course, entirely free to do so. You will be able to review the transcript of your interviews, if you wish, to ensure they are an accurate reflection of the discussion.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

It is expected that each interview will take between 50 mins to an hour each.

(5) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researcher or anyone else at the University of East Anglia. This is especially so in that some participants will be people who are or have been

my students at the University of East Anglia and I would wish to emphasise that your participation, non-participation or withdrawal will have no negative impact on your relationship with me or with the University. If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by letting me know by email (m.langsdon@uea.ac.uk) or by phone (01603 593011). You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview. If you decide at a later time to withdraw from the study your information will be removed from my records and will not be included in any results, up to the point I have analysed and published the results.

(6) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

Aside from giving up your time, I do not expect that there will be any costs associated with taking part in this study. Discussing Focusing and the personal issues that are addressed during Focusing could bring up distressing material that you have not planned to revisit. If this should occur, then I will discuss resources or strategies for addressing any such negative effects from the interview.

(7) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

I would hope that participation in the project will further your personal and professional understanding of Focusing and may assist your practice. Participation in the project aims to contribute to society primarily in terms of promoting positive mental health and emotional literacy.

(8) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to me collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the 1998 Data Protection Act and the University of East Anglia Research Data Management Policy (2013). Your information will be stored securely and your identity/information will only be disclosed with your permission, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be identified in these publications. In this instance, data will be stored for a period of 10 years and then destroyed.

(9) What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, I will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. You can contact me on m.langsdon@uea.ac.uk or 01603 593011.

(10) Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell me that you wish to receive feedback by providing a contact detail on the consent section of this information sheet. This feedback will be in the form of a one page lay summary of the findings. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

(11) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved under the regulations of the University of East Anglia's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee.

If there is a problem please let me know. You can contact me via the University at the following address:

Martin Langsdon
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
NORWICH NR4 7TJ
m.langsdon@uea.ac.uk

If you would like to speak to someone else, you can contact my supervisor:
Professor Anne Cockburn
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
NORWICH NR4 7TJ
01603 592859
A.Cockburn@uea.ac.uk

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact please contact the Head of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Professor Richard Andrews, at Richard.Andrews@uea.ac.uk.

(12) OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?

You need to fill in one copy of the consent form and give to me or hand into my pigeonhole. Please keep the letter, information sheet and the 2nd copy of the consent form for your information.

This information sheet is for you to keep

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (1st Copy to Researcher)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researcher if I wished to do so.

✓ The researcher has answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researcher or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.

✓ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

✓ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.

✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law (e.g. child protection and 'Prevent').

✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, but these publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:

- **Audio-recording** YES ☐ NO ☐
- **Reviewing transcripts** YES ☐ NO ☐
- **Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?** YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: _____

☐ Email: _____

....

Signature **PRINT name** **Date**

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (2nd Copy to Participant)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researcher if I wished to do so.

✓ The researcher has answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researcher or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.

✓ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

✓ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.

✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law (e.g. child protection and 'Prevent').

✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, but these publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:

- **Audio-recording** YES ☐ NO ☐
- **Reviewing transcripts** YES ☐ NO ☐
- **Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?** YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: _____

☐ Email: _____

....

Signature **PRINT name** **Date**

Appendix Four: Experiencing Scale

(Klein 1969)

Short Form:

Stage	Content	Treatment
1	**External events: refusal to participate.**	**Impersonal, detached.**
2	**External events: behavioral or intellectual self-description.**	**Interested, personal, self-participation.**
3	**Personal reactions to external events: limited self-descriptions: behavioral descriptions of feelings.**	**Reactive, emotionally involved.**
4	**Descriptions of feelings and personal experiences.**	**Self-descriptive: associative.**
5	**Problems or propositions about feelings and personal experiences.**	**Exploratory, elaborative, hypothetical.**
6	**Synthesis of readily accessible feelings and experiences to resolve personally significant issues.**	**Feelings vividly expressed, integrative, conclusive or affirmative.**
7	**Full, easy presentation of experiencing: all elements confidently integrated.**	**Expansive, illuminating, confident, buoyant.**

Long Form:

Stage One

The chief characteristic of this stage is that the content or manner of expression is impersonal. In some cases the content is intrinsically impersonal, being a very abstract, general, superficial, or journalistic account of events or ideas with no personal referent established. In other cases, despite the personal nature of the content, the speaker's involvement is impersonal, so that he reveals nothing important about himself and his remarks could as well be about a stranger or an object.

The content is not about the speaker. The speaker tells a story, describes other people or events in which he is not involved, or presents a generalized or detached account of ideas. Nothing makes the content personal.

