

The experience of supervision for integrative coach-therapist  
practitioners: An interpretative phenomenological analysis

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## Abstract

This study aimed to explore the experience of supervision for integrative coach-therapist practitioners.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five integrative coach-therapists. An interpretative phenomenological analysis was utilised. The analysis created three distinct superordinate themes: 1) Bifurcation and arbitrary lines, 2) Detective work and 3) A conscious sense of belonging. Each of these overarching themes was supported by a number of subordinate themes that encapsulate the particularities and complexities of the integrative coach-therapist experience.

One of the key findings of the study was that there appeared to be both similarities and differences for integrative coach-therapists when compared with the general literature on supervision experience. A similarity to previous research findings was the relational difficulties highlighted by the supervision literature. For example: power dynamics, supervisee anxiety and boundary issues were present in the participants' experience. However, a key divergence, was a finding encapsulated by the superordinate theme "A conscious sense of belonging". This finding suggests that the integrative coach-therapist practitioners have their own unique needs in supervision and these needs are integral to their professional identity.

These findings suggest that integrative coach-therapists face challenges and complex relationships in their supervisory encounters. However, the practitioners also see great potential for supervision to help foster their professional identity. These insights into practitioners' experience of supervision highlight avenues for future research. Further qualitative enquiry into particular topic areas was illuminated, such as group supervision and supervisor experience. An important implication for counselling psychology practice is that individual integrative coach-therapists may experience supervision differently, precisely because of how they integrate practice. Given counselling psychology's interest in pluralistic practice, the discipline is thus in a unique position to engage with the development of contemporary integrative practices, such as integrative coach-therapy.

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## **Abbreviations**

**AICTP:** Association for Integrative Coach Therapist Practitioners

**BACP:** British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy

**BPS:** British Psychological Society

**CAT:** Cognitive Analytic Therapy

**CBT:** Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

**HCPC:** Health Care Professions Council

**IAPT:** Improving Access to Psychological Therapies

**IPA:** Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

**NHS:** National Health Service

**PC:** Personal Consultancy

**UEL:** University of East London

**UK:** United Kingdom

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## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Chapter Overview**

This introductory chapter sets the context for the proposed research. Firstly, I discuss my philosophical positioning as a researcher, define key terms of reference, before briefly exploring the background of supervision and its application to integrative practice. I then discuss my personal context for the research, before exploring the relevance of this topic to counselling psychology and then a summary of the chapter.

### **1.2 My Positionality as a Researcher**

Theorists have stated that when counselling psychologists conduct research it is important to consider and reflect upon their position and to state “one’s guiding paradigm, methodology, and personal orientation” (Ponterotto, 2005, p.132). Therefore, it is important and necessary to acknowledge my own position and perspectives on my research topic from the beginning of the process. As Henton (2016) notes, this is because research happens within ‘praxis’ (defined as philosophy in action) and my own philosophy of science interacts with my interpretation of the literature. This is also true my analysis and discussion of the findings of my research.

I identify with counselling psychology’s key principle of pluralism defined as a desire for a diversity of enquiry, “not to assume the automatic superiority of any one way of experiencing, feeling, valuing and knowing” (BPS, 2005, p.1). However, I acknowledge the tensions created by engaging with multiple viewpoints and specifically position myself as a ‘dialectical pluralist’, a philosophy defined by (Rescher, 1993) as “any substantial question admits a variety of plausible, but mutually conflicting responses” (p.3).

As a counselling psychologist trainee, I subscribe to the principle of scientist practitioner (Constantino, Castonguay & Schut, 2002), defined as applied science for helping practice. I also subscribe to the principle of reflective practitioner, defined as position that focuses on a “commitment to personal development work” and maintaining “awareness not only to technical expertise, but also to the ethical, social, political and cultural context of their work” (Woolfe, 2016a, p.12).

From an axiological lens, I assume that all forms of research are valuable and methodological pluralism is useful, but pragmatic priority should be given to research that can be of most use to our clients. My philosophical position and their relationship to my methodological choices for this study will be discussed further in the methodology chapter. I will now define the terms and definitions that are integral to this research.

### **1.3 Terms of Reference and Definitions**

In this section I have outlined some of the definitions proposed by academia for the terms that will be used in this thesis. This is by no means an exhaustive list of definitions for each term, nor are the terms absolute and an exact meaning of each term. Given that the terms are descriptors for types of relationships, they are by their very nature subjective. The purpose of listing them here is to highlight the lens through which I will be viewing these terms and how the study and research will be relating to them.

**1.3.1 Supervision:** Hawkins and Shohet (2012) posit the following definition on supervision intended for use across talking practices and this is the definition I shall use for the meaning of supervision in this research study:

“Supervision is a joint endeavour in which a practitioner with the help of a supervisor, attends to their clients, themselves as part of their client practitioner relationships and the wider systemic context, and by doing so improves the quality of their work, transforms their client relationships, continuously develops themselves, their practice and the wider profession” (p.5).

**1.3.2 Coaching:** I understand this to mean the practice of goal-orientated talking and helping practice. It has many different definitions currently, but my understanding would align most closely with Cox, Bachirova and Clutterbuck’s (2014, p.1) definition:

“Coaching is a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee and potentially for other stakeholders”.

**1.3.3 Integrative coach-therapist practitioner:** This term is used to signify a practitioner who has opted to utilise both coaching and therapy within their practice.

## 1.4 Introduction to Supervision

Supervision has long been viewed as a prerequisite of effective practice in therapy and psychology (Shipton, 1997). Its practice is prolific across: mental health professions (Spence, Wilson, Kavanagh, Strong & Worrall, 2001), other helping professions, like social work (Wilkins, Forrester & Grant, 2017), within coaching (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012), occupational settings (Hawkins, 2014), and is international in scope (Watkins & Milne, 2014).

There are many different definitions for supervision like the one provided above. Another empirical definition of clinical supervision, used by the division of clinical psychology (BPS, 2014b), is declared by Milne (2007) as:

“The formal provision, by approved supervisors, of a relationship-based education and training that is work-focused and which manages, supports, develops and evaluates the work of colleague/s” (p. 439).

This definition provides indication as to how talking practices like counselling psychology can benefit from supervision. In clinical settings researchers have focused on measuring individual aspects of the above definition. For instance, ‘approved supervisors’ implies a notion that accrediting bodies with high ethical standards are selecting experienced practitioners to “manage, support and develop” their peers. However, as I shall note in the literature review chapter, supervision also seems to function as a vehicle for “personal survival”, “quality assurance” and “personal development” with many different challenges and tensions for practitioners (Beddoe & Davys, 2016, p.25). From this view supervision is a complex, multifaceted relational tool which can tell us much about practice.

When studying any therapeutic model, supervision remains a particularly useful avenue of research. This is especially true when studying novel and contemporary practice, as it is seen as an ethical pre-requisite for the helping professions (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). Many researchers have begun to notice that as research into supervision is evolving so is the practice of integration between therapies (Norcross and Popple, 2017) and across disciplines, for instance integration of coaching and therapy. This study will seek to explore how integrative practitioners, including counselling psychologists, experience supervision. In the next section I will explore the personal context for my research topic.

## **1.5 Personal Context**

My interest in the subject of the experience of supervision has evolved throughout my training as a counselling psychologist. I have had the opportunity to experience many different settings and formats of supervision across my training and I have discussed the topic of supervisory experience with many of my peers. I have noted the broad variety of experiences within my own training and the variance of experience reported by my colleagues. The complexity of these relationships was as fascinating to me as the therapeutic work that was being conducted in parallel with supervision. Simultaneously I was experiencing a trainee journey to counselling psychology and therapeutic practice, working with many clients in a range of settings and working with the needs of a diverse population. By utilising specific theoretical models of understanding distress and the human condition, I became increasingly aware of the benefit of a plurality of theories to understand the complex life-worlds of my clients as opposed to one theory above all others. I studied and adopted CBT, psychodynamic, CAT models and also used assimilative integration (connecting two or more of the above theories). I integrated these models to help facilitate change, understanding or insight that clients desired.

On my path to becoming an integrative practitioner I also discovered that practitioners were beginning to assimilate disciplines like coaching and therapy together. My background in occupational settings, using strengths-based helping practices like careers coaching and coaching psychology had exposed me to a proactive and goal-driven helping practice. I was curious as to the similarities and differences between coaching and reparative therapy and if there could be any coordination with counselling psychology in accordance with the principle of pluralism. Integrating coaching and counselling seemed to fit many criteria for clients and I was excited and intrigued as to how research could further psychological theory, practice and research, particularly from the lens of counselling psychology. I had also begun to study how to supervise other peers and how to best utilise supervision for myself. I became increasingly interested in how supervision worked in practice for integrative practitioners. This interest led me to explore supervisory practice from an integrative lens and I began to think about how this topic relates to counselling psychology, which I discuss further in the next section.

## 1.6 Relevance to Counselling Psychology

The study of supervision is vital to counselling psychology because it helps to maintain standards, fosters reflective skills and can help with practice issues (Goodyear, 2014). Research on the experience of supervision is thought to be a valuable knowledge product that can advance the practice of counselling psychology (Woolfe, 2016b). It is of tangible use to all counselling psychologists as most therapeutic practitioners will practice as supervisors in their careers (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014), whilst practitioners report that being supervisors/supervisees are roles that span their careers (Grant & Scholfield, 2007). Supervision is inherently important to trainee practitioners as it is a pre-requisite for training placements (Bor and Watts, 2016). It is also thought of as one of the key learning tools for therapeutic practice and functions as a major part of most therapeutic practitioners' continuous professional development (Norcross and Popple, 2017). Therefore, counselling psychology is inherently interested in supervision as a practice.

Counselling psychology is also founded on the principle of pluralism. Blair (2010), explains the location of counselling psychology as:

“situated at a busy junction of diverse and sometimes competing ideologies, frameworks and paradigms” (p.20).

Cooper and McLeod (2010), note the development of a societal focus on wellbeing that mirrors the remit of counselling psychologists. With a variety of helping practice models and integrative practice available, counselling psychologists are now, more than ever, able to ‘personalise’ the help they provide (Carr, 2010), rather than be constricted by medical models (Mollon, 2008). This allows them to offer formulations and idiosyncratic help for wellbeing as well as distress. It also allows for an integration of disparate ideas between therapeutic models and across disciplines (Grant & Palmer, 2015). This pluralistic integration adds complexity to supervision structures, but it also adds opportunity for supervisory practice to support these varied practices (Norcross & Popple, 2017).

However, it is debatable as to whether coaching and therapy are ‘competing’ ideologies or whether there are many similarities and convergences that can lead to epistemological congruence. What is clear, is that the two disciplines represent theory/practice that inhabit different places along the spectrum of epistemology, for

instance; psychodynamic psychotherapy is practically and theoretically different from humanistic therapy and therefore these schools seem to have very different ontological bases. Therefore, there is complexity in integrating these two positions even within psychotherapy. This integration becomes even more complex when uniting entire disciplines like coaching and therapy.

Draghi-Lorenz (2010), points to the inevitable contradictions that will arise when attempting integration of such practices with different ontologies. They argue that although disciplines like coaching and therapy may have differing epistemologies and therefore appear incommensurable, this does not make them necessarily exclusive of one another. Counselling psychology, with its focus on the philosophy of science, is well placed to engage with and discuss these ontological complexities and the possibility of whether epistemological eclecticism can be utilised to bridge the two disciplines.

In summary, this research topic aims to be valuable to counselling psychology by firstly, researching supervision which is a key learning and reflective tool for counselling psychologists. Secondly, it aims to be of value by researching supervision into integrative practice across disciplines of coaching and therapy, a topic which is becoming ever more popular amongst practitioners who value integrative practice like counselling psychologists.

## **1.7 Chapter Summary**

Through this research I will aim to explore supervision for integrative practice through the lens of integrative coach-therapy. I have introduced the topic and its relevance to me personally, to the profession of counselling psychology and to the wider research community. I will review the current literature in the next chapter and summarise current gaps in the literature, before introducing possible research avenues.



## **Literature Review**

### **2.1 Chapter Overview**

In this chapter I will review the literature on supervision across the domains of counselling psychology, integrative therapeutic practice and integrative practice across disciplines. I will evaluate research that has focused on how supervision is experienced by practitioners and I will explore studies that have investigated the complexities of relating that arise as a result of this experience. I discuss supervision in the context of the growing area of integrative therapeutic practice, particularly in relationship to counselling psychology. I also note that integrative practice is evolving to include the integration of other disciplines, for instance the joining of therapeutic practice and coaching. I will review this growing field from the lens of supervision and focus on current research trends in this area. Additionally, I discuss avenues for future research and the topic of experience of supervision, in the context of integrative coach-therapy practice, is explored as a key gap in the literature. I summarise the findings of the literature review and proceed to discuss methodological and epistemological critiques of the research presented in the review. I then propose a rationale for my proposed topic of research and a research question that has arisen from the literature review, before summarising the chapter.

### **2.2 Supervision of Therapeutic Practice**

Supervision is practiced widely and is popular with practitioners (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). It is also a requirement for many professions (Wheeler & King, 2000). Some research has pointed to it being helpful for client outcomes (Valence, 2004). However, despite its popularity as a practice, supervision remains under-researched (Watkins, Budge & Callahan, 2015), ambiguous in definition (Weaks, 2002) and complex, particularly when evaluating its constituent parts, as it appears in many different styles across many different settings (Wosket, 2009). Much of the research has been carried out with trainee supervisees (Wheeler, 2003) and the area is closer to practice based evidence rather than evidence based practice, a notion that contravenes the values of a scientist-practitioner, counselling psychologist in training. This is especially true for the supervision of integrative therapy and (Norcross & Popple, 2017).

Harris and Brockbank (2011), have made an attempt at listing the variety of foci within the supervision literature, noting that it can be simultaneously: a support (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012), a task focused endeavour (Proctor, 2001), a

developmental process (Bachirova and Cox, 2007), a consultative (Woolfe, 2016b) and/or reflective relationship (Mattinson, 1975). Despite the huge variance in both definition and focus of supervision, research into this area has traditionally focused on effectiveness with respect to practitioner satisfaction, with some exploration into supervisor/supervisee experience and almost no data on outcomes for clients (Milne, Aylott, Fitzpatrick & Ellis, 2008). Some have focused on its pedagogical nature, with Goodyear (2014) naming it as *the* key learning tool for therapists. However, its utility for teaching is recognised across many different professions from social work to medicine (Spence, Wilson, Kavanagh, Strong & Worrall, 2001).

Although therapists seem to value supervision (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012), the actual empirical outcome findings across most studies is weak, but mildly positive (Watkins, 2011). Milne (2007) and Wheeler, Aveline & Barkham (2011) have tried to get to the “how” of supervision and thereby assess outcomes using valid report measures. Their set of proposed measures for clinical supervision of psychotherapy is deliberately “pan-theoretical” (p. 90), attempting to test for and acknowledging the common factors across therapies utilised by integrationists in supervision, however the methodology of their research is post-positivist in perspective. They dismiss subjective qualitative research due to its limitations, particularly a lack of global generalisability. Their findings point to the “positive but weak support for supervision” (p.89) and suggest a list of measures to be tested. Winstanley and White (2011), have taken the idea of measures further and have created the Manchester Clinical Supervision Scale which intends to measure a set of factors which they predict will allow testing for outcomes with supervisees and possibly clients. An important limitation of this kind of empirical research is that it is hard to prove efficacy or effectiveness when studying a dynamic relational dyad, triad or group and that causal effects are almost impossible to prove.

Wheeler and Richard’s (2007) and Freitas’ (2002) studies are two of a small number of systemic reviews, into effectiveness of supervision on clients’ welfare and their findings suggest a positive impact on self-evaluated efficacy of supervisees and supervisors. However, these meta-analyses point to a mild impact for clients and raise the concern that most of the studies utilised were undertaken with trainee participants. Another concern would be the study’s grounding in post-positivist statistics and therefore a lack of qualitative enquiry into the lived experience of the clients’. I have

noted that so far academia has predominantly focused on outcomes and how effective supervision is in helping practitioners with their client work. There has also been a focus on the mechanisms of supervision and how this in turn effects client work. However, there seems to have been less enquiry into the experiential and qualitative worlds of supervisees and supervisors. This focus is beginning to change and I discuss some of the areas of qualitative enquiry into therapeutic supervision next.

### **2.3 The Experience of Supervision**

Academia has begun to focus on the experience of supervision for both supervisees and supervisors. An example of this focus is the popular “seven-eyed model” of supervision (Hawkins and Shohet, p.85, 2012), which was posited with the intention of supervision creating a space where a supervisee could experience a Winnicottian ‘good enough’ supervisor, who survives and re-experiences affect, cognitions and behaviours that are present in the clinical relationship, for the good of both client and supervisee. It is a theory particularly concerned with process issues between client and therapist and parallel process between supervisee and supervisor. This is an example of theorists acknowledging that supervision is a relational endeavour and that subjective experience is a key part of supervision. Hawkins and Shohet (2012), acknowledge that this model cannot create a “tangible product and very little evidence whereby to rigorously assess its effectiveness” (p.6). However, despite their recognition that interpersonal process is difficult to measure empirically, they highlight the importance of the complexities of individual experience and the multifaceted phenomena involved in this interpersonal relationship. Casement (2013), goes further than the interpersonal and makes the case for therapeutic practitioners using their intrapsychic awareness to build an ‘internal supervisor’. The research into these intrapsychic and interpersonal complexities has unearthed complex and often challenging dynamics. I will explore the literature pertaining to some of the challenges and complexities of the supervisory experience below.

One of the complexities for practitioners in supervision is the questions of what supervision means to them. Beddoe and Davys (2016, p.22), posit that it can be either “surveillance or support”, hinting at a dichotomy between evaluation and helpful guidance. Woolfe (2016b, p.606) goes further, noting that supervision is “inherently hierarchical” and cites Cornforth and Clairborn (2008:156) in their assertion that supervision is “the contradiction between hierarchical expertise and collaborative

reciprocity”. This is often experienced as a power dynamic skewed in favour of the supervisor (Grant & Townend, 2007). This supervisee experience of a dialectical blend between hierarchy and equitable collaboration has been identified in the qualitative research findings of Kaberry (2007). They found that supervisees reported uncomfortable positions where social, managerial and support boundaries were often crossed by supervisors. This temptation to blur boundaries has been summed up by Copeland, Dean and Wladowski (2011, p.27) as an “ethical hornet’s nest” that supervisors face. This seems to be particularly likely when supervisors are asked to fulfil several overlapping roles in an organisation, for instance, as a line manager *and* a supervisor. These difficulties are often exacerbated by the pressures that are inherent in large organisations, indeed Holloway (2014) reports that power dynamics are expected in organisations and therefore should be expected in any supervisory relationship operating within these structures.

The literature seems to state that supervisees experience and report inherent power imbalances and ruptures that arise from the supervisory relationship. However, in addressing these seemingly inevitable conflicts, some researchers have posited that supervisees can grow and learn from these experiences. Hitchings (2016, p.117), professes that supervisees may find they foster “enhanced relational ability” when working through conflicts in supervision which in turn can help build greater emotional intelligence when working with clients. Dodge (1982) notes that these power dynamics and navigating complex relationships in client work/supervision can be anxiety provoking for all supervisees. This has been particularly noted in the experience of trainee practitioners in supervision. Pakenham and Stafford-Brown (2012) posit that the anxiety is more likely, precisely because of an even greater power differential for trainees. This may be because the supervisor is often clinically responsible for the trainee supervisee’s client’s welfare and can also be responsible for evaluating the supervisee in the context of their academic/professional trainings.

A particular area of research into the experience of supervision is the subject of contracting. This mechanism is believed to act as a mediator to conflict, power imbalances and supervisee anxiety. Through focused attention on structuring and creating collaborative boundaries, a contract has been found to alleviate anxiety for all participants (Davys and Beddoe, 2010) and to add structure to what can be an ambiguous relationship (Beddoe and Davys, 2016). Some researchers have found that

practitioners report containment and greater transparency with what they can bring when contracts exist. Crocket et al. (2004) found that supervision and contracts can define boundaries and in turn who is responsible for what, again alleviating the aforementioned supervisee anxiety. How a contract is set out is often mediated by the setting and format of the supervision. Settings and format can range from the organisational and managerial to peer-led and consultative, which all have an effect on the experience of supervision for the supervisee. One of the most common divergences from the one-to-one supervision structure is the format of group supervision and this setting can often foster collaborative support amongst peers. Bernard and Goodyear (2014) note that: practitioners can vicariously learn from one another, benefit from increased exposure to a broader scope of client presentations and gain reassurance from others' support and similar experiences. This last point is often termed "containment" and Hughes and Pengelly (1997) state that another way for supervisees to feel that they can express themselves freely in is to feel safe and comfortable or 'contained'. Carroll (2014) posits that when supervisees feel contained they can talk more openly about difficulties in the client work and possibly in the supervisory relationship. This can then alleviate anxiety and distress (Hughes & Pengelly, 1997) and build resilience (Grant & Kinman, 2014).

In this section I have discussed the current literature into supervision and specifically the experience of therapeutic supervision. It appears that although there has been little research into supervision as compared with therapy and even less from a qualitative lens, there is a growing body of qualitative research into the rich life-worlds of supervisees and supervisors. From these studies, it seems that the experience of supervision is a complex topic. However, certain mechanisms like: contracting, defining formats and utilizing different structures (like supervision groups) can allow the supervisory relationship to progress and be of use to supervisees, thereby improving experience. In the next section, I discuss one of the pertinent and upcoming challenges for both counselling psychology research and the study of supervision experience: the ever-evolving area of integrative practice. I will also explore how counselling psychology is uniquely placed to research it.

#### **2.4 Supervision of Integrative Therapeutic Practice**

In parallel with the growth of supervisory practice, integration has become increasingly popular in practice for all therapeutic disciplines, especially counselling psychology with its emphasis on pluralism, (Woolfe, 2016a). The enthusiasm for

integrating theories and the practice of integration has developed quickly, so much so that research has struggled to keep pace with practice (Anchin, 2008). This deficit of research compared with theory and practice, has generated further calls to evaluate efficacy and effectiveness for clients and post-positivist questions remain about the effectiveness of paradigmatic pluralism (Cutts, 2011). The predominance of evidence-based outcome measures research into theory and interventions is popular in UK health settings, particularly primary care settings like IAPT (Mollon, 2008). Their popularity is indicative of an adherence to medical models of distress and an alignment with scientist-practitioner principles (Constantino, Castonguay & Schut, 2002). Counselling psychology as a discipline aims to adhere to both the scientist-practitioner principle, but also the reflexive-practitioner principle (Woolfe, 2016a). By aiming to adhere to this, counselling psychology often finds itself in a dialectical position as many models that are being practiced have not been thoroughly researched, only theorised and then practiced. Cutts, (2011) notes the popularity and growth of integration, but also the dearth of research. They call for “critical scrutiny” of emerging integrative models, but argue that this does not always have to be from a post-positivist lens.

The effect of the proliferation of models and their subsequent integration on supervision is twofold: firstly, the practice of supervision has to keep pace with an ever-expanding panoply of theory and clinical practice. Secondly, supervision is often seen as a pre-requisite of good practice (Milne, 2007) and therefore is a way of “quality assurance” (Beddoe & Davys, 2016). This is deemed vital for new models that are often utilised more than researched. The proliferation of integrative therapy has also added further complexity to the multifaceted subject of the experience of supervision. Practitioners are now adding and assimilating different theories and interventions into their practice and taking this work to many forms of supervision (Norcross & Popple, 2017). Both supervisors and supervisees are now exposed to models that they may be unfamiliar with (Schultz-Ross, 1995). Despite this potentially complex and confusing mix of practice, integration continues to expand as does the supervision for integrative therapists (Norcross, Karpiak & Lister, 2005).

Some studies, like that of Cox and Araoz’s (2009), have used both qualitative and quantitative enquiry to investigate supervisory practice. Their stated aim of comparing their respondents’ trial experience of supervision with previous experience of supervision, gives an insight into the variation of supervisory practice offered within

different therapeutic settings. Their initial sample of eighteen participants were split into three groups of six, across occupational therapists, physiotherapists and psychologists/CBT therapists. Their findings show that all participants were in favour of the structured, agenda-driven supervision with integrated peer supervision on offer in the trial, as opposed to their linear previous experience. Limitations can be found in the size of the sample (n=14, but had started at n=18) with a response rate of 78%, which can be regarded as a lack of generalisability, if viewed from a post-positivist position. However, it could be argued that the focus on experience of different types of therapist, including and outside of psychology, shows an attempt to research the varied experience of supervision across professions. It also attempts to research integrated supervision and is one of only a few studies which does so. Structured qualitative studies like this are of great utility for the counselling psychology community as they allow a balance of homogeneity and heterogeneity whilst exploring the human experience of our practitioners. This kind of explorative study allows for some dialectical plurality of research perspective. It mixes a nomothetic, critical realist lens with an idiographic, relativistic perspective.

The aforementioned study points to both similarities and differences even within supervisory experience, which has been expanded on with studies into how supervision works in practice and its secondary benefit to clients (West & Clark 2004; Vallance, 2004). Again, theorists are currently proposing links between these similarities or common factors within this particular topic (Watkins, 2017). Microcounselling supervision is one such integrationist theory proposed by Russell-Chapin and Ivey (2004), who posit that a supervisory model can work for practitioners who practice integrative psychotherapy. They readily acknowledge that more research must be conducted into how this model is experienced and this ties in with a popular sense that more research will be needed for many of these contemporaneous integrationist theories and in general supervision practice.

In this section I have presented literature evidencing the prevalence and growth of integrative models of practice, as well as the effect of this growth on the practice of supervision. I have also discussed the utility of integration as well as the prediction of further growth of therapeutic integration that is likely in the coming years. This growth of therapeutic models and their integration is now spreading to integrate into other helping practice domains (Popovic and Jinks, 2017), which poses further complexity

and opportunity for supervision. One of the most popular developing help practices currently is coaching (Palmer & Whybrow, 2018) and I explore some of the extant literature on coaching and coaching's relationship with supervision below. I will then explore how the disciplines of coaching and therapy are being integrated and what this means for counselling psychology and the experience of supervision.

## **2.5 Coaching**

Coaching is a helping practice which is considered to be more proactive in reaching a client's goals, with less of a reparative focus on mental health issues or human distress than therapy. Its popularity has increased exponentially in recent years, starting as a managerial pursuit within occupational settings to its current use in many arenas from 'health and wellness coaching' to 'skills and performance coaching' (Cox, Bachirova & Clutterbuck, 2014). However, it takes much of its theory from an array of social sciences like psychology, philosophy and sport sciences and suffers from the lack of a unifying definition (Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck, 2014). Nor does it have a central theoretical grounding and a body which offers ethical guidance, like the BPS (2018). It also fails to be regulated by an all-encompassing ethical, accrediting body like for instance the HCPC's regulation of counselling psychology. Nevertheless, positive client experience and a growing evidence base for critical moments of change are increasing its standing in the one-to-one 'helping practices' arena (Jones, Woods & Guillaume, 2016; de Haan, Bertie, Day & Sills, 2010). It is also evolving and its remit is not as narrowly defined as it once was. For instance, longitudinal studies like that of Franklin and Franklin (2012), show that a coaching model had a significantly positive effect on students' academic progress over a prolonged period of time. This is counterintuitive to the popular notion that coaching is a short-term, skills based activity.

Lane, Stelter and Stout-Rostron, (2010) note that initially, many coaching researchers attempted to provide outcome measures for the effectiveness of coaching. This was done through client satisfaction surveys and many studies reported positive client satisfaction correlating with their coaching experience (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006). Lane, Stelter and Stout-Rostron (2010) also note that in more recent times, coaching researchers have strived to conduct RCT (randomised control trials) much in the same vein as CBT researchers have in the arena of psychology. However, Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh and Parker (2010), found that only two studies found positive

effects with this level of control and some, like de Haan (2011) argue that less controlled studies are more likely to produce statistically significant effects.

Coaching, like psychology, has begun to move away from operating under a solely post-positivist perspective and has begun to investigate the effectiveness of the practice in broader, more subjective terms (de Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2011) as well as what coaching interventions are themselves and how clients find them helpful (Cox, 2013). This qualitative trend is now beginning to balance out the number of outcome measure-based studies (Fillery-Travis & Cox, 2014). Therefore, there is a burgeoning evidence base for coaching as a helping practice in the one-to-one talking therapies field. This is perhaps unsurprising, as coaching's background is psychological and the field bases many of its models on psychological theory, for example, CBT coaching is becoming ever more popular (Kearns, Forbes & Gardiner (2007). Like counselling psychology, coaching is also endeavouring to integrate some of its own models, which in turn could open new avenues of research. Kahn (2011), advocates for an integrated coaching model that takes a systemic perspective for executive coaching. Yet, Kahn's study, like many others in coaching currently, is limited by the population and setting that it is based upon. Cavanagh and Buckley (2014) state that "the dominant position among coaches maintains that coaching is targeted toward working with clients from non-clinical populations" (p.404), but this bias could be hampering study and practice in areas that could most benefit from it. For instance, with young people or groups that tend not to seek help from traditional clinical organisations, especially when it is difficult to tell what is a 'mental health issue' and what is about potential and wellbeing, if a dividing line can ever be drawn. This area of confusion is potentially interesting for therapeutic disciplines, like counselling psychology.

Coaching is therefore popular and contemporary (Lane, Stelter & Stout-Rostron, 2010), it is developing its research base (Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh & Parker, 2010) and shares many similarities and overlaps with both therapeutic work (Popovic and Jinks, 2017) and counselling psychology (Grant and Palmer, 2015). It is also heading in the same research direction as counselling psychology with an emphasis on exploring relational experience (Fillery-Travis & Cox, 2014). I will now explore the growing research into coaching supervision.

## 2.6 Coaching Supervision

In parallel with coaching's accelerated rise in popularity, the practice is becoming more regulated. Perhaps because of this regulation supervision is now seen as a prerequisite of coaching, in a similar vein to psychology and psychotherapy. However, coaching supervision was largely absent for the first twenty years of coaching's inception (Hawkins, 2014). Hawkins and Schwenk (2006), were the first to delve into the question of how coaching supervision was experienced, finding that it was "much advocated, but poorly practiced" (as cited in Hawkins, 2014, p.393). They also found that although a majority of coaches wanted supervision and believed they should have it (86%), a minority were actually experiencing supervision (44%).

Gray (2007) researched how coaching supervision is conducted and proposed an integrative model for coaching supervision. They note that in answering questions about supervision we come closer to "a distinctive, accepted and applied model of supervision for coaches that moves us from clinical to professional development needs" (p. 309). This paper also flags up the issue that not all coaches seek or are in full time supervision. Moyes (2009), notes from a literature review of coaching supervision, that for coaching, mandatory supervision would go some way to regulating a currently under-regulated practice. It has been outlined in Stern and Stout-Rostron's (2013) analysis of coaching practice, that supervision in coaching was not being effectively researched in line with the ICRF (International Coaching Research Forum).

One study that used a phenomenological stance, exploring the supervisory aspect of coaching supervision, is that of Passmore and McGoldrick's (2009). They have questioned the assumed "perceived benefits of the supervision process" for coaching and have attempted to "build a conceptual framework for coaching supervision" (Passmore & McGoldrick, 2009, p.5). They use this open stance in attempt to gain an insight into what supervision can be used for and to build a structure for supervision by using Grounded Theory, (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, they also note the aforementioned lack of agreement around definitions as to what supervision is and its purpose and that this makes creating theory difficult. The study of coaching supervision has therefore suffered from many of the methodological pitfalls that research has encountered when investigating supervision in general. To add to this issue, practitioners have now begun to integrate across disciplines, assimilating therapeutic work with coaching (Popovic & Jinks, 2017). I will now explore how an

integration of therapeutic work and coaching has begun to develop. I will also discuss how counselling psychology is uniquely placed to engage with this practice through the lens of supervision.

## **2.7 Integrating Counselling Psychology and Coaching**

With the growing trend to integrate in: psychotherapy and counselling (Cooper & McLeod, 2010), coaching (Utry, Palmer, McLeod & Cooper, 2015) and counselling psychology (Cutts, 2011) there has also been some debate as to how practitioners can integrate aspects of each discipline together. Grant and Palmer (2015), argue that counselling psychology's principles allow flexible, pluralistic practice that places it in an ideally position to interface with integrating positive psychology and coaching psychology. They posit that both have "been shown to be effective means of helping clients improve their wellbeing, resolve mental health problems and attain their goals" (p.23). They make an argument that counselling psychology has moved away from a "reductionist diagnostic medical approach that primarily aims to treat or rectify dysfunctionality" and is inherently interested in moving to "an approach that primarily aims to help people create the conditions that will allow them to flourish, develop and attain personally meaningful goals in their work and personal lives" (p.23). They see an inherent synergy between the coaching, positive psychology and counselling psychology. Lopez and Edwards (2008), go further and argue that the integrative practice between counselling psychology and positive psychology is already extant, with many counselling psychologists assimilating this in the field. Fortuitously, many coaching theories have been based on psychological theory, utilising theories as diverse as Gestalt (Whybrow & Allan, 2007) and systems theory (O'Neill, 2011) and assimilating them. Some theorists like Palmer and Whybrow (2018), have begun to explore how these differing theories have been used by coaching and how they have been integrated together.

However, any integration of two psychotherapeutic models, or in this case, integration of two entire disciplines, must be analysed carefully as there are inevitably as many differences as there are points of reconciliation. There are of course different ways of integrating and counselling psychology has historically viewed this from a pluralist and dialectical perspective. Draghi-Lorenz (2010) acknowledges that there are "different differences" which can be considered in four broad areas; "differences of terminology, emphasis, content and epistemology" (p.106). Some of these differences

can be easily reconciled and some could be regarded as “incommensurable”. When contemplating counselling psychology and coaching, the scientific community must consider if the differences of emphasis and epistemology can be reconciled in commensurable fashion, enough to help our clients. Coaching has historically considered a rational CBT-based epistemology and emphasis as its philosophical base. This epistemological paradigm would have created the same tensions with counselling psychology that CBT has. However, coaching is now integrating ideas from psychodynamic, systemic, person-centred and many more psychotherapeutic models (Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck, 2014). This movement into integration with different therapeutic schools and engagement with different models creates further ‘different differences’ and tensions abound. These differences will have to be carefully thought about by theorists, researchers and practitioners alike as proliferation and further attempts at integration of the disciplines of counselling psychology and coaching is sought.

In Spinelli (2008) acknowledges these papers and they discuss the “similarities and divergences” between therapy and coaching (p. 241). They note that many authors and theories have tried to distinguish the two, to little success, because there is no ‘unified’ version, or universal agreed definition of either therapy or coaching. This creates a theoretical space in between the two practices that at various points converges, overlaps and diverges once again. Spinelli highlights Jopling’s (2007) phenomenological study, in which they conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with coaches, who are also trained therapists. Jopling recognises two experiential themes that were present across some of the sample. The themes of “contracting” and “the relationship” inhabit a “fuzzy space” in between coaching and therapy and how they are treated depends on the individual practitioner. Spinelli (2008) hypothesises that many practitioners, like counselling psychologists, utilise both therapeutic and coaching practices and that the interface between coaching and therapy is complex. They conclude “that something that bridges therapy and coaching will evolve” (p. 248). True to Spinelli’s prediction, that a bridge would be made between the two practices of coaching and therapy, a body of work did begin to form in the BPS in the form of the special group of Coaching Psychology. However, despite the recognition of similarities between the practices, research has failed to keep pace with the growth in practitioners using integrative models (Cutts, 2011). Some academics are creating integrative models

that combine practices, whilst adhering to a structure that can be utilised by coaches, therapists and counselling psychologists.

Many theorists have begun to notice the “fuzzy space” that Jopling (2007) identified in her earlier study, particularly Maxwell (2009) who researched the boundary between coaching and counselling. They found that coaches often explored client presentations at a ‘deeper level’ than first anticipated, especially if they were qualified in a talking therapy practice as compared to those with a business background. This qualitative study used an interpretative phenomenological analysis to explore individuals’ meaning of the boundary between coaching and counselling. An advantage of this approach is that Maxwell (2009) was able to unearth a “Pandora’s box” (p. 153), of boundary issues and highlights that coaches, with and without a therapeutic background, dealt with reparative as opposed to strengths-based foci. Maxwell’s paper shows that coaches’ and therapists’ work is often overlapping or to use Jopling’s theme, occupies a “fuzzy space”, but has so far lacked theory to combine coaching and therapy.

Personal Consultancy (PC) is a contemporary theory proposed by Popovic and Jinks (2013), that aims to enable practitioners to integrate theories of therapy, and more widely, between therapy and coaching. The model posits a theoretical flexibility, allowing practitioners who have experience in varied practice to use their own idiosyncratic skillsets, whether that be therapeutic training or coaching based practice, to help each individual client. This ‘open integration’ system allows practitioners a flexible framework to integrate practices. This differs from many integrative theories of therapy that use a more structured, theoretical integration (Castonguay, Eubanks, Goldfried, Muran and Lutz, 2015) of for example, Cognitive Analytic Therapy (Ryle & Kerr, 2002). The aim of the model is to embrace the complexity of human nature and provide clients with a practitioner who can utilise a ‘what works for whom’ approach, without needing to refer on to other practitioners when a practitioner has the necessary skillset. Therefore, it is an overarching paradigm that fits the pluralistic counselling psychology philosophy. This type of model could serve several of counselling psychology’s principles listed above and Cooper (2009), states that one of the six key principles of counselling psychology is “a focus on facilitating growth and the actualisation of potential (versus a focus on treating pathology).” (p. 5).

In present context, integrative coach-therapy is applied in several settings and through the study of the theory of Personal Consultancy it has been found in practice being applied in leadership (Aspey, 2013), with young people (Mumby, 2011; Flynn, Sharp, Walsh & Popovic, 2018) and addictions (Collins, 2013). It is practiced internationally and is wide enough in scope to encourage practitioners to recognise and integrate cross-cultural interventions (Passmore, 2013). This range of applications shows the importance of an interdisciplinary practice that is able to transcend some of the stigma that society attaches to counselling or psychotherapy (Ungar, Knaak & Szeto, 2016), but can also go further and work in more ‘depth’ than coaching alone. I will now discuss this evolving integrative practice and its relationship to supervision.

## **2.8 Integrative Coach-Therapy Supervision**

The contemporaneous nature of integrative coach-therapy means that theories like PC are under-researched, however this also creates many avenues for research. The dilemma facing the research community is how and what to begin to research when considering expansive, integrative practice across disciplines. There is a lack of quantitative research, such as empirical studies of clients’ welfare, nor are there qualitative enquiries into the experience of clients or practitioners. From an empirical perspective the effectiveness of particular models like personal consultancy, has been researched by Baker (2013), but Popovic and Jinks (2013), have identified supervision as one of the most prescient areas of future development. Authors from across the helping practices have advocated for more research in this area, including (but not limited to) coaching (Hawkins, 2014), counselling and psychotherapy (Norcross & Pople, 2017), counselling psychology (Woolfe, 2016) and integrative coach-therapy models (Popovic & Jinks, 2017). Theorists like Popovic and Jinks (2017), acknowledge the fledgling nature of this kind of cross-discipline integration, but also note the prevalence of current practice versus a dearth of research. They point to useful avenues for research and in particular they highlight supervision as a key interest area.

## **2.9 Summary of Literature Review**

In this literature review I have stated that supervision, although under-researched, is considered an indicator scientific rigour, ethical boundaries and is a key instrument for practitioner learning (Goodyear, 2014). Supervision appears under-researched in general, particularly in the context of individual experience of supervision (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). It is under-researched in: integrative practice across

therapies (Norcross & Popple 2017), in counselling psychology (Woolfe, 2016b) and cross-disciplinary integration, such as integrative coach-therapy (Popovic and Jinks, 2017).

One of the main findings of the studies of supervision in both counselling psychology and coaching in this review, is that supervision provides a vital structure for many as self-reported by many practitioners, be they: coaches, psychologists or integrative coach-therapist practitioners (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). What is not clear, is how this translates to client outcomes and if the benefits of supervision are generalisable, given the amount of variation in: definitions, structure and integration of theory. It is unclear as to whether supervision is evidence based practice or practice based evidence. There is no universal agreement between therapeutic models or across talking therapies on what supervision is, because of the variance of practice and the breadth of settings. Even defining supervision is contentious and this is one of the reasons it is difficult to measure (Milne, 2007). A parallel can be drawn with the ongoing debate and difficulties of proving efficacy in psychoanalytic psychotherapy when compared to CBT (Lemma, 2003). The difficulty of operationalising aspects of a relational phenomenon like supervision could be the reason that so little research is available from a post-positivist lens and why therapeutic models often struggle to gain objective outcome measures proving effectiveness. However, research into the experience of supervisors, supervisees and clients is also lacking and is only beginning to develop through qualitative studies (Davy, 2002).