The content is such that the speaker is identified with it in some way but the association is not made clear. The speaker refers in passing to himself but his references do not establish his involvement. First person pronouns only define the speaker as an object, spectator, or incidental participant. Attention is focused exclusively on external events. For example, "As I was walking down the street I saw this happen . . .": "t read a book that said. . .": "I put the lid on the box": "He stepped on my toe." The speaker does not supply his attitudes, feelings or reactions. He treats himself as an object or instrument or in so remote a way that the story could be about someone else. His manner of expression is remote, matter-of-fact, or offhand, as in superficial social chit-chat, or has a mechanical or rehearsed quality.

The content is a terse, unexplained refusal to participate in an interaction, or an avoidance or minimizing of an interaction. Minimal responses without spontaneous comments are at stage one.

Stage Two

The association between the speaker and the content is explicit. Either the speaker is the central character in the narrative or his interest is clear. The speaker's involvement, however, does not go beyond the specific situation or content. All comments, associations, reactions, and remarks serve to get the story or idea across but do not refer to or define the speaker's feelings.

The content is a narrative of events in which the speaker is personally involved. His remarks establish the importance of the content but make no reference to the quality of this involvement. Remarks and associations refer to external facets of the narrative, other

people, the events, objects, the speaker's actions: they do not give his inner reactions or perspective. If the narrative includes the speaker's thoughts, opinion j, wishes, or attitudes, these only describe him intellectually or superficially. Some speakers refer to ideas and thoughts as if they were feelings: e.g., ") feel that 1 am a good farmer": "I feel that people should be more considerate." If terms tike "I think" or "I wish" could be substituted for "I feel" without changing the meaning, the remark is at stage two.

The events narrated are impersonal but the speaker explicitly establishes that the content is important to him. For example, he expresses interest in or evaluates an event, but does not show the quality or amount of his interest or concern.

The content is a self-description that is superficial, abstract, generalized, or intellectualized. No reference is made to the speaker's feelings or internal perspective. The segment presents the ideas, attitudes, opinions, moral judgments, wishes, preferences, aspirations, or capacities that describe the speaker from an external or peripheral perspective. One sees him from the outside.

The content reveals the speaker's feelings and reactions implicitly but not explicitly. If the speaker is emotionally aroused, it is evident from his manner, not from his words. If the content is the sort that ordinarily would be personally significant, the speaker does not say so. If the speaker mentions his feelings, he treats them abstractly, impersonally, as objects, or attributes them to others. Third person pronouns, especially "one feels" indicate depersonalization.

The content is an account of a dream, fantasy, hallucination, or free association. These should be treated as narratives of external events. They are at stage two if the speaker's remarks associate him with the account but do not give his feeling reactions to it.

Stage Three

The content is a narrative or a description of the speaker in external or behavioral terms with added comments on his feelings or private experiences. These remarks are limited to the events or situation described, giving the narrative a personal touch without describing the speaker more generally. Self-descriptions restricted to a specific situation or role are also at stage three.

The content is a narrative of events or description of an aspect of the speaker's environment (past, present, or future) with parenthetical personal remarks that give one of the following:

1) The speaker's feelings at the time of the event or in retrospect about it. For example, "He didn't call me back and I was angry" or "He didn't call me back: thinking about it now makes me angry."
2) The personal significance or implications of the situation by relating it to the speaker's private experience. For example, "it reminded me of being scolded as a child": "It was one of those queer moods that comes on me when 1 get tired."
3) The speaker's state of awareness at the time of the event. Such remarks include details of motives, consciousness, private perceptions, or assumptions which are limited to the event. For example, "I knew at the time that I was reacting too strongly": "I was aware of wanting to defend myself": "I did it even though I sensed how foolish I was." Accounts of dreams, hallucinations, fantasies, and free associations should be treated as narratives: they are at stage three if feelings are mentioned.

The content is a self-description of circumscribed aspects of the speaker's life style or role or of his feelings and reactions presented only in behavioral terms. The speaker might, for example, describe how he functions as a parent or in his job, or tell what he does when he gets angry. Personal remarks enrich the description of the situation or reaction to it, but are limited to the immediate context.

In response to a direct question, the speaker tells what his feelings are or were. The interviewer's words are not needed to identify the feeling.

Stage Four

The content is a clear presentation of the speaker's feelings, giving his personal, internal perspective or feelings about himself. Feelings or the experience of events, rather than the events themselves, are the subject of the discourse. By attending to and presenting this experiencing, the speaker communicates what it is like to be him. These interior views are presented, listed, or described, but are not interrelated or used as the basis for systematic self-examination or formulation.