The type of supervision on offer for coaches and counselling psychologists appears similar in its provision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). However, it seems that supervision of coaching is not offered in the same quantity, with the same regularity or under regulatory bodies in coaching, as compared with therapeutic supervision that would be on offer to counselling psychologists (Hawkins, 2014; Hawkins and Schwenk, 2006). Yet the format, purpose and function is often similar and many of the same models of supervision are used, for instance, the CLEAR model and Seven-Eyed model (Hawkins, 2014). We currently have some insight into what it is like to be a supervisee and supervisor in psychology and psychotherapy (West & Clark, 2004), we have less information, but some from coaching (Passmore & McGoldrick, 2009; Hawkins & Schwenk, 2006). What the research community does not know is how

supervisors/supervisees experience supervision of integrative coach-therapy practice (Popovic and Jinks, 2017).

Given the ever-increasing popularity, time and resources that are spent on the practice of supervision for integrative practitioners it has been argued that it is crucial that more research is conducted (Wheeler and King, 2000). It would also be beneficial for research, to answer questions of experience and subjective meaning, as well as effectiveness (Rafalin, 2010). Norcross and Popple (2017) propose that in researching supervision of models of integrative practice, there is an opportunity to approach the knowledge base from the lived experience of the individual practitioner's encounters, instead of the sole use of outcome measures. Qualitative studies such as those of Passmore and McGoldrick's (2009) and West and Clark's (2004) gain much from the idiographic nature of their research, because the participants' experience is the strived for phenomena rather than solely the researcher's arguably reductionist variables.

In summary, supervision has been a popular tool for practitioners and can tell us much about practice, client work and relational challenges. It is also difficult to research from a post-positive perspective because of its subjective, relational nature and lack of clear definition (Wheeler & King, 2000). Theorists and practitioners continue to call for further research (Davy, 2002). Some work has begun on researching both integrative models of supervision and supervision for integrative practice (Norcross & Popple, 2017), although there remain few studies into the experience of supervision in general. There seem to be no existing studies into the experience of supervision for cross-disciplinary models like integrative coach-therapy. In the next section I will discuss the epistemological and methodological positions of the aforementioned studies in this review and note the implications for future research into supervision and experience of supervision in integrative practice. I will then conclude with the rationale for this study and a general summary of the chapter.

## **2.10 Epistemological and Methodological Critique**

I have presented a variety of literature in this review and much of the research presented has been from a broad spectrum of epistemological and methodological perspectives. I noted that studies like that of Wheeler, Aveline and Barkham (2011), who sought to measure outcomes have dominated therapy research for much of the last century. Wachtel (2010), laments the preponderance of research trials of this nature,

along with ESTs (empirically supported treatments) that use RCTs (randomised control trials) as their evidence base, proposing that researching therapies cannot be reduced to outcome measures alone. Clinicians cannot be double-blinded to the therapy they deliver and therefore there will always be an element of bias (Barkham, Hardy & Mellor-Clark, 2010). The same is true of efforts to measure effectiveness of supervision as this also is a relational experience between two or more people. To develop as disciplines, psychology and specifically counselling psychology could press for an increased use of qualitative or mixed methods research design to highlight experience of integrative models for both clients and practitioners. Similar designs could also be used to explore the experience of supervision.

In much of the recent research on supervision the same skew towards empiricism has been present, yet some qualitative methods have been utilised. For instance, the aforementioned study by Passmore and McGoldrick (2009), used a Grounded Theory approach to the data, in order to use the participant's 'voice' to shape themes and structure an inductive theory. The authors make no mention of their epistemological lens; however, the study seems to have been conducted from a phenomenological perspective (McLeod, 2014). This type of study may allow us to gain more insight into individual supervision experience, which is important in such a relational field like supervision. Maxwell's (2009) study also used an IPA design, but a limiting factor with this type of research is that the data cannot be extrapolated and generalised. However, the depth of the verbalised experience of those practitioners is invaluable in capturing the subjective life-worlds of coaches and therapists in the field.

It would seem prudent for the research community to use a balance of epistemological and methodological positions when researching supervision in general, to take account of the complex philosophical underpinnings and epistemological tensions when researching such a multifaceted topic with so many definitions (Willig, 2013). Additionally, there are many different ways of researching individual experience and the study of integrative practice and/or supervision may benefit from using qualitative methods or mixed design research, rather than relying on empirical outcome measures. Counselling psychology, with pluralism as one of its key principles, could be ideally placed to lead the research community in advancing the study of experience of supervision in integrative practices and advocate for researching subjective supervision experience through qualitative means.

## 2.11 Rationale for a Proposed Study

Gaps in the literature have been highlighted in regard to supervision and particularly with regard to experience of supervision of integrative practitioners. The contemporary practice of integrative coach-therapy is under-researched and no such studies exist on: the structures, definitions, outcomes or the experience of supervision in this evolving area.

To reach the research, theory and practice synergy proposed by Anchin (2008), research into supervision is advised as it is often one of the first aspects of helping practices that supports integration of models in practice (Norcross & Popple, 2017). Counselling psychology would be ideally placed, for the reasons posited by Grant and Palmer (2015) and Lopez and Edwards (2008) above, to research the interface between therapy and coaching, whilst supervision may be an important “bridge” across the practices as Spinelli (2008) notes. Given the immediacy of current practice, a scientist-practitioner, trainee counselling psychologist such as myself, is in a unique position to understand the subjective experience of supervisees in the field at present. In exploring their supervisory experience, knowledge could be gained that can potentially enhance our understanding of the complex experience of supervision per se and could specifically add to the knowledge base of coaching, coach-therapy and integrative cross-disciplinary supervision. Finally, by owning my position as a counselling psychology trainee, this proposed research will allow counselling psychology to have a critical input into enquiry of an integrative practice that bridges the gap between helping clients in distress and those searching for wellbeing.

I would argue that the psychologists can ill afford to neglect the subjective experience of practitioners, clients, supervisees and supervisors. This is especially pertinent when researching social and relational models that rely on knowledge of human experience. As with any newly posited theory it falls to the research community to evaluate outcome in both efficacy and effectiveness *and* the phenomena of experience of those involved. Yet if we are to avoid the current predicament of overemphasis on quantitative outcome measures that dominates the discourse in psychology, coaching and psychotherapy; subjective experience should be a priority for the counselling psychologist researcher. Therefore, an approach which lends itself to a focus on supervisee or supervisor experience would be the most appropriate for my research. A proposed methodological position could follow that of, for instance du

Plock's (2009) study into existential supervision, where an idiographic IPA design seeks to find meaning and individual experience from practitioners who identify as coach-therapists and are under supervision. A research question like the one posited below is particularly pertinent to counselling psychologists, who hold a humanistic philosophical underpinning and are interested in individual experience (Cooper, 2008).

## **2.12 The Research Question**

In this study, I will aim to ask the question “How do practitioners who integrate coaching and therapy experience supervision?” I hope to explore the supervisee's experience of this practice and gain insight into individual meaning from extant supervisory practice. In this way, I hope to gain rich, qualitative data that focuses on idiographic depth of meaning, rather than nomothetic empirical data.

## **2.13 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter I have reviewed the literature into supervision as a whole and the experience of supervision, particularly in the context of counselling psychology and the evolving field of integrative coaching-therapy. I have noted certain extant models and their development, for instance the personal consultancy model (Popovic & Jinks, 2017). I have offered an epistemological and methodological critique of the current literature. By reviewing the literature into supervision as a whole, as well as specific studies, it has been noted that the experience of supervision has been under-researched. I have identified a gap in the literature of integrative practice, at the interface of coaching and therapy, where there is a lack of research into supervision from any epistemological perspective. I note that a counselling psychology enquiry into the experience of practitioners identifying as coach-therapists could be informative. More specifically an enquiry into their supervisory experience could serve to inform the disciplines of coaching, therapy and counselling psychology as well as the research areas of integration and supervision. In the next chapter, chapter - methodology - I outline how I researched the aforementioned research question.

## **Methodology**

### **3.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter is split into two sections: firstly, I explore the purpose of the research and the chosen methodology in light of the literature review of the previous chapter. In particular, I list the research questions illuminated from the aforementioned research gap. I then explore the aims of researching these questions, before discussing my own underlying philosophical positioning. I then discuss qualitative methodology and phenomenological research methods, particularly the method of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Additionally, I examine my decision to employ IPA as the chosen methodology for my research topic.

The second section of this chapter is both a descriptive and reflective account of my own research experience. I describe collecting the data and analyzing the qualitative accounts of participants. I outline the design, analytic strategy and my commitment to IPA methodology. I discuss ethical considerations and the quality and impact of this kind of research. Finally, I summarise the process before describing the analysis itself in the next chapter.

### **3.2 Research Questions**

Having demonstrated a gap in the research in the previous chapter, two phenomenological questions were illuminated:

1. How do practitioners who integrate coaching and therapy experience supervision?
2. What does supervision mean to integrative coach-therapists?

### **3.3 Research Aims**

To study the questions outlined above – specifically, to study the structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view – I thought it pertinent to focus on the phenomenon as experienced by the participants. As both integrative practice and supervision are types of human relationship it would be important to concentrate on the meaning of these relationships and to gain as much information into the ‘felt’ sense of these relationships as possible. A further aim was to explore how the practitioners created their own meaning through a methodology that would allow both an intersubjective and an idiographic focus.

### **3.4 Positioning in the Context of Methodology**

My identity as a counselling psychology trainee is one of a dialectical pluralist, a position that endeavours to engage with multitude of perspectives and not to automatically assume primacy of any particular school of thought. However, the literature review of the previous chapter revealed a gap in the research base of qualitative and experiential data for integrative coach-therapist supervision. Given this gap it would seem prudent and pragmatic to explore the experience of the individuals involved in these practices.

Willig (2013) describes a spectrum of philosophical positions that one can adopt when addressing the nature of knowledge. I adopt a relativistic ontological lens, ergo that what set of facts exist varies and no set of facts is objectively ‘right’. As defined by Willig (2013; 2016), I hold a phenomenologist epistemological position and adhere to constructivism, which denotes that knowledge is neither ‘simply’ subjective nor ‘simply’ objective, it is created through the individual subject’s interaction with the world. For example, particular conditions for knowledge are collected together to formulate a construct that tells us what counts as knowledge in the domain of science. Because all knowledge is constructed, it is therefore neither absolute nor generalizable, but is interpreted by the individual. I would define interpretivism as ‘there are a multitude of realities and ways of accessing them, hence different perspectives’. This is often associated with symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics and phenomenology. I adopt a relativist ontological position and I take a phenomenologist constructivist epistemological position (Willig, 2013).

When addressing the research questions, I will aim to concern myself with the “quality and texture of experience” and to “understand experience rather than to discover what is really going on” (Willig, 2013, p.71). In this way, I shall make no claims or causal statements about the information sought and therefore my position will be inductive rather than deductive. The type of knowledge I am therefore seeking to gather is experiential and idiographic.

To adhere to this philosophical stance, I considered qualitative methodologies to gain insight into the quality of a phenomena as experienced by an individual. These

methodologies have gained popularity in social science research in response to the quantitative positivism of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and seemed aligned with the novel nature of my research topic. To answer the research questions in an epistemologically congruent way, I needed to explore the experience of the individuals who integrate in the manner discussed in the previous chapters using an explorative method. Specifically, due to the current gap in the literature around supervision within integrative practices, it would be prudent that this area is researched with practitioners who are currently utilizing supervision in the field and can communicate their contemporary experience. In the next section, I discuss my rationale for the particular qualitative method of choice for this research.

### **3.5 Overview of IPA**

Having chosen the methodological school of qualitative enquiry as the most appropriate route to gaining insight into the quality of practitioners' experience, I then sought to choose the most applicable method for this mode of enquiry. I chose IPA (Smith 1996), as I considered this method best suited to the research task. I review the background and characteristics of this method along with its applicability to my research below.

**3.5.1 Background to IPA.** Within the methodological arena of qualitative research, there are various phenomenological methods that allow researchers to understand the quality of information sought from a sample of participants. IPA was created on the basis of phenomenological philosophy.

Originally there were two philosophical schools of phenomenology, that of the descriptive phenomenology of Husserl and the interpretative phenomenology of Heidegger. Husserl (1900) first posited a philosophical enquiry focusing on the essence of one's own experience, bringing attention "back to the things themselves" (Husserl, 2001, p.168), without the contagion of one's previous thoughts, biases and social constructs. He advocated a "bracketing" of previous experience to examine all things in isolation and without aforethought.

However, Heidegger diverged from Husserl's descriptive phenomenology and felt that this bracketing was an impossible endeavour. Going further Heidegger (1927), philosophised that we are always situated in the world and it is important to use this

‘worldly’ embodied experience to attain a felt sense of the life around us. In this way ‘meaning’ is sought rather than an objective knowledge of phenomena.

Other philosophers built on the work of Husserl and Heidegger. They noted the endeavour of getting to the essence of being, but which is ever-changing and being understood by ourselves, Sartre (1956). Other phenomenological philosophers argued that the human condition is a complex experience that is situated within time, space and orientated to another, it is also both cerebral and embodied (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Using these ideas in the discipline of psychology Smith (1996) argued for a novel, qualitative and phenomenological methodology that grounded itself within psychology rather than using a method from outside the discipline. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), expanded on this idea, arguing that an appropriate method of striving for an individual’s subjective meaning is to use an interviewing and analysis technique that they term IPA.

IPA uses the careful phenomenological and intentional attitude, purported by Husserl and Heidegger, to examine phenomena with an idiographic focus on the rich “life world” which is being explored. Smith Flowers and Larkin posit that human experience has an essence and a quality that only individuals discussing their own experiences are able to express. For example, only coach-therapist practitioners undergoing supervision will be able to provide an avenue into their idiosyncratic experiences.

Heidegger’s phenomenology is honoured in IPA’s acknowledgment of intersubjectivity or relatedness (Larkin, Watts and Clifton, 2006). This is especially pertinent when researching human experience of integrative practice and supervision, both of which are relational activities. This conclusion is made based on the assumption that supervision is a subjective process, which is perceived differently and idiosyncratically for each individual. Therefore, a focus on the individual understanding of each participant is paramount, as is the understanding that the researcher’s own assumptions and perspectives cannot be fully bracketed and that this will add to any data gathered using IPA.

In focusing on the individual and case-by-case analysis, IPA largely forgoes nomothetic enquiry. It espouses that individualistic meaning can be derived from small, relatively homogeneous samples, even single case studies are often used. This focus takes the researcher from the current popular zeitgeist of quantitative data which looks to create “indeterministic statistical zones that construct people” (Datan, Rodheaver, & Hughs, 1987, p.156) and moves to a curiosity about the specific revelations of the individual. This is especially useful when interrogating phenomena which is experiential and social in nature.

IPA also incorporates the idea of hermeneutics into its method, namely through the concept of the ‘hermeneutic circle’. This idea takes Heidegger’s original thoughts on interpretation and expands on how we, as researchers, treat the data we collect, namely through levels of interpretation and the “dynamic relationship between the part and the whole” (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p. 28). Looking at my data through this lens, I endeavoured to interpret the texts as a whole, but also parts of the text and to look at the relationship between these levels. This is the ‘recursive’ part of IPA and provides rigour and depth to analysis.

I believe that the verbal data of the semi-structured interviews used in IPA, was the most appropriate instrument to access the participant’s idiographic experience. The flexible nature of the interview style allowed me, as the interviewer, to respond and calibrate questions to the participants in vivo. IPA theory emphasises both the Husserlian notion of descriptive phenomenology and the double hermeneutic iterative analysis. These foci helped me to facilitate levels of interpretation into the rich dataset of each participant (Smith, et al., 2009). IPA’s combination of descriptive phenomenology and reflexive interpretative phenomenology results in a “focus on personal meaning and sense-making in a particular context, for people who share a particular experience” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 45). Therefore, the structure of the interviews allowed me to use the data to shape themes, rather than the methodology shaping the nature of the data. As a result, I attempted to adhere to the participants’ experience as closely as possible in my analysis. Ultimately the IPA methodology offered me the opportunity to phenomenologically explore: how do individuals who integrate coaching and therapy understand their lived experience of supervision?

**3.5.2 Alternative methods.** I considered Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1992), as a phenomenological methodology that could have been appropriate. It is both inductive and idiographic with its focus on individual experience and seeks to create theory from inductive experience of its participants. However, an important feature of my research is that I did not know what knowledge would be gained and therefore no assumptions or specific direction would be utilised. As a researcher, I may add to the knowledge base for integration or supervision, however I am not directly advocating the use of any particular model as such and sought to explore current experience rather than create a model.

I also considered Thematic Analysis, (Braun & Clark, 2006). This has a nomothetic emphasis and compares participants' accounts with one another to look for common experiences in order to derive meaning of phenomena in small homogenous groups of individuals. This was also eliminated as an option, because I was not looking to make any concrete correlative claims across participants and I was interested in the depth of individual experience.

I am not directly advocating the use of any particular model of supervision or integration. Therefore, I sought to explore current experience rather than create a model, hence my use of IPA. I also had a secondary aim, which was congruent with IPA, to compare themes across a small sample (Smith et al, 2009), however this was not the primary focus of the research.

**3.5.3 Rationale for IPA.** Once I had reviewed alternative qualitative methods, I decided on IPA as the most appropriate for my research topic. My rationale for using IPA was based on the congruence between the method's phenomenological position and the experiential focus of my research aims and questions. IPA allowed a focus on meaning-making and the double hermeneutic and I therefore deemed it an appropriate method to elicit each individual coach-therapist's idiographic experience. Therefore, the research will be conducted using a qualitative line of enquiry, specifically using IPA. I implemented Smith, Flower and Larkin's (2009) semi-structured interview design, focusing on exploring subjective, idiographic experience of each individual practitioner.

### **3.6 IPA Method**

**3.6.1 Overview of the process.** This section will focus on the application of IPA methodology to my research topic. In particular: strategies of sampling, inclusion criteria, how my participants were recruited and their demographic information shall be discussed. I then review the data collection stage and specifically the interview process, followed by a description of the analytic steps of IPA. I also discuss ethical issues, reflexivity and how I strived to maintain quality during the data gathering and analysis stage.

**3.6.2 Participant sampling.** IPA theorists Smith, Larkin and Flowers (2009) suggest intentional selection of participants based on shared commonality, relating to the topic of research. This commonality creates a ‘homogeneity’, defined by Smith as “purposive sampling” which “finds a more closely defined group for whom the research question will be significant” (2008, p.56). This is important as the relative similarity of participants’ professional backgrounds creates a sense of the context in which the participants operate. This allows insight into coach-therapist experience on an idiographic level. Smith (2008), highlights that IPA research is not trying to make nomothetic claims or generalise across populations, therefore they argue that rigorous sampling is inappropriate.

This relative homogeneity across the sample adheres to the idiographic focus of the method and allows individual experience to remain the central purpose of the research. In my research, this homogeneity is upheld by a sample of participants that have identified as integrative practitioners with experience of integrating therapy and coaching, who seek regular supervision. These practitioners are experienced therapists or experienced coaches who have added further training in either a therapy or coaching style to their skill base and professional identity.

**3.6.3 Inclusion/exclusion criteria.** The inclusion criteria for participating in the study were outlined as participants who:

- Identify as practitioners who are both therapists and coaches and who are qualified or training as counselling psychologists and/or clinical psychologists and/or psychotherapists and/or counsellors and/or integrative coach-therapists.
- Describe themselves as integrative practitioners.

- Subscribe to using a broad range of talking practices with their clients, specifically both counselling and coaching experience.
- Identify or subscribe to the definition of integrative coach-therapy practice. N.B. I used the personal consultancy definition as it was broad enough to include most ways of integrating, but acknowledged that coaching and therapy is being intentionally integrated: “a general framework for different types of ‘one-to-one’ (or ‘helping by talking’) practices that enable their integration” (Popovic & Jinks, 2013, p. 47).
- Are engaged in supervision, at least on a monthly basis (e.g. as part of their membership or training of their coaching or therapeutic associations.
- Hold professional membership or associated trainee membership or enrolled in training that leads to membership of a therapeutic body, either the BPS, BACP or UKCP.

I used these inclusion criteria as a means to verify both professional experience and that participants were experiencing regular supervision. Coaching and other associated talking practices like mentoring, are less well regulated by comparison, however the literature is clear that several international organisations are in the process of building regulation and accrediting bodies (ICF, 2015). These organisations (ICF UK, AC UK, EMCC, APECS) all suggest supervisory practice. Membership of one or more of these professional bodies was preferred, but potential participants were not excluded on the basis of this, as some potential participants were still in training or associate members.

**3.6.4 Recruitment.** In searching for potential participants that adhered to the definition of integrative practice outlined above, the Association of Integrative Coach Therapist Practitioners (AICTP) was identified as an organisation set up for practitioners working within this paradigm. Some participants were not aligned to the AICTP, therefore it was not an inclusion criterion, however it was a helpful recruitment pool. At the time of sampling and recruitment this organisation was estimated to be numbered 2,808 in membership. Advertising on the online forum of the AICTP and emailing was used to contact potential participants. I contacted a senior member of the organization who sent out the link to my information email (Appendix B) and requested any interested parties contact me using the contact details provided. I also reached out to my own professional network, sending out the information sheet for the study. During the data collection phase, participants also recommended contacting colleagues who met the inclusion/exclusion criteria. This process is known as ‘snowballing’ and this was encouraged, but participants were not told if their colleagues had been contacted to maintain anonymity of all participants. If any potential participants were contacted and did not respond, they were not contacted again. The AICTP is a UK-based organisation and the organisations for professional inclusion were also UK-based, therefore I did not seek to recruit participants based internationally.

**3.6.5 The participants.** Seven potential participants contacted me with regard to participating in the research. One interview was used as a pilot interview. Another participant was excluded due to a lack of current supervision practice. This left five participants whose data was collected and analysed and this was in keeping with an appropriate number that Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) recommend for doctoral research, allowing in-depth analysis of a few individual cases.

The demographic information gathered from participants was deliberately sparse, in order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, but enough was gathered to ensure a level of homogeneity which sets the data in the context of the research question (Smith & Osborn, 2013). Three participants identified as male and two as female. All were either qualified therapists or in training with a substantial amount of practical experience. All had coaching experience and were affiliated to a coaching membership body. The experience in years of the group ranged from 1 year to 30 years. All five participants were in monthly or more group supervision with peers and three of the group had their own one-to-one supervision.

The demographics listed above show a homogeneity across participants who are integrating substantial practice in one or more fields (psychology, counselling and coaching) and either novice experience in the other or who are every experienced in both. Although experience levels varied in each individual practice, these participants share commonality in the joining of both practices and utilising these disciplines under one integrated practice for their clients. Homogeneity is achieved further, by only including these integrative practitioners who bring this practice to regular supervision.

The participant demographic table below (Table 1), shows the nature of each participant’s supervision arrangements and their level of qualification. Age, gender, ethnicity and exact membership details have been omitted to protect participant anonymity.

*Table 1 Participant demographics*

<b>Participant number</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Qualified or trainee therapist</b>	<b>Frequency of Supervision</b>	<b>Group supervision</b>	<b>One to one supervision</b>
1	Female	Qualified	Weekly	Yes	Yes
2	Male	Trainee	Weekly	Yes	No
3	Male	Trainee	Weekly	Yes	No
4	Male	Trainee	Weekly	Yes	Yes
5	Female	Qualified	Weekly	Yes	Yes

**3.6.6 Pilot interview.** Once the interview schedule had been created I started the recruitment process. During this phase, the first participant to respond to the advertisements who was eligible for the inclusion criteria, was used in a pilot interview. A pilot interview was conducted to gauge the quality of each question in eliciting the subjective data that was pertinent to the overall research question (Smith & Osborn, 2013). This process helped me to refine the interview schedule because I was able to notice if the participant understood the questions being asked and whether my line of questioning needed clarifying or if it was too directive. From this interview, I then strived to include more phenomenologically rigorous, open questions. Once these notes had been made, I then edited the interview schedule accordingly.

### **3.6.7 Data Collection**

Once the participants had been chosen and a mutually beneficial location and appropriate setting had been agreed over email, we met in person to carry out the data collection. The setting of the interviews was held at either UEL's department of psychology in the private recording suites or in a private space of the participant's choosing. One Skype interview was conducted for a participant that was unable to attend in person. A secure private internet connection was used and both myself and the participant were located in private surroundings during the interview.

I conducted semi-structured interviews for each case, using a set of pre-planned questions related to the research question, with relevant prompts. This style of data collection is congruent with IPA as it provides an environment for expansive and open-ended dialogue between researcher and interviewee about the interviewee's experience of a phenomena (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). This allows me as the interviewer to retain a flexibility in questioning, hence the '*semi*'-structured interviews, so as to encourage an inductive process led primarily by the participant. I did not seek objectivity, nor did I attempt to remain outside of the process as it is understood that I would bring my own assumptions and biases to the process. Therefore, the aims of the interview are twofold: one is to provide a platform to examine the meaning-making of the participant, but also to provide a space to examine the double hermeneutic element of my own meaning constructed from the interviewee's accounts (Smith & Osborn, 2013).

The interviews lasted between approximately fifty and sixty minutes, with as much time as each participant needed for questions at the beginning and end of each interview. An audio recorder was used to record the interviews.

**3.6.8 The interview schedule.** The interview schedule was constructed in accordance with IPA theory. I aimed to create "a comfortable interaction" that would help participants to "provide a detailed account of the experience under investigation" (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009, p. 59). The structure of each question was designed to be open and allow participants to describe and explore their felt sense of the overall subject matter.

I trialled my drafted questions on colleagues as suggested by Smith and Osborn,

(2013). Despite identifying three areas and questions that would be interesting to explore further, I aimed to adhere to the notion of flexibility, hence the ‘semi’-structured nature of the interviews. In actuality, I decided to omit many of my initial provisional questions that can be found in (Appendix A) in favour of three broad question topics with provisional prompts added, if I felt there was richer detail to be elicited. These questions reflect the gaps in the current literature, identified from the literature review.

My opening question was “can you describe your journey to integrative practice?”. This was aimed at getting a context for each participant and how they currently integrate and use models, whilst also allowing participants to ‘warm up’ to the process (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). This was important as it set the context for each participant’s background and understanding of both integration and supervision. The second question was “what does supervision mean to you?”. The intention with this question was to explore how the supervisees understood supervision and made meaning from the word ‘supervision’. This contextualized and situated their experience and aimed to give a clearer understanding of each participant’s sense of supervision. Clarifying questions were used at points of interest.

The third question was “could you describe your experience of supervision?”. This centered on what it was like for coach-therapist practitioners in supervision. This was central to the overall research question and my aim was to elicit firsthand experience of being in the supervisory relationships. Participants were then asked to offer an example of this experience in order to add further richness to the data. I concluded the interviews by asking whether there was anything else they would like to mention, thereby opening up the interview to be as explorative as possible and participant led. I did this so that participants had the freedom to note anything that they thought was particularly prescient for the research that had not already been covered.

**3.6.9 The semi-structured interviews.** On welcoming and introducing myself to each participant, I checked that they had had chance to read the participant information sheet which had been sent to them upon initial contact. I then asked participants about their demographic information at the beginning of each interview. I would then turn on the audio recording equipment and start the interview with the opening question.

Once the interview had reached a natural end between forty-five to sixty minutes, I brought the interview procedure to a conclusion, thanked participants for their time and answered any questions they had about the interviews. I then provided the participants with a debrief letter (Appendix C) and a list of organisations that they could contact if any of the topics discussed had caused distress or if they wanted support (Appendix D) as had been outlined in my ethical proposal. I used a similar procedure for the one Skype interview that was conducted, however I emailed the forms to the participant instead.

**3.6.10 Data storage and confidentiality.** In accordance with the BPS code of research ethics (2014a) participants' data was safeguarded by password-protecting all electronic files and audio files collected on recording devices and stored on computer. Audio files were collected and immediately transferred from recording device to a password-protected computer. The original audio files were then immediately deleted from the initial recording device. The demographic information and paper notes were kept in a securely locked filing cabinet. Participants were briefed on these processes and agreed to these procedures when signing their consent form (Appendix F).

Within the data, any identifying information including names, places and anything specific that could identify participants or individual third parties was redacted from transcriptions. Each participant was labelled with pseudonym. The original audio files were only accessed by myself, the researcher, and were kept separately from all demographic data and transcriptions. These processes were initiated to maintain anonymity of participants from all but the principle researcher, for the entire research process.

On completion of data collection and analysis, all data (audio and transcription) would be stored in a secure and confidential fashion. Data would be stored for three years to allow for appropriate access from the researcher in case of publication timelines. Participants were informed of both their right to withdraw from the research and their right to the destruction of their subsequent individual data (tapes, transcription) at any time during the research process, up until the transcription phase of the analysis was completed.

**3.6.11 Analytic strategy.** The data were analysed using the idiographic, flexible phenomenological ideals of structure of IPA. Initially after data collection, I transcribed each audio recording verbatim onto an electronic Microsoft word document (see copies of all anonymised transcripts, memory stick provided with this thesis document). On each transcript the individual dialogue extracts were labelled either ‘R’ for research or ‘P’ for participant and the time in the audio tape was noted for ease of recovery to listen and re-listen for both accuracy and redaction (see data storage and confidentiality section). All audiological insights were transcribed (for example: pauses, silences, non-verbal cues e.g. coughs, laughs), as I considered these cues to be part of my participants’ language and expression. These cues were noted on the transcript and any reflections were made in my reflexive diary for later consultation during the analysis process.

As a newcomer to IPA analysis, I was guided by Smith, Larkin and Flower’s (2009) six stages of IPA analysis outlined below, but I allowed flexibility, creativity and non-linearity of the process, as is meant as both “iterative” and “multi-directional” (Smith, Larkin, Flowers, 2009, p. 81). I have endeavoured to reflect on my own process alongside the analytic steps, so as to provide a transparent and coherent narrative of the journey through the collaborative, hermeneutic circle between researcher and participant.

**3.6.11.1 Step one: reading and rereading.** Once I had started to collect the participant’s accounts through the semi-structured interview process, I began to listen back to the audio files and reflect on each interaction. In first listening back to my recordings, before transcribing them, I was more able to imagine the participant’s voices throughout the analytic process, a process which Smith and Osborn (2013) recommend. After listening to the file, I then transcribed each recording verbatim. Whilst listening and transcribing I updated my reflexive journal, which allowed me to review my initial impressions of the transcripts. I then read and reread the transcripts and copied the raw text into tables (Appendix G) so as better to structure and prepare for the next stage: initial noting.

**3.6.11.2 Step two: initial noting.** After I had copied the transcripts into tables, I made initial notes in a column to the right of the original transcript column. As per Smith's guidance I went through each transcript noticing anything of interest within the descriptive (e.g. what the participant was trying to say), the linguistic (e.g. notes on any language, grammar, syntax) as well as the conceptual domains (including anything of note I felt was implied or on a deeper level than surface description).

**3.6.11.3 Step three: developing emergent themes.** After initial noting, I then moved to the next column to the right of the initial notes in the tabled transcript where I would begin the 'developing emergent themes' stage, before looking for connections between these themes. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p.91) call this the "analytic shift" where a researcher uses their own initial noting as the basis to draw out themes with their roots at both a micro and macro level of the original transcription. These themes often were small extracts or phrases that represented a psychological flavor or essence of what the participant was either explicitly describing or implicitly hinting.

I then moved from paper to computer and input my rough themes into a tabled document (Appendix G) where I could see each theme grouped together by the page of the transcript with line numbers of text that were representative of each theme. I then discarded themes that were either too descriptive or an exact copy of an initial note or the text and therefore not interpretative enough. I also used a colour coding system in which I would highlight parts of the text that corresponded with certain themes, making it easier to spot thematic flow through a transcript.

**3.6.11.4 Step four: connections across emergent themes within one participant.** Smith, Larkin and Flowers (2009) highlight this stage as the most creative part of the analytic process as it requires the researcher to make links across the emergent themes that they have created. I chose to continue using the tabled word documents on computer that I had utilized to cluster the emergent themes chronologically. I then looked across the chronological clusters and continued to use a colour system to make links, draw patterns and look for similarities and differences across the emergent themes.

I then began to make clusters of emergent themes based on the analytic processes of abstraction, subsumption and numeration as outlined by Smith, Flowers

and Larkin (2009), (Appendix H). An example of this clustering was the theme ‘the self-censoring editors’, which was created through abstraction and eventually became a subordinate theme. I initially started using a rudimentary form of numeration as a strategy. However, I decided that this was becoming close to theme counting and almost a quantitative research endeavour, so switched to use the table process outlined above. I also used an initial colour system to highlight which themes were linked to the overall research question and therefore discarded themes that were not as relevant.

**3.6.11.5 Step five: moving to the next case.** Once I had completed the first four steps with a particular transcript, I would then start again with the next case. The main challenge here was to attempt to bracket the previous analytic process with the aim to lessen the influence of previous thinking and other cases influencing each other, thereby adhering to the “idiographic commitment” (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p.100.). I attempted to bracket, although I knew it would be impossible to do so entirely, by treating each case in order. I also paused in-between cases. For instance, I would leave at least one day in between ending my analysis of one transcript, before starting the analysis of the next case. Similarly, I would create a new word document for each case to attempt to bracket my experience of one case from another. I then repeated this process subsequently for all five of the cases.

**3.6.11.6 Step six: looking for patterns across cases.** Once I felt that steps one to five had been completed for each case, I then began to consider looking across each case. I then began looking for patterns and connections by using the clustered emergent theme tables for each participant. At the end of this process I was left with a rough table of subordinate themes for each participant. I then spent time moving these subordinate themes into clusters which would eventually form the superordinate themes that served as overarching groups for the more numerous subordinate themes for each participant. I then created another table (Appendix I) which outlined themes that seemed to cross participants. A final table (Table 2, Analysis Chapter) was created where each group of subordinate themes was nested under a superordinate theme. One of my concerns at this stage was whether a reader would be able to track the creation and validity of superordinate or subordinate theme back to each transcription. This concern and the knowledge that I would need extracts to evidence the themes led me to track back through my table and gather line numbers and text to prove the essence of each of these higher order themes. In this way, a reader can trace the thematic essence to particular participants, but should also be able to see conceptual commonality shared across participants. Thereby, this final stage pays homage to both the idiographic and the collaborative nature of IPA.

### **3.7 Reflexivity**

During the interview stage, I found myself drawing on my skills as a trainee counselling psychologist to actively listen and respond in the moment to the participant's accounts. This responsiveness presented dilemmas for me at points during the interviews as participants asked for guidance and I endeavoured to retain an open and exploratory attitude. Maintaining rapport and warmth whilst remaining phenomenological could be a tension at times. I also tried to recall as much of the non-verbal audio and non-audio communication as possible, such as: laughter, coughs, movements and facial expressions among others, by writing anything I could remember down in a journal after each interview. This was useful, because in reading the diary back I recalled various memories from the interaction in the interview particularly audible tones, silences and other sounds in the interviews and how I felt in those moments which helped to construct meaning in the analysis.

In reflecting on the process of the interviews I noticed the sheer amount of information collected and my anxiety about how this data would all come together in

analysis. In the second stage of the analysis, I realised that I was making a volume of notes that would need further interpretation. An anxiety at this point was whether my notes were doing justice to participants' accounts and the balance between descriptive phenomenology and the more interpretative elements of the initial notes. I remember asking myself how far I should interpret and on what basis I was doing so, for instance using general psychological interpretations or questioning if I was using a specific theory to interpret the transcripts. I found myself noticing my own language and interviewing technique and found myself wondering how much my verbal and non-verbal cues had influenced the interviews. I also noticed the difficulty of 'bracketing' my views and prior knowledge of theory of supervision and integrative practice.

I found the stage of developing emerging themes to be particularly challenging as it required (what at least felt like) a significant move away from the participant's accounts and meant that my interpretation was more central. This of course is the interpretative part in a collaborative dynamic, but a part of me was concerned that in some way the analysis would become less phenomenological and idiographic. The impact of my concern was to attend with greater impetus to what I thought was going on for each client.

When looking for connections across participants, I felt anxious that I might lose some key emergent themes in the discarding process, or that a theme that looked less important at this stage may become more relevant later in the analysis. I recall reflecting on this anxiety and concluding that I was keeping detailed notes and copies of the extracts at all stages, so I could revisit these themes if necessary. I also wondered if the names of the clustered themes were coming from my own expectations or biases, so I then found myself returning to the transcripts to find idiographic, participant-led names for the clustered themes. I feel this particular anxiety has had a positive impact on the research as most of the themes are now named with participant language rather than my own labels, therefore the analysis is closer to their experience.

### **3.8 The Quality of Qualitative Research**

Yardley (2000), notes that qualitative research is being utilised within psychology more and more, especially when subjective meaning is sought from individuals. However, there are dilemmas when assessing the quality of qualitative methodologies, largely because there are numerous methodologies with divergent

claims to knowledge and truth and it is difficult to create an overarching way of evaluating 'validity', in the same way that quantitative methodologies can be examined. To address this difficulty, Yardley (2008), subsequently outlined four themes for enhancing quality research that can be used as general guidelines for all qualitative research endeavours: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence and impact and importance.

Yardley notes that the context of the research topic is acknowledged and responded to throughout the research process, with knowledge and insight from relevant literature in the forefront of researchers' minds. With this study, I have aimed to keep both the theories of the topic in mind (integration, supervision), but also the theory of the methodology used (phenomenology). Yardley also states that a commitment to the chosen qualitative method and prolonged concentration on the data is important, as is the rigour of attending to the "completeness of the data" (Yardley, 2000, p221). The rigour and completeness of this piece of research is served by case by case and line by line phenomenological analysis.

Additionally, Yardley discusses the importance of transparency of the research 'narrative' and coherence in the form of the 'fit' of the topic of the research and what is being asked of participants. In this research, open-ended questions and the overall research question "how do coach therapists experience supervision?" have been designed to encourage open dialogue about participants' experience, thereby attending to the "fit" between questions and the interpretative phenomenological method. Finally, impact and importance are highlighted as characteristics of good qualitative methodological practice, because all research must attend to gaps in the current literature and analysis must be of use to a readership. I believe a gap in the literature was identified in my literature review. The use and impact of this will be discussed more in the discussion chapter. These four factors in retaining quality in qualitative research are adhered to and commented on in both the analysis and discussion chapters as well as my reflections on the analytic process outlined above.

### **3.9 Ethics**

As a scientist-practitioner and trainee counselling psychologist I aimed to uphold the aforementioned ethical standards by adhering to the University of East London's ethical codes. Additionally, I read and acted in accordance with the BPS's

(2018) code of ethics and BPS's (2014a) code of research ethics throughout the research process. This code sets out the following principles (p7.): "respect for the autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals and communities", "scientific integrity", "social responsibility" and "maximising benefit and minimising harm". I aimed to uphold and adhere to these principles by using the processes outlined below. I was also granted ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of East London (Appendix I).

Participants were given an information sheet with the aim and details of the study in advance of meeting for the interviews (Appendices A & B). Consent forms were provided to explain the study's purpose, its practicalities and how strict confidentiality of participant's data would be maintained and how data would be collected and anonymised. A signature was required before any data was collected. Participants were made aware via the information sheet and consent form that therapeutic content may be elicited in the interviews and as the interviewer I was vigilant for any signs of distress in my participants. I used Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009) guidance on informed consent, which was sought verbally before continuing interviews if any upsetting material was identified by the participant. All participants were given a list of therapeutic services, regardless of whether distress is or is not reported. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time during the interview and for three months after the interview. The participants were also reminded that it is their responsibility to abide by their own code of ethics in terms of confidentiality and anonymity of any clients or third parties discussed.

### **3.10 Chapter Summary**

This chapter outlined the methodological background and considerations for this research, as well as the process of the chosen methodology: IPA. My own reflexive process and epistemological positioning were also explained. Issues of quality, impact and ethics were discussed. The next chapter outlines the analysis of the research, specifically the broader and more specific themes drawn out from data collection and the analytic process.



## Analysis

### 4.1 Chapter overview

In this chapter I present my analysis of participants' experience of bringing integrative coach-therapist practice to supervision. I will discuss how themes have been drawn from the individual transcripts and clustered, organised and structured into subordinate themes. I will explain how these subordinate themes have then been clustered into overarching superordinate themes.

I will present each superordinate theme followed by their constituent subthemes. This order can be seen in tabular form in Table 2. The direct relationship of each subtheme to participants' accounts will be explored with use of direct textual extracts and my own interpretations of how these extracts highlight the subthemes and superordinate theme for each case. An exploration of the relationship between individual accounts in relation to specific subthemes and superordinate themes will also be discussed.

I have attempted to pay close attention to the hermeneutic circle and my own process in the analysis from interview through to the creation of the themes. The names of themes are mostly drawn from the participants' extracts and therefore represent, explicitly, one participant's experience, but should speak to several of the participants' experience of supervision.