The initial content is a specific situation that is widened and deepened by the speaker's self-references to show what he is like more generally or more personally. The speaker must describe his feelings in great detail, refer to feelings as they occur in a range of situations, provide personal reactions to specific feelings, or relate reactions to his own self-image. The feelings can be immediate responses or remembered responses to past situations.

Selfdescriptive comments must deal with internal and personal aspects of the speaker, not with moral evaluations or external or behavioral characteristics.

The content is a story told completely from a personal point of view. The details of feelings, reactions, and assumptions are integral to the narrative, so that what emerges is a detailed picture of the speaker's personal experience of the events.

The content is a self-characterization in which the speaker tells about his personal perspective. In talking about himself he makes explicit his feelings, personality, assumptions, motives, goals, and private perceptions. By revealing these internal parts of himself, the speaker gives a detailed picture of one or more of his states of being. The material presented is not analyzed or interrelated. The use of abstract terms or jargon to describe elements of personality must be expanded with some internal detail to warrant a rating of four. For example, the statement "My ego was shattered" would need elaboration, such as "I felt as if I was nothing, that no one would ever notice me."

Stage Five

The content is a purposeful exploration of the speaker's feelings and experiencing. There are two necessary components. First, the speaker must pose or define a problem or proposition about himself explicitly in terms of feelings. The problem or proposition may involve the origin, sequence, or implications of feelings or relate feelings to other private processes. Second, he must explore or work with the problem in a personal way. The exploration or elaboration must be clearly related to the initial proposition and must contain inner references so that it functions to expand the speaker's awareness of '-is experiencing. Both components, the problem and the elaboration, must be present.

The proposition or problem must be given clearly or strongly and should include references to feelings or to the personal experience at issue. If the internal basis of the problem is weak, as in references to undesired behaviors or styles, propositions about the external precipitants of behavior or feelings, or presentation of the temporal sequence of feelings, then the exploration or elaboration must have extensive inward references. It must be clear that the speaker is focusing on his inner experience rather than simply justifying his behavior.

The problem or hypothesis about the self must be oriented to feelings, private reactions, or assumptions basic to the self-image. It can be presented in different ways:

1) A feeling, reaction, or inner process, and in some cases a behavior pattern, can be defined as problematic itself or as seeming to conflict with other feelings or aspects of the self: for example, "My anger is the problem" or "Why am I so angry?"
2) The speaker may wonder whether or to what extent he has a specific feeling: not "What do I feel?" which would be three or four, but "Do I really feel angry?" or "How angry am I, really? "
3) The problem or proposition can be defined in terms of the personal implications, relationships, and inner ramifications of a feeling, including its origins or causes, its place in a temporal sequence of feelings and inner events, its mode of expression, or its personal and private implications. For example: "Do I get angry when I feel inadequate?" or "My getting angry means I've lost control of myself" or "I get angry just the way my mother used to."
4) Feelings, reactions, and internal processes may be compared.
All problems or propositions about the self must be explored or elaborated with inner referents. Examples or illustrations may show how the speaker experiences the problem or proposition in different settings or at different times: if so, the pertinence of the illustration to the problem must be explicit. The problem or proposition may be related to other internal processes or reactions. Alternatively, through hypothesis, speculation, or analogy the speaker clarifies the nature or private implication of the central problem, its cause-, or ramifications.
At stage 5 the speaker is exploring or testing a hypothesis about his experiencing. While he must define the subject of this process clearly with inner references, his manner may be conditional, tentative, hesitant, or searching.
Stage Six
The content is a synthesis of readily accessible, newly recognized, or more fully realized feelings and experiences to produce personally meaningful structures or to resolve issues. The speaker's immediate feelings are integral to his conclusions about his inner workings. He communicates a new or enriched self-experiencing and the experiential impact of the changes in his attitudes or feelings about himself. The subject matter concerns the speaker's present and emergent experience. His manner may reflect changes or insights at the moment of their occurrence. These are verbally elaborated in detail. Apart from the specific

content, the speaker conveys a sense of active, immediate involvement in an experientially anchored issue with evidence of its resolution or acceptance.

The feelings involved must be vividly, fully, or concretely presented. Past feelings or past changes in feelings are vividly presented or relived as part of the speaker's current experience.

The structuring process relates these immediately felt events to other aspects of the speaker's private perspective. Thus, a feeling might be related to the speaker's self-image, his private perceptions, motives, assumptions, to another feeling, or to more external facets of the speaker's life, such as his behavior. In each case the nature of the relationship must be defined so that details of how the speaker works inside and the precise, internal impact of the changes is revealed. It is not merely the existence of a relationship, nor a sequential listing of feelings and inner experiences, but the nature and quality of the association that is made clear.