Subthemes and subsequently superordinate themes were created using the IPA techniques of abstraction, numeration, subsumption, contextualisation and polarisation (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

*Table 2 Superordinate and subordinate themes*

<b>Superordinate themes</b>	<b>Subordinate themes</b>
Bifurcation and arbitrary lines	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The big split</li> <li>2. Boundaries – clarity or confusion?</li> <li>3. Contracts – the red tape</li> </ol>
Detective work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Supervisor” implies a kind of hierarchy</li> <li>2. Picking the bones</li> <li>3. Fear of “am I doing the right thing?”</li> <li>4. The self-censoring editors</li> </ol>
A conscious sense of belonging	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Needing time and space</li> <li>2. Carrying the person</li> <li>3. A sense of all the different perspectives</li> <li>4. Integrative supervision – it would be utterly bloody marvellous</li> </ol>

#### **4.2 Superordinate Theme One: Bifurcation and Arbitrary Lines**

This superordinate theme was created using the IPA techniques of abstraction and numeration. The name is from two direct quotes from P3 about their experience of having to adhere to splits in supervision that they felt were “arbitrary”, particularly the “bifurcation” of coaching and therapeutic work.

The subthemes that form this superordinate theme all shared commonalities in their depiction of issues in integrating coaching and therapy and bringing that integrative work to supervision, hence the abstraction of their similarities. Numeration occurred because there was a frequency of occurrence across all participants in their accounts, specifically of difficulties and tensions that emerged between their practice with clients and the work of supervision. Difficulty and issues with the complexity of integrating and bringing these issues to supervision appeared to be the underlying similarity linking the subthemes. The subthemes all share enough commonality to create this overarching theme, hence the abstraction technique as all subordinate themes remark upon difficulties of bringing integrative coach-therapist practice to supervision. Additionally, in some of the subthemes there is an expression of what the opposite of these difficulties might look like and these idealised worlds are also discussed.

In particular, there seems to be a notion, held by some participants, that to bring anything other than a particular singular talking practice is difficult. It seemed to some that they must present coaching *or* therapy work in supervision and that the presented work must be congruent with their supervisor or supervisory group's chosen talking practice. There seems to be a felt sense that this agenda is pushed from supervisors or settings and the conflict is frustrating for supervisees and supervisors alike. These issues are elaborated on in the first subordinate theme, "the big split" in which the reader is invited to observe how participants view supervision as split into various groupings (i.e. supervisor, methodology and function). I discuss these partitions and how they seem to be processed by the supervisees.

In the second subordinate theme in this section "boundaries – clarity or confusion" I attempt to highlight the tensions for participants who experience client presentations that do not "fit" neatly into coaching or therapy practices, but also the idea that neither do the practitioners themselves.

Lastly, contracts seemed to be an important gateway to practice for integrative practitioners, particularly how the work was negotiated with clients and then taken to supervision. This led to a theme centered around contracts and the name "Contracts - the red tape" was taken from P4's expression, which is explored further below. The topic of contracts often seemed to be a tension for participants, but some participants felt that contracts added legitimacy to integrative work by making the practitioner's stance clear to clients. Some experienced them as permission and evidence that they were working ethically and in the bounds of their competence, a physical object that could be provided to supervisors or supervision groups.

**4.2.1 Subordinate theme one: The big split.** It quickly became apparent to me during data collection that all participants had experienced a range of different structures to their supervision, with many different foci. All participants had experienced supervision for their therapeutic practice and continued to do so. Some were in supervision for coaching practice, but this was always in addition to supervision for therapeutic practice and was a separate setup from their therapy supervision. All the participants had either experienced or continued to experience supervision that was either therapy supervision and/or coaching supervision, but very few experienced a space where they felt they could bring a combination of both coaching and therapy practice. This led to several emergent themes among participants, both within participants' narratives and across their interviews, where the divide between the practices is highlighted in the supervisory space. This binary division or "big split" of supervision, as P3 names it, seemed to be at odds with some participants' views of an arbitrary line between the practices. Therefore, I was keen to find out more about how they experienced, not just the practical splitting of these practices in supervision, but gain an insight into how they experienced this splitting in their own minds. P3 talks of their sense of what appears to be frustration at this state of affairs in the extract below.

*"Because even either, being in those supervision groups is saying "well I'm working with these other people but hey they're not for this group because they're coaching people" (S:hmm). That's kind of pretty hypocritical, because I don't really see it in that way. So, what message does that send to those other people in those groups? It sends the message that I think there's a big split between these two practices and I don't." P3, line 738*

Above, P3 notes that the very act of choosing a particular supervision or "being in" the particular groups sends a message that certain clients will not be able to be presented in particular groups. The "but hey" conveys a sarcastic tone, a sense that they do not believe in the splitting, that the group by its very nature encourages. There seems to be further frustration highlighted in the noting of hypocrisy as they feel their particular beliefs are not in line with these binary divides. Interestingly P3 states the "split", a psychological concept that emphasises a binary, oppositional thinking around nuanced concepts, which seemed to show their disdain for this perceived reductionism of the client's presentations.

P3's varied background as a coach and psychotherapy trainee, across a range of sectors, may have influenced this discourse. The range of interventions they offer and

their history of offering these interventions to many different demographics in various settings could help foster an integrative style, which could feel in opposition to dividing their supervisory practice.

*“Whereas in coaching supervision or cognitive supervision, we’re just thinking about you know, we don’t even think about core beliefs in that context, it’s more about how to deliver a particular, erm what do they call them? A, erm, a particular model you know, a particular model, but it’s very. It’s like psychoeducation I guess (S: mm). So I’m going through an idea that somebody might think might work for helping somebody to see themselves more holistically erm, you know in terms of their career, their professional self. . . erm . . . yea it feels superficial.” P4, line 582*

P4 experiences two different supervision settings, but makes it clear that there is a distinction for them, both in their experience and in the purpose of each supervision. This distinction seems to be summarised by the used of word “Whereas”. It felt to me that P4 sets up coaching in opposition to the idealised therapeutic supervision: “we don’t even think about core beliefs”. There is a sense that there is something missing for the practitioner and they find it hard to believe this. They note that the “particular model” used with clients is prioritised as the focus in coaching supervision. The “psychoeducation” feels as though it is simplistic and possibly patronising for the participant that feels the “self” is the route into practice and the purpose of supervision. They summarise their feelings with a bold “yea it feels superficial”, omitting that it feels superficial *in comparison* to the clinical supervision that they seem to be attached to.

P4’s experience as a trainee counselling psychologist and experienced therapist and coach, puts their experience with supervision in context. They note a split in the organisation of their supervision in the same way as P3, however they diverge in their opinion about each practice and seem to hold therapy in higher regard. This could be due to the onus on psychotherapeutic practice in their training or indeed the perceived simplicity vs complexity when comparing their experience of coaching vs therapy practice. What’s noticeable is that the split of coach supervision and therapy supervision seems to enhance an opposition and comparison of the two practices.

*“Erm, I suppose I, I, I think it makes me less inclined to bring them back if, if you know what I mean? I mean, its not like I’ve brought loads of, hundreds of clients to super . . . hundreds of coaching clients to supervision, but I think the times I have erm, you know there’s a little bit of “oh ok”.” P2, 1147*

P2 discusses the attempt to cross supervisory lines by bringing ‘coaching clients’ to what is assumed to be a more therapeutically inclined supervision. It appeared that they felt this had been a fruitless endeavour, with the participant’s flattened tone of voice abruptly finishing their sentence. The participant talking in a present-tense with the use of “oh ok” delivers a powerful indication of the perceived rejection and felt sense of disappointment. I found it interesting that they called the clients “coaching clients” as there seems to be some compliance or agreement from the participant that these clients fall into a certain bracket and are perhaps unsuitable for this particular supervision space. However, they almost rebel or provoke by bringing presentations that are unorthodox. The reaction to this is still surprising to the participant and perhaps shows a desire or hope to find a place to bring presentations that do not fit into the lines of supervision currently on offer to them. This last extract summarises and highlights the split sense of supervisory options open to all the participants operating as integrative coach-therapist practitioners engaging with diverse talking practices.

P2’s background as an experienced coach, but less experienced psychotherapist may explain their sense of rejection when attempting to presenting coaching clients in supervision, especially if they dismissed. Their narrative converges with the idea that for them a ‘big split’ is occurring in their supervisory experience and it does not necessarily feel comfortable.

**4.2.2 Subordinate theme two: Boundaries – clarity or confusion?** Most participants commented on ‘boundaries’, either explicitly or implicitly, in their integrative practice and boundaries in supervision. Oftentimes these boundaries were not only thought of as a boundary between coaching and counselling, but also included boundaries between clients, practitioners and supervisors. Boundaries between ethical and organisational bodies were also noted. Difficulties and tensions around negotiating these boundaries arose recurrently, with supervision as a seemingly helpful conduit to discuss boundaries, as well as a space that could cause tension, confusion and difficulties for practitioners and supervisors alike. Therefore, given the prevalence of discourse around boundaries of all natures, it seemed prudent to gather the numerous emergent themes within participants into a subordinate theme across participants. However, this came with a note that their purpose was ambiguous for some participants, hence ‘clarity or confusion’.

*“and then I will bring along a coaching client if I feel they’re almost at the boundary. So, so generally, you know if I’m seeing a career coaching client, not a lot of stuff, you know, I can have a really good relationship to somebody, with somebody and we can see each other for, six or, six times or something and then might I might never bring them to supervision because there tends not to be anything that I sort of feel the need to get a view on where I bring coaching tends to be where they’re, they’re sort of . . . they’re bringing other stuff and I’m not sure quite what to do with it and that, those sort of erm boundary clients are probably more problematic than either coaching clients or the counselling clients . . .” P2, line 640*

P2 talks about presenting a coaching client in supervision, but only if the client’s presentation is close to a “boundary”, perhaps needing therapeutic help as well as coaching. In this portrayal of boundaries, P2 perhaps views coaching as more pragmatic and straightforward in most cases. This “problematic” nature of boundary clients, is perhaps inherent in the difficulty of the presentation. It seems that the problem could be that decisions need to be made about whether the work must then change from coaching to therapy or become a mix of the two. This appears to be highlighted by the tension of presenting this issue in the supervisory space. P2’s background as an experienced coach should also be considered, as they may find coaching issues simpler to resolve than therapeutic ones hence a predilection for presenting complex ‘boundary’ clients in supervision. P3 goes further in their discussion of boundaries. They seem to see them as more than just between the divide between talking practices of counselling and coaching, but additionally between other lines of practice in supervision settings.

*“and I think that well I can’t talk to my line manager about that, this is a good thing to talk about in supervision because it does feel a little bit more like counselling because I’m again getting a bit unsure about where the boundaries are, whether I’m actually as a friend or a line manager or as a counsellor and them really wanting to, to, to know in that situation what I was doing. So, it does increasingly feel to me like a place where I can bring all of this stuff as well” P3, line 911*

They link a confusion in relations between themselves and colleagues as “line manager or as a counsellor” and are similarly conflicted as to whether they can bring this confusion to supervision. Supervision in this extract seems to be experienced as a positive, welcoming place where practice that sits outside the formal lines of the talking practice professions can also be brought. Perhaps this participant feels that “increasingly” they are pushing and testing the boundaries of which relationships and the variety of content that can be presented for discussion in supervision. They seem to be questioning the limits of traditional supervision and playing with the scope of supervision. It appears that the boundaries in supervision are more flexible than they originally anticipated. Additionally, P3’s previous experience of multiple settings is highlighted in the above segment, as they note the complexity of negotiating role boundaries as ‘friend’, ‘line manager’ or ‘counsellor’.

*“Erm I think it was Proctor and somebody else, talking about the functions of supervision, so there’s the kinds of normative, comparative, the stuff about the kind of ethics I suppose and looking after the boundaries of the profession and having the client’s interests very much front and centre.” P5, line 745*

P5 discusses boundaries beyond practice, across what they view to be the varying purposes of supervision. Descriptively they point to “the functions of supervision” and ethical boundaries which they feel supervision should uphold. My own interpretation of this is that there is an expectation that supervision is an authoritative vehicle able to police the professions and uphold the client’s rights in the therapy room. I wonder if the participant feels that sometimes the focus shifts from the client and that this is lamentable. They seem to imply that supervision can “function” to uphold this is as a boundary to stop this shift in attention away from the client. In this way, the boundaries feel important for the participant as they are a vehicle to uphold the standards of the profession, but also to maintain ethical principles and client-centred values which the participant gives primacy: “very much front and centre”.

P5’s background as both a qualified coach and psychotherapist, with years of experience in both and of integrating, seems to lead to reflections on theory of

supervision in the context of boundaries for coach-therapy supervision. Their experience seems to give them a wider lens of theory and practice to draw upon in order to discuss supervision boundaries not just as a supervisee, but also as supervisor.

**4.2.3 Subordinate theme three: Contracts – the red tape.** The notion of contracts for practice appeared in many of the participant's accounts and increasingly as a topic of discussion when thinking about supervision's effects on contracts and vice versa. Although the theme was recurrent throughout the participants, the nature of the relationship to contracts and how this relationship differed between talking practices and in supervision was diverse. P4 explores their feelings about the use of contracts in the extract below.

*“Erm . . . I mean it all feels a bit, what's that word for red tape? . . . Erm anyway redtapey. Erm, you know, where it's, it's erm no if its, the client needs something, we should be able to think and talk about it and intervene to the best of our ability. (S:mm) Sort of what these ethical erm, rules or guidelines, it means that . . .that you can't, you have to bracket. Quite important and then go through this whole contract thing, so it's almost like you can't really be yourself until the paperwork's done. What's the word . . . for redtape? Ah” P4, line 788*

P4 describes a bureaucratic process in which they feel that a “bracketing” of sorts has to happen in order to fit the client work into what the “rules or guidelines” state. They see contracts as “paperwork” that stop them being themselves until they are completed, they appear to stymie the therapeutic or coaching work. The language denotes a frustration, in their inability to find a synonym for “redtape”. When P4 says “it's almost like you really be yourself” there is a sense that until they have legitimacy of clarity through contracts, their identity is stifled and they resent this delay. It seems that to do or be anything else to clients, in P4's case to do more than coaching, is seen as disingenuous before they have contracted, but equally they do not feel free or true to themselves until they can use their therapeutic skills. This could be explained by the context in which P4 works; in a organization that primarily contracts for coaching, before transitioning clients to therapy if deemed necessary by both client and coach therapist.

I wonder what role supervision plays in the developing of the contracts; is the supervisor seen as policing the contracts or someone who can discuss the difficulties of integration and contracting? Whatever their role it seems as though contracts are seen as

the gateway to transitioning to another type of practice, in P4's case often from coaching to therapy or integrative work.

*“and I think the supervision really helped me to work out that just because I know how to do something, doesn't mean I should be doing it. So that's the kind of flip side in a way of, it's all about what is it your, what's the contract? What's your intention? Erm yea” P5, line 615*

In the above extract P5 describes supervision as helping them to find a boundary possibly between talking practices or perhaps individual interventions. Again, this boundary is amplified by the contract, which the reader hears from what appears to be the imagined supervisor's interrogative questions: “what's the contract?”, “what's your intention”. These direct questions seem to be experienced positively, as a mechanism to make the supervisee think and reflect on where they are going in their journey with their clients, but also with a cautionary warning about whether their intention is being carried out or whether they are sticking to the aforementioned contract. I wonder if there is an anxiety about moving away from the contract and the supervisor is seen as a protector of the supervisee who prevents an unconscious moving away from the collaborative journey that has been planned by client and practitioner. The segment above and the following segment from P5 can be understood in their context of this participant inhabiting dual roles as both supervisor and supervisee of coach-therapy and someone who has experienced many different settings and structures of supervision and contracts. This range of experience seems to have helped them develop a positive notion of how discussion of contracting in supervision can be of use when practicing coach-therapy.

*“Like how do we know, what territory we're in? Erm and I think in, it could have been, it could have been quite shaming to think oh I'm doing something I shouldn't be doing or whatever, but it was really useful to go “oh, we seem to be going here and I could work with that, but that's not the contract”. I think it was quite empowering to be able to really speak about that in supervision, really get clear in my own mind and then work out how am I going to speak with her in a way that doesn't feel shaming to her, “you're bringing something you shouldn't” you know.” P5, line 685*

A confusion of territory is discussed here, using a rhetorical question to display the ongoing dynamic position that an integrative practitioner finds themselves in. The concern about their client's shame speaks across participants to the idea, or even fear, that they might be doing something they “shouldn't be doing” and that there will be consequences for this, perhaps shame or that they feel they have failed themselves and

the clients. The contract in this extract is seen as a firm reminder of where the work 'should' be and a landmark in which to discuss the work in supervision. There seems to be a further dynamic presented, in which the participant seems to be concerned that the client will be shamed if they were to sense that they should not be speaking about certain themes. Perhaps supervision offers a relief and somewhere to organise the supervisee's mind around how they will keep to the contract without rupturing the client-practitioner therapeutic relationship, perhaps even the supervisory relationship.

*"I think it, perhaps it makes more relaxed about bringing counselling clients than it does coaching clients, because with counselling clients it's like the setup's very clean compared to some of the coaching stuff or it feels cleaner. You know, it's like I'm sitting in an agency, it has its policies, I see these clients, they're assessed before they see me, I see them once a week, there's policies about how many times they can miss before, you know there's a lot of sort of clarity around those contracts. With coaching contracts that clarity is less, it's just less clear, you know I think it's less clear erm"* P2, line 1089

P2 delineates between the clarity offered by counselling contracts as opposed to coaching contracts above. They state that they are more relaxed when discussing their counselling contracts in supervision and I wonder if there is some understatement around exactly how much is disclosed around the "less clear" coaching contracts in the supervisory space. P2's background in 'agency' therapeutic work seems to create clearer contracts as opposed to their private coaching practice and this adds further 'splits' and 'boundaries' (as mentioned in previous themes) for this participant's coach-therapy practice which then seems to affect their experience of supervision.

There is an apparent paradox that runs as a theme within the theme of contracts: that contracts seem to be a collaborative base and map for practitioners and clients to follow throughout their integrative work. Some see the combination of supervision and contracts as a way of keeping them on track, whereas others see the contracts as a gateway or red tape to being able to work holistically with clients, a gateway that supervisors are guardians of.

### **4.3 Superordinate Theme Two: Detective Work**

The name of the second superordinate theme came from P3 who remarked upon the supervisory process as sometimes being like "detective work", with supervisors and supervisor groups heavily scrutinising the client's narrative. Although this name came from a specific example of overzealous supervision, the thematic anxiety and difficulty of power dynamics seemed to be summarised by the phrase. It became clearer that

supervisees were concerned about the power of the supervisor, the supervisory relationship and even their own performance as the analysis progressed.

In particular, within the subordinate theme “supervisor – implies a kind of hierarchy” I analyse the participant’s accounts of the inherent power dynamics of supervision and how they differ in different settings and with a variety of supervisory experiences.

The second subtheme, “picking the bones”, explores the experience of participant’s when they feel the supervisor or group has become too powerful and is abusing this power either by being too directive, interrogative or strong in their presence. The effects of this experience on the supervisee and their client work is discussed.

This is followed by the theme of “am I doing the right thing?”. I felt that there was a thematic trend of anxiety, both explicitly in what the participants described in their relationships, possibly stemming from power dynamics, but also implicitly in their language and narratives. This anxiety seemed to stem from the potential of supervisors being critical of participant’s practice or even critical and dismissive of their choice of integration of coaching and counselling. This theme seems to be closely related to how the participants behave in their supervision, which is explored in the theme of “self-censoring editors”, with participants deciding what they feel they can and cannot present in their supervision spaces.

This last subtheme of how participants explicitly censor or edit their presentations in supervision led me to analyse what this means for their experience of supervision. It seemed that participants compared and contrasted what is presented to supervisors versus what is not and these phenomena are explored further.

#### **4.3.1 Subordinate theme one: “Supervisor” implies a kind of hierarchy.**

Many participants talked about the theme of power and hierarchy: inside the therapy room, in the supervision space and the power felt from services and settings to third parties. All of these stakeholders seemed to have an effect on the participants’ experience of integrative practice and bringing integrative practice to supervision. This lead to emergent themes based on these hierarchies and the theme of supervisees often

feeling less empowered. These were then subsumed under P5's phrase "supervisor, implies a kind of hierarchy".

Particularly of note is the sense that each participant feels they can only bring some practice to the supervision room, with some feeling they have to omit or censor their work. In this way, this theme is closely linked to the "censoring" and "am I doing the right thing" themes outlined below. The theme adds to my sense that currently these integrative practitioners feel they must fit themselves into whatever service or supervision setting they find themselves in to the detriment of their integrative identities.

*"And then I was really reluctant with my supervision to be saying well actually I'm doing a load of coaching work today, I don't think I was really doing, you know, the sort of grief counselling work because, even though in my view it was part of the same thing (S;mm), but there's always this thing on the part of the service, to always bring it back to the bereavement, always bring it back to the bereavement, because the service is part of the NHS, it's funded for a certain course of work and people are sent through IAPT through to get bereavement work, but as with anything like this, there's a multiple load of things going on for people." P3, line 212*

In the above extract P3 outlines their "reluctant" feeling at bringing their coaching work to supervision, with their reasoning that coaching could be construed as outside the boundaries of the service. I wonder if it is possible that they see the supervisor as a guardian of the service boundaries and that P3 feels they are not practising within the bounds of the bereavement service. The power here is linked back through P3's background experience of the structures of IAPT and the NHS and there is a sense of the strength of the power structures politically and economically from a hierarchy that cannot be challenged on an individual level. The conflict for the participant seems to be that their reality is that clients' needs are "multiple" and to offer the best practice they feel coaching is key to this. Perhaps there is some guilt at disobeying the power structures around them. P3 also has experience of operating as a coach and coach therapist in other settings, so these power structures in IAPT may feel alien. Elsewhere, in their transcript, there is the notion of being "caught" doing something they should not, which I discuss in more detail in the theme "am I doing the right thing?" below. P4 discusses a different setting, but a similar dynamic in how the power of the service affects supervision in the next extract.

*“Although it’s a coaching company, everyone has this underpinning of some mindfulness background and some psychotherapeutic training erm so our discussions do integrate everything, but we tend not to really think about, too much about the therapy because the woman who directs the company very sort of, for insurance purposes and all that is very cautious about combining therapy with coaching so actually in those supervisions, particularly the group supervision we stay away from talking therapeutically about a client” P4, line 682*

P4’s above account implies that the varied, integrative experience of their supervision group is utilised to an extent, but that therapy is mostly disavowed by the group facilitator and supervisor. Again, there is a sense of powerful vested interests affecting the ability to provide integrative practice. What is unclear is how much integrative work is practiced with clients and whether this is censored out for supervision or if it is curtailed in the therapy room. P4’s background as a trainee counselling psychologist must play a part here and it could be imagined that omitting therapeutic factors like the therapeutic relationship from supervision could be difficult.

*“Erm I think we do feel vulnerable about sharing our practice. I think the very term ‘supervisor’ implies a kind of hierarchy where somebody can come in and tell you, you’re doing the wrong thing and that is implicit in the role” P5, line 735*

P5 picks up on the feeling that the supervisor is the ultimate power structure in the supervisory space, highlighting the descriptive phonology in the word “supervision” and the implied hierarchy inherent in the prefix “super”. The vulnerability in the face of this power seems to feel inevitable for P5 with the use of the word “we” implying that every supervisee experiences this feeling. Elsewhere in P5’s transcript there is sense that these power imbalances can be negated by the supervisor and supervisee making a concerted effort to facilitate the supervisee’s autonomy. It seems that there is a balance to be found for P5 and that others would like to feel less scrutinised or anxious about potential criticism.

*“but sometimes supervisees can abdicate responsibility or feel infantilised by the way supervisors say things and again that’s why I really love the thinking environment way of working, because one of the core conditions is around equality, so I don’t assume that my thinking is better than theirs. I may have more experience and knowledge, but I don’t assume that I know better, but if someone was clearly behaving in a way that’s unethical then obviously I would need to say that.” P5, line 763*

Further on in P5’s interview there is an advocacy for a particular type of supervision, that works to address the child to parent relationship that they see in the

supervision space. They see “equality” as a desired state in the supervision space and their experience of being a supervisor in integrative supervision perhaps creates a view of both sides of the power dynamic and a wish for it to be more balanced. P5’s range of experience as both coach and therapist can be seen in this segment with the advocacy for solutions to dilute power dynamics in supervision.

The imbalances, dynamics and relationships described in the above extracts form a thematic essence of power or “an implied hierarchy” as central to participants’ experience. Participants seem to feel this power not only in the supervisory relationship, but across their relationships in the settings in which they work. This theme links to the wider superordinate theme in that there appears to be an influence over the practitioners’ work, particularly how integrative they feel they are able to be with clients depending on how powerful they feel in their own supervisory relationships. It seems that when integrative practitioners feel directed or stymied by their supervisors, anxiety and anger can arise which is discussed in more depth in the next theme summary below.

**4.3.2 Subordinate theme two: Picking the bones.** All participants talked about how they experienced their supervisor or fellow peer supervisees in the supervision space. Some participants seemed to express recurrent feelings of tension and intense frustration, often directed towards peers and supervisors. This was particularly evident when the phenomena felt like an imposition, either by a supervisor being overly directive, interrupting or even by assuming too much about a client before the participant has had time to present their client or practice. Therefore, themes among participants began to form with names like; ‘interruptions and impositions’ vs ‘space to think’ and ‘reflective space vs interpretations’. These convergences and divergences from the themes of how directive a supervisor or supervision group was eventually formed this subordinate theme through the mechanism of abstraction. The impact of these impositions was often felt in the client work as portrayed by P3’s language below, which subsequently formed the name of the subtheme.

*“I’m like hang on a minute, I felt like I did violence to the clients really (S:mmm), because the supervisor hasn’t even met this client, you’ve only got it third hand really from me and then for to have everyone else sort of picking up, picking the bones out of this poor person. I thought no, no, this doesn’t feel comfortable to me. So, I went through a difficult period of a couple of months or so where I didn’t really feel safe in the supervision here.” P3, line 492*

On a descriptive level the participant talks about wanting to fiercely guard their clients from “picking the bones”, a gruesome use of language which seems to display the violence that they feel implicated in. The felt sense of the participant’s experience here seems to be one of a righteous anger in defending the client’s truth that they are striving to present in the supervision, but also a resentment that they have been implicated in this process of heavy handedness. There is a sense from this participant that supervisors or peer supervision groups can overstep the mark and push assumptions and interventions before the client has been thought about.

P3’s varied experience of a range of supervisions and supervision groups gives them an unspoken ability to compare and contrast the experiences of supervision. It would be interesting to know more about when and in what context they experienced this ‘picking the bones’.

*“Where they work from a specific approach and where they erm . . . There’s a, the supervisor that I work well with erm, including one in the NHS erm work with a range of models and might have sometimes suggestions (upward inflection) erm, but there’s never an imposition of a perspective and erm with supervisors who might be working wholly psychodynamically erm, and who don’t sort of have that break that says well this person works differently it’s a bit frustrating to feel as though you’ve got to fit everything that happens into their model (laughs) . (S: ah ok). Erm and then actually follow their advice. So erm, fortunately for me, by the time I had to work in that way, I’d worked long enough not to be steered off course (upward inflection), I would say (S:yes). So I would understand that’s how they would see it and that’s what they would suggest and some of the suggestions might be apt and part of the perception was apt, but I would just have to suffer the hour (both laughing) and I would go off to do what I do.” P1, 326*

P1 faces a similar frustration, but describes a supervisor working from a singular modality, which is then imposed onto the participant’s supervision, despite the practitioner identifying as integrative. This is experienced as the possibility of “being steered off course”, almost a force as powerful as the weather that has the ability to change a supervisee’s direction in both supervision and perhaps practice. The length of the description of this experience is almost at odds with some of the language and bodily cues (for instance laughing), suggesting that the participant is not wholly comfortable with criticising their supervisors, but does indeed feel frustrated, perhaps more so than can be fully communicated.

*“I might, I might set something else up erm, because I think we all interrupt each other, much more than we realise and so then we get into exchange*

*thinking which is not really the same as thinking well for ourselves.*” P5, line 883

P5 notes a practical step in wanting to “set something else up” as a solution to the interruptions and “exchange thinking” which is at odds with the “time to think” practice that she experiences elsewhere. It is possible to interpret a dichotomy here between expansive, freedom and facilitation to think as opposed to the “exchange” where others’ thought processes are forced, perhaps violently as with P1, onto the practitioner. This feels at odds with P5’s earlier noting that supervision means “the opportunity to stand back”, espousing generative and open dialogue as integral to supervisees finding their own answers in facilitative supervision.

Both P1 and P5’s backgrounds as experienced therapists and psychologists may give some context to their apparent irritation with interruptions and impositions as these phenomena are often discouraged in psychotherapy supervision in order to facilitate thinking and reflection. It would be interesting to know more about when and how these practitioners experience this in the supervisory space.

There is a sense from the accounts that all participants bring diverse and unique training backgrounds and practice to supervision. The integrative nature of their various trainings means that freedom and flexibility to express themselves are valued, but when this freedom is opposed by overly structured directedness or inflexibility, the participants can perhaps feel interrupted and controlled. This seems to lead to anger, frustration and oftentimes a rejection from the supervisees which can be seen in P5’s wanting to take back control and “set something else up”. I discuss this perceived desire to change the status quo in a later subtheme “integrative supervision – it would be bloody marvellous”, under the superordinate theme “a conscious sense of belonging”.

**4.3.3 Subordinate theme three: Fear of “Am I doing the right thing?”** The theme of supervisor’s and peer supervision groups’ scrutiny was frequented by many of the participants in their interviews. Within this topic we also discussed subthemes of feedback, experience and the effect on their practice with clients. A common emotion that was both explicitly and implicitly expressed was the anxiety and acute fear, often created from actual or perceived scrutiny and therefore possible criticism from supervisors. This led to the name of the overarching subtheme: fear of “am I doing the right thing, neatly encapsulated by P5’s words.

*“So, I think that fear of “am I doing the right thing”, or “have, have I wandered into something I shouldn’t or made a mistake?”. It’s very natural for us to be a bit worried about that, but supervision only really works if you really feel like you can be vulnerable with how you really feel and think you know.” P5, line 780*

There is a sense of the anxiety that any supervision can create in P5’s speech: “that fear of am I doing the right thing”, a sense of right and wrong, danger and safety. However, P5 takes this theme further in discussing how this is linked to integrative practice in their discussion of wandering into an area that they “shouldn’t”. This seemed reminiscent of the blurred, arbitrary lines discussed in earlier themes that mean a supervisee may end up in the ‘wrong’ place in practice or how they present in the supervisory space. Perhaps presenting the wrong discipline/model and feeling that they could be criticised for this wandering into another place to the detriment of their client. P5 also explores the idea that supervision cannot truly work without the willingness to be vulnerable, and implies a bravery to face the possible criticism or sense of failure. They are more than likely aware of this as both a supervisee and a supervisor and therefore see this fear being played out when trying to supervise others.

*“you’re like “oh god I’ve been doing this for three years and nobody’s actually seen me coach apart from my clients so I’ve never had any feedback on it, but I think that that has not been as, as . . . I suppose the difficulty with that is, you really don’t know who’s going to rock up and what their training is, you know the feedback can be really really, erm can hit the mark or it can be completely off (S:mm). Whereas, I suppose, when you observe sessions here, or recorded sessions there’s a sense that people are coming from the same erm, playing field, it’s quite a level playing field so the feedback seems quite, much more easier to take on board.” P2, line 609*

P2 also speaks of an anxiety, but in contrast to P5 feels that there is a critical lack of feedback. Perhaps there is an anxiety here that when feedback is finally given, that there will be a shock or surprise criticism from supervisors and that they may have

been failing in some way for a while. I felt a sense of imposter syndrome here, that somehow with no feedback they are less of a practitioner or waiting to be found out. P2's relative inexperience, given they are in a training programme, may shed some light on the fear of the lack of scrutiny seen in this segment. Perhaps many trainees feel like this when practicing and receiving limited supervision, however it would be interesting to know more about how trainee coach-therapists feel when there is a lack of scrutiny.

The sense that even when feedback is given, it can be "hit and miss" also implies more anxiety that the feedback is false or weak in some way and that this adds to the amount of time they have not been truly supervised. There is an implication that when proper feedback is given it may be destructive or shaming in some way. There is also a strong implication of splitting the feedback into coaching versus therapy, with coaching being seen as the "hit and miss" in comparison to the "level playing field" of therapeutic peer supervision.

*"the anxiety in my mind is just like well you're just doing coaching work with them, where's the, where's the counselling work and that's never happened, but there is a fear that it might . . . There is a fear that it might and I don't want to be caught. I don't think it's fair and I don't want to be caught, to be that person that's representing this, bifurcation between these two things."* P3, line 118

P3 goes further in speaking about what seems to be a previously unspoken "anxiety in my mind" about bringing coaching practice that their supervisor may or may not be familiar with. The word "caught" is illuminating as it implies that the role of the supervisor here is a scrutinising detective, policing and analysing the supervisee's practice for work that is 'off model'. I wonder what the feared consequences are for the participant? I am curious as to what it would mean to be caught or have to explore their integrative work more fully in a supervisory space that feels dangerous. I am also aware of P3's extensive background as a coach and that there may be valuable insights from their coaching experience that are not being brought to bear.

In summary, there is a sense of anxiety as to the previously stated power imbalances of supervision, but particularly the power exercised in respect to scrutinising a supervisee's practice and the possible, maybe even imagined, repercussions if the supervisee gets it 'wrong'. It appears that many participants feel that presenting their integrative coach-therapist work in supervision is an anxiety provoking experience. This feeling often seems to result in censoring behaviour, discussed in more detail below.

**4.3.4 Subordinate theme four: The self-censoring editors.** The name of this theme was taken from a participant's account of the experience of shaping their presentations to supervision. It is indicative of a recurrent sense from all participants that not all of their integrative practice is brought to bear in the supervision space. The reasoning and experience of these omissions and the particularities of how this is acted out is explored further below.

*“Do you know what? I think I actually self-censor to a point, thinking ok going through the questions “this is probably a good question for this supervision group . . . And I’m quite good at judging that, this is the type of thing which this supervision group will respond to really, really well. Erm, and, but sometimes you can be surprised, sometimes somebody else can be struggling with something else which is more like a goal setting thing and then I can see someone else talking about something which is very much a coaching orientated perspective and then I self-censor as well and then I don’t step forward and be like “oh when I had this coaching client we did this, that and the other”. I tend to keep that work out of it really (S:mmm). So, I think I am, yes, I’m editing. One always edits what one brings, but I think there, consciously and unconsciously I’m deciding what to bring based on what I think is suitable for that group (S:yes) and within that service” P3, line 972*

P3 notes that they are “self-censoring” with a flavour of surprise and interest in their use of the “do you know what? I think I actually”. They talk about pitching the “good” questions to the supervision group depending on which group it is and the implied notion is that there could be such things as bad questions, an anxiety about bringing material that will not be responded to “really well”. They go on to note their surprise around others’ “coaching orientated” practice which the reader is invited to value as the not “good” material that is ultimately edited. Once again, the power of the service is noted, as though supervision is a conduit to the wants of said service and bringing material that sits outside of the service could be of negative consequence.

*“Yea I censored that quite a lot, because that represented about a third of our work, that I never brought to supervision, because that doesn’t feel like what we should be doing here in the service.” P3, line 1342*

Further on in P3’s interview, the reader is aware of the consequence of the censoring, in that a significant part of the narrative of the therapy is omitted from supervision. The participant notes their reasoning as a felt sense that it isn’t what they “should be doing”, that there is a right and wrong about what should be done in practice and therefore what gets presented in supervision. The ‘service’ is taken to mean the NHS services previously mentioned in P3’s interview and background. It is indicated to

be the ultimate power that has say over what should be done and the practitioner as a maverick that is doing what they feel is best for the client. There is possibly a bit of rebelliousness and perhaps guilt or shame that some practice has to be kept away from the supervisor as if they represent the interests of the service in some way.

*“Yea, so keeping a lid on it like not being able to use therapeutic skills with somebody until they’ve signed the second contract. So you know, having to like bracket the therapeutic training erm and then in supervision to do, sort of have it like, a couple of times I did talk about it and I was sort of told “oh we can talk about that but we’ll have a one-to-one to talk about that”. Kind of thing, yea . . .”*  
P4, line 744

The above extract displays the language of resisting the urge to use “therapeutic skills”. The participant seems to feel frustrated by this ‘bracketing’ and is being forced to do certain things using multiple contracts and talking about particular aspects of client work in supervision. The reasoning for their resistance is apparent in the consequences and rejection described here. I felt a sense of the dismissive supervisor, only interested in work that fits into the service and supervision. The words “I was sort of told” appear to display the authoritarian gatekeeper supervisor who allows coaching, but not therapeutic or integrative practice in the supervision space.

P4’s experience described here fits into the context of them as a counselling psychologist offering a broad integrative practice in settings that do not necessarily encourage this kind of thinking. It seems natural that they are censoring the pluralism of coach-therapy practice in supervision if it’s presentation does not feel welcome.

#### **4.4 Superordinate Theme Three: A Conscious Sense of Belonging**

This superordinate theme was abstracted from several subthemes that shared an essence of building an identity for the coach–therapist practitioner. A need for time and space for practitioners was a common theme, particularly in group/peer supervision, but also because of the ‘weight’ of the work they were bringing to supervision. These resources, ‘time and space’, seemed to mitigate against the heaviness of the work and help them bear the emotional load.

The emotional load mentioned above, is particularly pertinent to the second subordinate theme in this section; ‘carrying the person’. This theme is taken from a participant who sees the containment offered by supervision as critical to both the supervisee and the client. This is explored through what the client needs from the

practitioner and in turn, what the supervisee needs from the supervisor. A further theme that fell under the 'sense of belonging' to a particular identity, was the theme of 'a sense of all the different perspectives'. This subtheme summarized the experience of supervision settings, particularly group/peer versus supervision with an experienced colleague. Some participants described a positive experience of the groups, often set up by a set of peers and others felt that group dynamics could be disruptive of their supervisory experience.

Lastly, it became evident to me that participants were often offering explicit recommendations for practice and implications for what may be useful for supervision structures. Sometimes these recommendations would be offered explicitly or implied through what they felt was improving or limiting their integrative practice as coach-therapists in supervision. The most poignant of these was the explicit statement 'integrative supervision – it would be bloody marvelous' and became the name of the theme, as I felt this echoed several participants' thinking and was central to building an identity or a "conscious sense of belonging".

**4.4.1 Subordinate theme one: Needing time and space.** This theme was grouped under the superordinate theme as it began to appear recurrently for most participants on a descriptive and pragmatic level, at the stage of initial noting in the analysis. As I progressed through the different levels of phenomenological interpretation, I came to see a deeper meaning in the participants' accounts of what time and space meant for them in the supervision.

There was recurrence of the theme of time as an important concept in the supervision space and for the integrative practitioners in general. Participants described a need for set times, boundaries of time, the number and amounts of supervision on offer and why time was so important for them in supervision in relation to their client work. It features as a pragmatic aspect of the supervisory space, but also a pressure and psychological concept, which I discuss in more depth below.

*"I think it's a real, well it's a real mixture of stuff, erm because I think there's a, there is that sort of like I just need to get this out and, and now it's placed I have some relief about it so sometimes I'm almost like I've, I've got to talk and I've got to be, got to be quite near the beginning because I don't really want to get the ten minutes at the end, you know, sort of need to, I need to have my space here" P2, Line 535*

P2 describes a need to talk about and process their client work in a space that is apportioned within the integrative group supervision. Time is mentioned on a descriptive level, in terms of how much and when they are allowed an allotted space to present their work. There is also a sense that there is a primacy to presenting first and that the end of the session is not good enough. In the words “I need to have my space here” there is an essence that space is finite and others are vying for the space, although it is unclear if this is directed at other trainees or supervisors. It appears that time is felt to be precious in this integrative setting and is perhaps a particularly pressured resource in integrative supervision settings or becomes more pressured in group formats. The preciousness of the time is possibly even more acute for P2 due to the individual context of their traineeship and a need for more intensive supervision.

*“You know it’s an online thing, that I could quite easily do and I really only do it, I really only attend if, if it’s convenient for me erm. Whereas you know I travel forty-five minutes each way to see my therapeutic supervisor for my private practice erm, erm and pay (smiling). Erm yea” P4, Line 720*

P4 describes the setting of supervision and uses a comparison between their one-to-one ‘clinical’ supervision and the ‘coaching supervision group’ that they are able to attend. Here again there is a sense of a divergence of supervisory practice along the lines of therapy and coaching as two very different practices and supervision spaces. The coaching supervision seems to be tolerated only if it is “convenient” and fits in with the schedule of the participant; time here is valued, but in terms of the participant’s time in general rather than the supervision time which is dismissed for this particular setting. Whereas, the ‘clinical’ supervision time seems to be far more valuable and time intensive both in the time allocated to physically travel there, the financial costs and the focus allotted to it by the supervisee. This appears to me to be emphasized by the apparent amusement at the awareness of the disparity in time and resources between the two settings by the participant.