The synthetic, structuring process leads to a new, personally meaningful inner experience or resolves an issue. As a result of working with his feelings and other aspects of his private perspective, and exploring their relationship to each other, the speaker has new inner experiences. These may be new feelings or chary:' feelings, as when the speaker says, "Now I'm beginning to see that my feeling of guilt is caused by my ideas about work, and it makes me feel much less worried about that sense of guilt. What a relief!" Alternatively, an issue may be resolved: "You know, I've always kept my anger bottled up because I've been afraid of losing control of myself. Now I realize it wouldn't be so bad if 1 did: maybe I'd yell or throw something, that's all." If the speaker starts with a concrete external problem, the related feelings must be presented as part of his present experience and the emergent formulation must change his perception of the problem in some way. For example, "I never asked a girl out because I'm so short. I'm still kind of afraid a girl might call me a shrimp or something, but I'm willing to take that risk now. I guess it's because I realize that even if she did, it wouldn't break me up. I wouldn't like her very much, but I'd feel better about myself for having at least tried." Some elements in the emergent structure may be external, behavioral, or intellectual, as in a decision to act in a different way. Still they must be clearly grounded to immediate feelings. It is never sufficient only to state that a resolution has taken place: the experiences underlying the structuring process must be revealed or relived to satisfy the criteria for stage six.

Stage Seven

The content reveals the speaker's expanding awareness of his immediately present feelings and internal processes. He demonstrates clearly that he can move from one inner reference to another, altering and modifying his conceptions of himself, his feelings, his private reactions to his thoughts or actions in terms of their immediately felt nuances as they occur in the present experiential moment, so that each new level of self-awareness functions as a springboard for further exploration.

Formulations about the *self at* stage seven meet the requirements for stage six with the additional stipulation that they be applied to an expanding range of inner events or give rise to new insights. The development may follow one of several different patterns:

1) The speaker may start with an internally anchored problem, explore it, and reach an internally anchored conclusion that he then applies to a number of other problems.

2) He may arrive at several related solutions to a single problem and reintegrate them. Any self-analysis is followed by a more comprehensive or extensive synthesis.

3) The speaker may use several different formulations about himself, each of which meets the requirements for stage six, and integrate, relate, or reduce them through a more basic or general formulation.

4) He may start with one conclusion of the type reached in stage six and apply it to a range of situations, each with inner referents explicit, to show how the general principle applies to a wide area of his experience.

Experiencing at stage seven is expansive, unfolding. The speaker readily uses a fresh way of knowing himself to expand his experiencing further. Manner at this stage is often euphoric, buoyant, or confident: the speaker conveys a sense of things falling quickly and meaningfully into place.

Appendix Five: Focusing Manual

FOCUSING MANUAL (Gendlin E. J., 1968)

This is going to be just to yourself. What I will ask you to do will be silent, just to yourself. Take a moment just to relax..... 5 seconds. All right—now, just to yourself, inside you, I would like you to pay attention to a very special part of you..... Pay attention *to that part where* you usually feel sad glad or scared. 5 seconds. Pay attention to that area in you and see how you are now.

See what comes to you when you ask yourself, "How am I now?" "How do I feel?" "what is the main thing for me right now?"

Let it come, in whatever way it comes to you, and see how it is.

30 second or less

If, among the things that you have just thought of, there was a major personal problem which felt important, continue with it. Otherwise, select a meaningful personal problem to think about. Make sure you have chosen some personal problem of real importance in your life. Choose the thing which seems most meaningful to you.

10 seconds

1. Of course, there are many parts to that one thing you are thinking about—too many to *think* of each one alone. But, you can *feel* all of these things together. Pay attention there where you usually feel things, and in there you can get a sense of what *all of the problem* feels like. Let yourself feel *all of that*.

30 seconds or less

2. As you pay attention to the whole feeling of it, you may find that one special feeling comes up. Let yourself pay attention to that one feeling.

1 minute

3. Keep following one feeling. Don't let it be *just* words or pictures—wait and let words or pictures come from the feeling.

1 minute

4. If this one feeling changes, or moves, let it do that. Whatever it does, follow the feeling and pay attention to it.

1 minute

5. Now, take what is fresh, or new, in the feel of it *now*..... and go very easy.

Just as you feel it, try to find some new words or pictures to capture what your present feeling is all about. There doesn't have to be anything that you didn't know before. New words are best but old words might fit just as well. As long as you now find words or pictures to say what is fresh to you now.

1 minute

6. If the words or pictures that you now have make some fresh difference, see what that is. Let the words or pictures change until they feel just right in capturing your feelings.

1 minute

Now I will give you a little while to use in any way you want to, and then we will stop.