*“So I guess, I’ve always been checking myself and making sure I’m not contributing to that dynamic that I want to really give people the space to figure out for themselves (S:mmm). Because this is what we do with a client, so why aren’t we offering the same generosity to each other rather than sort of, trying to sort of, theoretically, sort of butcher each other for an hour and a half which seems to be a complete waste of time to me really.” P3, line 525*

In the above extract, P3 describes not wanting to “contribute” to what they see as taking “space” away from others in group supervision settings. They see this as a “dynamic” that can readily be enacted by not allowing others time or “space to figure

out for themselves”. The parallel they then draw between client practice and the supervision space is a powerful one and the reader/listener is invited to agree with this disparity in “generosity”. Again, the violent language used: to “butcher” the time is seen as a crime against the supervisee and perhaps their client’s needs. Time is again alluded to as being completely wasted if this butchery is allowed to continue in the dynamics. I sense an anger in the language that would suggest the participant experiences this dynamic firsthand and wishes for supervision to be different in the future.

**4.4.2 Subordinate theme two: Carrying the person.** The name for this subtheme was taken from the below extract as it surmises the experience of participants’ need to contain their clients and be contained in their integrative work within the supervision space. In this sense, many participants spoke of the need to process emotive topics in supervision and to feel contained by their supervisory relationship. In this way the theme evokes a sense that supervision can be a place of safety and comfort for participants to offload the emotional weight of their client work. Conversely, if this space does not exist it seems to be problematic for the participants. P2 talks about the strain of client work and supervisions impact on this stress.

*“Well, sometimes it’s just like I’m carrying this person around in my head (S:mm) and I just need to tell you about them, I just need to share, share them. (S:mm) And I, I, there’s always really useful feedback that comes back, but in a way I don’t care, you know, I just need to, need to share it with a group of people that get it (S:mm) and get the weight of what someone has told me and get the impact that it has on me (S:mm) so I think that’s almost erm, if there was like one aspect of supervision that, you know it was like there’s ten different things that go on which one would you know, in a fire, which one would you keep, that’s the one I’d keep I think.” P2, line 452*

P2 invokes the sense of the “weight” of the client work on their psyche with their use of “carrying” and the possible burden. I wonder here if they talk of the emotional burden or the professional responsibility they feel towards their clients? Either way, there is an expectation that it is possible to share the weight of this burden. The last line is indicative of the import that they assign to this sharing “aspect of supervision”. I believe it is possible to see the participant’s need for “a group of people that get it” as meaning fellow integrative practitioners and that this understanding of both the burden and the way in which coach-therapist’s work is more important than any feedback. Perhaps the participant indicates there is a process in the peer supervision group of taking the burden from the individual and integrating the burden amongst the group. Thereby the practitioner is “carrying” the client until this carrying can be

offloaded onto the more powerful, benevolent group. The group's ability to withstand the burden is implied through the number of its constituent parts.

Feeling safe and comfortable in supervision were emergent themes that stood out across participants' accounts. Reasons for this uncomfortable feeling differed, but the below extract from P3 points to the supervisor themselves and their style of directive intervention as conflicting with that of the participants'.

*"I thought no, no, this doesn't feel comfortable to me. So I went through a difficult period of a couple of months or so where I didn't really feel safe in the supervision here. I think it's just something to do with the supervisor I had as well, because it was much more like (clapping hands together) "oh let's problem solve here", "let's, you know" P3, line 500*

Elsewhere in P3's interview they explicitly describe wanting space to think and not be interrupted. They appear to advocate for a particularly open style of facilitative thinking and sharing as opposed to the supervisor problem solving or leading. Again, the body language of clapping explosively seems to fit with the violent language they use elsewhere in the interview. It seems that P3 feels that supervision could be more collaborative and as a result it could be a more comfortable experience for them. They repeat the word "let's" implying the imagined supervisor's voice, a word that indicates a directive command rather than a cooperative discussion.

*"but so it's getting back to the answer to your question I think that, it has to feel safe for me and right now that, that safeness and my authenticity in being able to engage with that does feel like it needs to be a space where I can bring all this work that I'm doing into." P3, line 888*

P3 then goes on to clarify what safety means to them, a supervision experience where "all this work" can be brought. It seems then that for safety and a comfortability to be maintained they must be able to bring their whole selves and not partition or omit any parts of their practice. Perhaps they feel that their identity as an integrative practitioner who utilises both coaching and counselling is under threat in this supervision space. There is a sense that P3 has experienced safer supervision spaces in their previous work and in previous supervisory relationships.

*"Erm, I think it was a sort of temporary moving across on one level in that you know I'd be maybe giving my kids tea and I'd get a call from a supervisee saying that they were working with a suicidal client and it was just very very heavy work so erm, I, it wasn't just a getting away from the heaviness it was*

*also about being drawn to what coaching could bring to people who were in difficult situations.” P5, line 191*

P5 talks about their experience of being in the supervisor role and the impact of the supervisee’s work on their personal life. They seem to use this example as a way of explaining one of the reasons that coaching practice was attractive to them, when they were solely a therapist practitioner and supervisor. However, with the language of; “very, very heavy work” the reader is invited to empathise with the burden of carrying the supervisee and the evocation of the client’s emotional world. The weight of this heaviness seems to double in that there is a transferring of emotion from client to practitioner and then to supervisor. Integrative work and the introduction of coaching could be seen as antidote for the client, but perhaps also for both supervisee and supervisor to shift some of that heaviness.

In summary, this theme of ‘carrying the person’ displays the emotionally heavy work that integrative supervisees experience as their responsibility to hold, but in turn take to supervision as a way of sharing or holding this work. There is also a sense that supervisees feel safer and more contained when they are able to bring their whole selves, identities and every part of their practice to the supervision space, perhaps in their roles as supervisors as well.

**4.4.3 Subordinate theme three: A sense of all the different perspectives.** The “sense of all the different perspectives” title comes from P2 and their experience that highlights the multiple viewpoints on offer in group supervision settings. The setting of the supervisory space was a recurrent theme that seemed to be poignant and moderated participants experience of supervision. Many supervisees described several different settings and often a variety of settings for each participant, whether that be split between coaching and counselling practice and between private or NHS work. It seemed that the comparison between one-to-one supervision and peer or group supervision was particularly important. The extracts explored below portray the variety of experience of these differing settings and both the positive and negative phenomena felt within both settings. P5 delineates group supervision with ‘peer’ supervision and explores the topic of structure below.

*“I think in terms of the peer supervision group sometimes I find that’s really useful. I think we, it might be quite nice if we structured that a bit differently. I really like the Thinking Environment approach to supervision because it has a structure that I think is really useful, that helps the supervisor not to come in too*

*quickly. So the structure of, shall I talk about that structure or is that . . . ?” P5, line 502*

There seems to be a conflicting experience of P5 in the experience of group supervision as “really useful”, but also that it can be “structured a bit differently”. In advocating for a model of supervision that helps the supervisor not come in “too quickly” I wonder if there is significant frustration with interruption and advice giving from the group dynamic.

*“Erm, I think it’s helpful in the sense that we’re all on a journey and being involved in something that’s a bit different. Er and so it’s really good that we have that kind of shared sense of the virtue of working in an integrated way and erm have some shared understanding about that.” P5, line 800*

Further on in the extract above, P5 goes on to explore the upsides to group/peer supervision and sharing in the group’s “journey”, based on their integrative experience. This “shared understanding” seems to be in opposition to the earlier criticisms, but I wonder if both a frustration at the directedness of the group and the appreciation for the shared experience of the group coexist.

*“Erm, and actually there’s something else about erm almost being witness to other people’s journeys as well. So yea, and that’s a really er, beautiful part of it actually, that we’ve all started together erm, and we’ve all started at slightly different levels. You know, so from people who’ve had lots of experience previously in coaching or whatever to people who’ve come in from a different career, so actually to see everybody move up together is really nice and actually there’s something really erm. . . And what I really like about group supervision as opposed to individual supervision is that sense of all the different perspectives and being able to pick up what other people are doing,” P2, line 546*

P2 also highlights being “witness to other people’s journeys” and the ‘felt’ sense is one of a beauty and a joy to experience these phenomena. The range and diversity of experience at the start of the group is outlined as significant in comparison with current times and perhaps there is an awe at the progression of the group. The integrative and pluralistic nature of the group’s beginnings and journey is commented on and perhaps there was an expectation from P2 that there is some surprise that the group’s pluralistic identity has been fostered and has added to their own practice.

*“Erm (long pause), my experience of supervision when I first started coaching was really very positive. Erm and I, what I realise now that I didn’t realise then was that it was very person-centred. So, it was group, we’d meet over Skype, erm and erm, it wasn’t as regular er as er the counselling supervision I’d had,*

*so maybe once a month we would spend a couple of hours and we'd all bid in and er you know with the things we'd talk about and then people would present in turn and the supervisor would always ask about "oh what do you think about this situation, what might you do?", then ask all of the others and we'd have a supportive and held conversation, but only really from advice giving until there was that request, ok we've exhausted all these things so ■■■, my supervisor ■■■, said well what do you think? From your experience what would you do?"*  
P3, Line 444

P3 compares their supervisory experience chronologically, first noting the positives and the particular favouritism of a particular model: person-centred therapy. They note the pragmatic differences, but emphasise the turn-taking and the holding back by the facilitator/supervisor of offering any supervisory intervention too early. P3 seems to very much approve of this approach and goes as far to mimic the supervisor's voice to display the nature of this experience. They name this a "held conversation" and here the reader can view the similarities between the earlier themes in superordinate theme 2 'line of sight' and subordinate theme 'carrying the person', specifically the safety and containment of feeling held in the supervisory space where integrative and pluralistic work is valued. By comparing this earlier supervisory group and stating how positive this experience was, the reader is compelled to see an implication that P3's current or later supervisory experience in other groups has been less positive and not so "held" or integrative. Again, the omission of one-to-one supervision experience here implies that P3 feels more comfortable in a group, particularly an integrative group where many minds can "bid in" as opposed to the singular thinking of one supervisor.

Summarising the participant accounts of group supervision in comparison with one-to-one supervision, supervisees seem to experience each group differently depending on the dynamics and how able they are to bring the material and their unique integrative style to the supervision. Some noted that witnessing the developmental journey of the group and other individual's growth was a positive experience. Additionally, they seemed to think that this type of experience could not be encountered in one-to-one supervision because of the very nature of the setting. The multiple perspectives on offer seem to be an important factor in building practitioner identity as coach-therapists.

**4.4.4 Subordinate theme four: Integrative supervision – it would be utterly bloody marvellous.** In imparting descriptive accounts about the practicalities of their supervision experience, participants talked about recommendations for practice. The most explicit recommendation was made by P3 and creates the title for this subtheme. In many of the previous themes, recommendations could be inferred from the participant’s narrative by the reader. In the extracts below participants went further by explicitly stating exactly what they would like to see in the future both for their integrative practice and specifically in supervision. This was often in response to the question posed at the end of interviews “is there anything more you would like to add?”.

*“Erm, I suppose it still feels a little bit awkward, because even, I think there’s not that many supervisors, there’s supervisors who sort of work integratively”*  
P2, Line 1067

In noting the awkwardness, P2 seems to allude to not feeling comfortable in their current set up. The use of the word “still” perhaps implies that they thought supervision that doesn’t welcome both coaching and therapy practice would become more comfortable over time. They note an important belief, shared across the participants of this research that there is a lack or reduced number of supervisors who are able to offer a supervisory space that welcomes integrative work combining coaching and therapy. P3 fantasises about what it would be like to be in this idealised integrative-friendly supervisory space below.

*“and then that leads me to think that I need to have a supervision arrangement where that isn’t the problem anymore and it would be utterly bloody marvellous, it would be wonderful and that’s never, that’s not happened yet and just the idea that could happen.”* P3, Line 1133

P3’s exclamation that it would be “utterly bloody marvellous” to have an integrative supervision arrangement, shows a depth of feeling, perhaps of perceived joy or euphoria as to what that experience could be like. The lack of that phenomenon in their current practice possibly points to an impoverished experience in which they feel only some of their practice or identity is being attended to.

*“Erm and I think, you know I will take the time now to find a supervisor that, where we can work in this way so that I can learn more about working with this model, the personal consultancy model in practice erm and its supervision as well, because just to be able to bring all of this stuff together I just wonder what that will be like”* P3, Line 1142

P3 takes this idea further in line 1142, recommending to themselves that now is the time to find an individual working with the personal consultancy model. They see this model as the answer to being able to learn more about, work with and be supervised in their integrative practice as a coach-therapist. P5 takes the recommendation for integrative supervisors further below, with ideas about these types of supervisors coming together to discuss their practice.

*“Yea, erm (exhales) I think, I think that it would be really useful for supervisors who see themselves as supervising integrated practice to come together and talk about what that’s like and to talk about how they do it and why they do it and what the difficulties are for them, because it almost feels as though there’s less of a conscious sense of belonging to something that does that. I mean, I could be wrong, there might be people out there quite happily doing that, but I think, I think it would be an interesting thing. Erm, something like this, you know research like, I think can really be a great starting point for more discussion and debate which I think is really useful.” P5, Line 1408*

Within the explicit recommendations for practitioner supervisors “to come together” and discuss practice, issues and dilemmas there appears to be an implication that this is not being experienced currently. P5 notes that the “how”, “why” and the difficulties could start discussion and possibly research into this area. Importantly as P5 identifies as both a supervisee and a supervisor it appears that this recommendation comes from their experience supervising others and what they would like to see for the future in both roles. Importantly, all participants point to their own backgrounds and experience, noting that they have either not experienced specific coach-therapy supervision or, if they have, they feel it is not an organised and coherent activity.

In analysing some of the specific recommendations posited by the participants in this research, there seems to be similarity across participants who want better access to supervisors who supervise in an integrative manner, accepting both coaching and therapy within one space. Some suggest an inclination towards specific models like Personal Consultancy, whilst others advocate for different settings and functions for supervision. In these suggestions, the reader is invited to imply that there is a lack of integrative supervision and the field could go further in this regard. A deeper underlying theme here is that of identity and building a group and individual identity as coach-therapist practitioners.

#### **4.5 Chapter Summary**

The aim of this analysis chapter has been to explore the supervisory experience of integrative coach-therapist practitioners. I have drawn individual extracts from the data that I feel are representative of pertinent themes in both individual transcripts and across the participants. These extracts have been presented as my own sense-making of the participants' meaning. I drew overarching motifs from the text in the form of three superordinate themes that I felt were most indicative of the data as a whole. These sweeping themes bring a collection of subordinate themes that follow the essence of the different dynamics, concepts and practicalities inherent in the supervisory experience.

These major themes are separate from each other as they draw upon differing aspects of the participants, but they also, perhaps dialectically, influence and overlap with one another. The first two major superordinate themes: 'bifurcation and arbitrary lines' and 'detective work' summarise the current experience of integrative coach-therapist practitioners and seem to be formed of challenges and dilemmas that they face in their day-to-day supervision. The third superordinate theme 'a conscious sense of belonging' seems to be more hopeful and future focused, centring on what the participants currently experience positively and what they would like to experience in the future. An exploration of how this analysis is set within the current context of the research literature is outlined in the following discussion chapter.

## **Discussion**

### **5.1 Chapter Overview**

In this chapter I summarise my general conclusions from the research and discuss how these conclusions were drawn from my overarching, superordinate themes. These findings are placed in the context of my research aims and questions, as well as the extant literature. I discuss reflexivity and critique the methodology used and its limitations. Additionally, I evaluate the implications for the coach-therapist community and for counselling psychology. Finally, I offer some recommendations for theory, research and practice and present a summary of the research.

### **5.2 Summary of the Research**

My analysis of the participant's accounts highlighted the difficulties in the supervisory experience currently available to coach-therapists. This experience seemed to be present across all superordinate themes and all of their nested subthemes. I felt this difficulty was most apparent in the superordinate theme; "bifurcation and arbitrary lines". This super theme reflected the complex nature of bringing integrative work that bridged coaching practice and therapy to supervision.

In parallel with the confusion and difficulty encapsulated by the first superordinate theme, there seemed to be a sense of anxiety, particularly a concern about scrutiny from supervision which made up the second superordinate theme 'detective work'. This covered subthemes that covered experience of: anxiety of supervisor scrutiny, fear of failure, protecting clients from reduction and self-censorship in the face of evaluation.

From the difficulties and anxiety of practising integrative work and bringing this work partially or in its entirety, another major theme arose. This theme was altogether more hopeful, more optimistic. It transpired that many of the participants desired a collective 'conscious sense of belonging' that could unite their thoughts, their peers and perhaps integrative coach-therapy around an identity which reflected the work they were practising. I discuss my three superordinate themes in the context of the current literature below.

### **5.3 Discussion of themes in relation to existing literature**

**5.3.1 Superordinate theme one: Bifurcation and arbitrary lines.** This superordinate theme encapsulated an overarching sense that participants felt a pressure to fit their practice into “arbitrary lines” based on notions of what they felt they must bring to supervision and how they felt they should be practising based on others’ perspectives. These difficulties can be thought of in two ways; the issue of how to integrate and the decisions and choices of what supervisees bring to supervision. The first issue is present in many of the themes across this study and in both of the other two superordinate themes, it is the central issue on which coach-therapy is predicated on. The second issue also makes an appearance in other subthemes like “self-censoring editors”, but is also prevalent throughout.

The first difficulty: how they should be integrating, relates to much of the literature on integration of therapeutic models and is precisely why theorists have begun to create models like Personal Consultancy to help structure this kind of integration (Popovic & Jinks, 2017). The subtheme “the big split”, seemed to reflect one participant’s feeling that to split their supervision into separate practices of coaching and therapy would be “hypocritical” as this is not how their practice looks in session with their clients. This is reminiscent of Maxwell’s (2009) ‘boundary issues’ and Jopling’s (2007) study that explored the indistinguishable ‘fuzzy space’ between coaching and counselling. If these practitioners are integrating coaching and counselling together then, they will most certainly be operating in a ‘fuzzy space’ of overlap. This is congruent with Jopling’s findings, that this fuzzy space will be idiosyncratic to each individual client. There is also a sense that they receive a lacklustre response from supervisors or supervision groups if they bring cases in which they have worked in an integrative manner. This reaction seems to be present whether the supervision is ‘coaching’ or ‘therapeutically’ orientated.

The second subtheme is about the boundaries of practice and it seemed this related less to the structural, administrative splits in supervision discussed above and more to boundaries in participants’ minds between: themselves and their supervisors; themselves and their clients; the practices of coaching and therapy. Supervision was experienced as a helpful practice to negotiate these boundaries, but could also be a hindrance depending on the individual participants’ perspective. This is mirrored in the literature, particularly in studies like Cavanagh and Buckley (2014), who found that

coaches often had fixed beliefs about who coaching was for: namely non-clinical populations. This kind of fixed thinking would naturally be difficult to negotiate for practitioners like coach-therapists and counselling psychologists who thrive across a variety of settings and use a variety of models. In this study, some participants seemed to hope that supervision could help them navigate boundary issues, particularly if they were unsure how to integrate with a client. Others found that in supervision they may be exposed to fixed beliefs, much like the ones found in Cavanagh and Buckley's (2014) research. Some participants seemed concerned that supervision was focused on boundaries precisely because supervisors feel 'quality assurance' is a higher priority than 'personal development' or containment, which is consistent with research into supervision in general (Beddoe and Davys, 2016).

The boundary issues and how to navigate them in the coaching/therapy room is often placed in the context of 'contracting' and this has been a central theme in supervision research (Crocket et al., 2009). The subtheme "contracts – the red tape" applies to the sense that some of the participants had, of a bureaucratic restraint of process of contracting. Some seemed to feel that contracts were the gateway to doing the work that they preferred or work that would be more beneficial to the client. For most this seemed to mean working in an integrative way, but for P4 it appeared to mean switching from coaching to therapy, a personal preference of practice. The literature has found that supervisees benefit from clear contracts in their client work, but also for their supervision, especially in multidisciplinary supervision (Davys and Beddoe, 2010).

The participants' experience of negotiating the complex nature of integrating therapy and coaching was at the forefront of this superordinate theme and its subthemes. Their experience is reflected by previous literature, especially the sense of difficulty of bringing integrative practice to particular supervisory structures. The nature of boundaries and contracts was explicitly talked about by many of the participants and these issues often accentuated the main theme, that the participants distrusted using "arbitrary lines" and bifurcating their practice, when this seemed illogical or at odds with their work or client presentations. Again, this mirrored previous findings (Baker, 2013). It seems that when they were invited to think about these boundary issues in the supervisory space they found this helpful and it may be that counselling psychology, with its emphasis on reflective practice and pluralism, could add more to the literature in this space.

**5.3.2 Superordinate theme two: Detective work.** ‘Detective work’ was a participant phrase that seemed to describe the concern and anxiety that supervisees felt when bringing their integrative work to supervision. Particularly a concern was that their supervisor or supervisory group would turn into a “detective” and scrutinise and reconnoitre their work for any signs of wrong doing or bad practice. Another concern that seemed to be summed up by the superordinate theme was a concern that the supervision would turn into trying to get to some objective truth about the client, rather than treating the client’s material in a humanistic and respectful way. This felt especially pertinent for the coach-therapists’ participants who seemed to often feel nervous or uncomfortable bringing integrative practice to a supervision that may not welcome integrative practice.

Within the overarching theme of “detective work”, the nature of power in the supervisory relationship and participant’s experience of this was represented by the subtheme “a kind of hierarchy”. The literature confirms that the participants in this study are not alone with the sense that there are implicit power dynamics in supervision and sometimes the power imbalance is skewed towards the supervisor (Grant & Townend, 2007) or even the organisation (Holloway, 2014), and can be uncomfortable for the supervisee (Copeland, Dean and Wladowski, 2011). Specifically, participants talked of power imbalances borne from monetary issues for instance, medical insurance companies and what practice they accept and expect their clients to receive. Others talked about a strived for ‘equality’ in the supervisory space. These power imbalances and the aim for balance are not new to the research community and the participants’ experiences mirror Copeland, Dean and Wladowski’s (2011, p.27) warning that supervision can be an “ethical hornet’s nest”. However, they also make the point that “power is inevitably present and takes many forms even in supervisory relations that are primarily collaborative” (p.37). The literature goes further in its scope, for instance Hays and Chang (2003) note that only frank and honest discussion in supervision about these kinds of power issues can create ongoing awareness of them, especially particularly prevalent, but often unexplored power issues like discrimination, racial biases and privilege. These power and hierarchy issues are numerous and complex in extant supervisory practices (Beddoe & Davys, 2016), but it would seem reasonable to hypothesise that the added complexity of dual practice supervision like coach-therapy could add extra layers of power dynamics.

The evocative subtheme of ‘picking the bones’ arose from one participant’s sense of unease about overzealous supervisors either interrupting or being too directive or interrogative of client’s narratives. This is an interesting observation and seems to imply a number of points. Firstly, that the participant’s perspective is that the client is primarily to be respected and that they are the expert of their own experience. Secondly that the supervisee is in a better position to describe the client’s narrative, although imperfectly, rather than the supervisor who is hearing of them second-hand. Thirdly that supervisors should check whether they are imposing themselves too vigorously into the client’s narrative, becoming “the detective”. It seems that the very nature of holding a pluralist perspective, means engaging with supervisors that bring different opinions and supervisory practice, some of which may be at odds with a tentative, person-centred view. It seems that this could be especially difficult when faced with the ‘medical-model, supervisor as expert’ perspective. It may be that managing these multiple, perhaps dialectical, perspectives, is an area in which counselling psychology, with its focus on pluralism, can offer useful discussion. It is also worth noting that there is confusion across the helping professions as to whether supervisors hold responsibility for client work and if so, what their responsibilities are, which can add to a tendency for ‘quality assurance’ (Crocket et al., 2004).

The ‘fear of doing the right thing’ is essentially a theme that brings together the supervisees’ sense of anxiety about their work and particular fears about this work being scrutinised in supervision. The notion that it is expected that junior practitioners are likely to experience anxiety in supervision has been present and addressed in the literature for some time (Dodge 1982), especially with trainee psychologists and supervisees (Pakenham & Stafford-Brown, 2012), which is a common experience. Theories have been hypothesised about why this may be true for less experienced supervisees: perhaps due to trainee anxiety or perhaps a poor supervisory alliance (Gray, Ladany, Walker & Ancis, 2001); or it could be due to the stress level and likelihood of burnout in the professions, which adds to this phenomenon (Kaeding et al., 2017). The idea of anxiety in response to scrutiny seems reasonable as supervisees are rightly concerned about evaluation and assessment of their skills in an increasingly outcome-led world (Baines, Charlesworth, Turner & O’Neill, 2014). This is congruent with the idea of supervision flipping between the polarities of ‘surveillance versus support’. This is a polarity that has also been mentioned in the literature in the form of

supervision as a ‘quality assurance activity’ (Beddoe and Davys, 2016). This theme seems to be generalizable in all supervision experience literature, integrative or otherwise.

The anxiety and fear of ‘am I doing the right thing’ or perhaps the unspoken, ‘what will happen if I do the wrong thing’ theme discussed above, seems to be linked to the final subtheme: ‘the self-censoring editors’ within the superordinate grouping of ‘detective work’. The supervisees’ concerns about their practice and presenting practice to supervisors are perhaps attenuated by self-censorship in the supervisory space. In terms of coach-therapy practice this is particularly pertinent, as some participants have spoken freely about bringing coaching and/or therapeutic work to a supervision where they have felt one practice is ‘othered’. The notion that in supervision a supervisee has full autonomy over what they are bringing to supervision has been discussed by Mehr, Ladany & Caskie’s (2010) study of trainee counsellors which is aptly named “Trainee nondisclosure in supervision: What are they not telling you?”. This study points to trainee supervisee’s anxiety about their performance as the major reason behind avoidance and ‘non-disclosure’. In this study, it appears that the participants ‘censored’ themselves on the basis of a concern that an element of their integrative practice either coaching or therapy, would be dismissed or unwelcome. This theme may be a direct result of the anxiety of the aforementioned theme ‘am I doing it right?’ or perhaps is a rebellion against supervisors who are perceived as not acceptant of coach-therapy practice. Beddoe and Davys (2016), offer some thoughts on how mixed supervision can be managed under the term ‘interprofessional supervision’ and posit the idea that practitioners should be competent and confident in their practice before integrating and taking practice to supervision.

**5.3.3 Superordinate theme three: A conscious sense of belonging.** In the theme “need for time and space”, participants’ experience is grouped under a desire to be given the ‘generosity’ of their own allocated space in one-to-one supervision, but especially group supervision settings. The importance of this time and space in participant’s accounts is mirrored in the literature. Mcpherson, Frederico and Mcnamar (2015) talk of supervisees of all experience levels requiring a safe, reflective space in which to take topics and material about which they may feel very unsure before they have been able to talk it through. Research has also found that poor time management is particularly disadvantageous for supervisees in group settings as it hinders learning (Enyedy et al., 2003). Bernard and Goodyear (2014) confirmed that group supervision practices were more likely to experience issues with time and supervisees gaining enough space for their voice to be heard. In relation to coach-therapist practice, this feels particularly pertinent as discussing boundaries (as discussed under the first superordinate theme) is a particularly complex topic and may need more time devoted to this aspect of practice.

By gaining an acceptable amount of time and space in supervision, participants talked of feeling safe. In the psychological literature this is commonly known as ‘containment’. This concept is apt as participants talked of needing safety in the second subtheme “carrying the person”, especially when client material felt difficult to bear. Carroll (2014) quotes a participant in their study: “a container where I feel safe and held” (p.15). In this way supervision can be viewed as diffusing anxiety and distress held by the supervisee (Hughes & Pengelly (1997) and helping to build resilience (Grant & Kinman, 2014). For integrative coach-therapists in supervision who it seems do not always ‘feel safe’ to bring their integrative practice to supervision, this topic may be especially poignant.

The subtheme ‘a sense of all the different perspectives’ effectively clustered together participants’ experiences of group and peer supervision. Some participants found that they were on a shared ‘journey’ with their colleagues and found this to be a positive experience. Bernard and Goodyear (2014) concur that many practitioners find the shared experience an opportunity for vicarious learning, exposure to different presentations, a setting in which to gain reassurance and to bolster individual identity. However, others found that competitiveness, strong characters dominating the space and lack of structure were major issues for group supervision structures (Carroll & Gilbert,

2011). Proctor (2008) offers solution to these challenges in the form of the individuals taking shared responsibility for the structure and contracting. De Haan (2011), goes further and states that in order for group supervision to be beneficial, individual practitioners should alternate between individual and group throughout practice and career.

I have noted previously, the superordinate theme ‘a conscious sense of belonging’ encapsulates the notion of a group sense of belonging to an identity of being a coach-therapist. Nowhere is this theme more relevant than in the last subtheme “integrative supervision – it would be bloody marvellous”. In this subtheme, there is a sense of wonder and excitement from participants as to what an acceptant supervision, (where they are actively encouraged to bring coach-therapy practice), would be like. Previous research has found that supervisees’ sense of individual identity is bolstered if they feel supervision offers hope and optimism for the future (Collins, 2007; 2015). The literature is extant on how bringing two different disciplines together under one supervision could work. Beddoe and Davys (2016), talk extensively about how ‘interprofessional supervision’ could be set up, managed and maintained between professions or different areas of practice. Townend (2005) found that supervisees enrolled in multidisciplinary supervision of this kind experienced it a creative, flexible space that enabled them to think more critically and a deeper level with their client work. The literature seems to agree with the participants’ hypothesis that multi-disciplinary supervision for integrative practitioners really would be “marvellous”.

**5.3.4 Summary of Superordinate Themes.** This study is original in its focus on the supervisory experience of integrative coach-therapists, but converges with extant literature on supervisees’ experience in general. Comparing participants’ accounts and their meaning-making with other literature has helped to illuminate pertinent topic areas for future research (which are discussed in ‘implications for future research’ below). Participants’ appeared to experience positive and negative perceptions of the supervisory relationship, with: challenges, tensions and paradoxes arising in participants’ meaning-making. This finding is congruent with other studies into the experience of supervision.

The three superordinate themes resemble some of the findings of previous qualitative research. The first superordinate theme, ‘bifurcation and arbitrary lines’

encapsulates the complexity of integrative practice and what it means to experience supervision as an integrative coach-therapist. Subordinate themes like boundary issues mirror the findings of the qualitative literature into the experience of supervision, particularly that boundaries are often difficult to define in supervision and that contracting remains an important vehicle for both client work and in the supervisory relationship. This superordinate theme also diverges from the literature as it names specific challenges for practitioners who feel their experience has been challenging precisely because their supervisor does not share a similar perspective on integration.

Notably the superordinate theme ‘detective work’ details some of the challenges that supervisees face, particularly: power dynamics, supervision experienced as quality assurance, trainee anxiety and subsequently trainee non-disclosure. These challenges were noted in the literature review and seem to continue to be prevalent in the experience of supervision for integrative coach-therapists. The third superordinate theme is both distinct and novel, in that it groups together what participants would like to see in their experience for the future. It centres on their needs of: time, space and safety as well as what it would mean to have these concepts in their supervision. The overarching essence of the theme seems to be that participants would like to generate a shared identity as integrative coach-therapists within the supervisory space.

The issues of integrating two distinct but overlapping disciplines in client work and then bringing that experience to a variety of supervision relationships/settings is a complex topic. It must be acknowledged that IPA has its limitations and I offer a critique of the methodology and quality issues in the next section.

#### **5.4 Critique of and limitations of the study**

As discussed in my methodology chapter, IPA was chosen as the preferred method to explore the topic of: “how do coach-therapist practitioners experience supervision”. Below I critique this choice of method and specific issues including the role of language, quality and use of self. Additionally, I discuss limitations of the study as a whole. This then leads on to implications for practice and future directions for research.

**5.4.1 Role of language.** IPA depends on language and IPA researchers use this methodology as a conduit to access participants' experience. It is possible to critique IPA for not fully acknowledging the role of language in participants' experience and how meaning-making is mediated by language. Some theorists hold the view that IPA naively assumes that language provides direct access to experience. Critiques of IPA argue that it cannot represent how someone thinks and feels to any degree of accuracy, as language is an imperfect vehicle for individual meaning (Willig, 2013). Smith and Larkin (2009), would argue in defence of IPA, that all experience is co-constructed in language and that IPA cannot mediate for the complex relationship between language and meaning. For example, in this study I strived to access some meaning from participants' accounts, but acknowledge that this unlikely to be objective and objectivity was not an aim.

**5.4.2 Quality issues.** When assessing the quality of this study in the template of Yardley's (2000) guidelines for qualitative research, it is important to evaluate its rigour. I endeavoured to do this through adherence to the research questions and the philosophy of IPA, however it was difficult to know exactly how much scope there was to follow my own thoughts and meaning-making. It is possible that a first-time user of IPA methodology like myself is less used to the interpretative element of the analysis and Flowers and Larkin 2009 have noted that more experienced IPA users are more comfortable with deeper levels of interpretation and therefore possibly more rigorous. However, I feel my training as a reflexive-practitioner and counselling psychology trainee meant that I had some inherent understanding of the levels of interpretation that would be required.

The impact and importance of the study is discussed in greater detail below, particularly in the implications for practice sections. However, a possible criticism of this study is that the topic focuses on supervisee practice of integrative coach-therapists. To make the study more impactful one could make the sample even more homogeneous and focus only on counselling psychologists who practice integrative coach-therapy. However, recruitment may have been more difficult and a smaller population would connect with the research.

**5.4.3 Use of the self.** I am a “cultural insider” (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p .195), because I am an integrative therapist, an integrative coach-therapist and a counselling psychology trainee. Therefore, I come with my own assumptions and positive bias towards pluralistic philosophy and integrative practice. This experience will have had a different impact on the interviews and analysis than if someone from “outside” of this culture had conducted the research.

**5.4.4 Topic and title change.** My initial introduction to the integration of coaching and therapy was through reading Popovic and Jinks’ (2017), Personal Consultancy model theory. I had previously intended that the research enquire into personal consultants’ experience of supervision. This focus changed for two reasons: lack of available personal consultants at recruitment stage and the probability that I would miss potential integrative coach-therapist participants that were not aware of the personal consultancy model, which seemed unnecessarily exclusive for a fledgling practice such as coach-therapy. However, the research started with personal consultancy in the title and participants responded to this title. I decided to use Personal Consultancy’s definition for what coach-therapy involved as it was broad enough to include any practitioner operating using coaching and therapy and fitted well with my inclusion criteria. However, this changing of title and shifting of focus may have affected the participant’s narratives and interviews.

A possible impact of this change is that some participants who were aware of the personal consultancy model may have focused on their experience of bringing this model to supervision more than their overall experience of supervision. This may mean that some participants were viewing the research and potentially their experience from a different lens from other participants. Another implication is that the participants’ experiences analysed here will include participants’ that use a particular model to integrate and others that do not. Ultimately, this research primarily focuses on individual meaning rather than producing generalizable data from a homogeneous sample like many quantitative studies, however it is interesting to note that even within this small sample pool of integrative coach-therapist practitioners, there will be a wide variety of experience of practice and supervision and the topic change will have only enhanced this variance.

## **5.5 Reflexivity on the Research Process**

As mentioned above in ‘use of self’, I found that my own integrative training as a counselling psychologist and identity as a ‘cultural insider’ meant that I found it difficult to attempt to ‘bracket’ myself. I was aware that I would be using my own sense of meaning-making to co-construct participants’ meaning (Smith 2009). Ultimately, the study was into participant’s experience and not my own, but maintaining a balance between noticing my own meaning and the participants’ meaning was an ongoing challenge.

A specific example of this was a desire to offer a thought when a participant was struggling to find the word they wanted to convey in a particular interview. I remember the urge to suggest this, but held back in the interview. The frustrations of the participant and myself could be viewed as a parallel of the subtheme “hierarchy” as the issue of power dynamics and the constraints they feel in practice and in supervision was the topic of discussion. This was an illuminating instance of the co-construction of meaning, unique to IPA (Smith and Larkin, 200).

I found that the participants’ experience as supervisees, both overlapped and diverged from my own experience. It was fascinating to observe their meaning-making firsthand and highlighted the balance between each participant’s unique individuality and the similarities of their homogeneity as a group. I was surprised by the difference in ideas about what supervision meant to each person and how this emerged in various ways in the interviews, yet I was equally interested in the similarities of experience brought to life through IPA’s clustering of themes and layering of analysis.

Having concluded the process, I am now reflecting more on my own fledgling practice as an integrative practitioner psychologist and my experience of bringing integrative work to supervision. I am noticing what helps and hinders me in supervision, what I would like and the different functions of supervision. I am more aware of the inherent differences between my one-to-one supervision and peer supervisory practice and am looking forward to the next step, becoming a supervisor myself.

## **5.6 Implications for Practice in Counselling Psychology**

Counselling psychology can learn from the findings of this study, namely the experiential meaning the participants took from supervisory practice. The superordinate

themes are clear that supervision is a multifaceted relational experience and the complexity of this relational endeavour cannot be underestimated. Equally, integrating itself is a complex task and often supervision seems to be most valued when it helps to facilitate integrative practice. Counselling supervision can use its scientist and reflective practitioner stances to help with the three functions that Beddoe & Davys (2016, p.25) point to: “personal survival mode”, “quality assurance” and “personnel development”.

Particularly of note are the relational aspects of supervision. For example: power dynamics will be inherent and unavoidable and are even more likely in cross discipline supervision. Counselling psychology could use reflective practice to mediate this dynamic. A potential recommendation would be to utilise broad values-based approaches to power imbalances to offset adverse outcomes, for instance like the model posited by one participant: ‘the thinking environment’ (Kline, 1999). Using models like this may help address the ‘inherently hierarchical’ supervisory relationship in many one-to-one supervision settings. This could enhance supervision as a collaborative platform and perhaps serve to provide a more collegiate environment similar to the positive aspects of group supervision noted in this study.

Through the participants’ accounts and the analysis, the findings of this research offer a glimpse into coach-therapist supervision from the supervisee perspective. In this way, the research provides an experiential perspective on integration and how diverse disciplines are currently being practiced together. Through the lens of supervision (itself a complex, relational activity) this new kind of integration has been explored. Counselling psychology with its emphasis on pluralism and integrative practice could continue to research and expand on the literature in this contemporary field.

### **5.7 Implications for Future Research**

When evaluating the analysis and research findings alongside the extant literature, it becomes clear that certain topics could be researched further. One of the implications for counselling psychologists who are practising as coach-therapists is that supervision remains under-researched and finding supervision may well be a struggle given the contemporary nature of the field. Further thinking for all individual practitioners and for the discipline is necessary to address this practical issue.

The direction for research in this area could now progress into numerous exciting avenues. From a qualitative and phenomenological perspective, specific studies into supervisor experience of coach-therapy could be a next step after this study. As particular models of coach-therapy and other models linking disciplines grow, more studies on experience of practitioners and clients could be interesting investigations. For example, further studies into models like Personal Consultancy (Popovic and Jinks, 2017), would be beneficial, as these theories add frameworks for practitioners to utilise. Research into these models may also help to create a collegiate identity and a 'conscious sense of belonging' which was a superordinate theme in this study.

Equally researchers may aim to find out more about the extant practice and prevalence of integrative coach-therapists, for example how many identify in this manner. Another avenue for research could be a cross-cultural exploration of supervisory experience and supervisory experience of integrative coach-therapist practitioners as this study only focused on the experience of integrative coach-therapist practitioners in a small cultural arena of South-East England. International studies could widen the scope of the impact of future research.

The supervisory relationship has been prevalent as a motif and a pressing issue for supervisees throughout the literature review, analysis and this discussion. Within the relationship, certain topics such as: power dynamics, supervisee anxiety, how integration is brought to supervision and identity, could be researched further.

As noted by Harris and Brockbank (2011), there are many different definitions and areas of focus for the topic of supervision and particularly the experience of supervision across disciplines. For example, studies could focus on the supervisee experience of different settings or the different stages of development of supervisees who are integrative coach-therapists. Another valuable area for enquiry would be the group/peer supervision experience, in comparison with one-to-one supervision experience, for integrative practitioners who integrate across disciplines.

The role of language has been discussed in this research, as have the criticisms of IPA in acknowledging and mediating for language in data collection and analysis. Another avenue for research could be to use different methodologies to unpack the role

of language or acknowledge the co-creation of meaning through language in a more explicit manner, for example a discourse analysis (Willig, 2013).

Additionally, when considering further implications for future research, it is worth noting the current socio-political climate and possible future climate in which research will exist. The current climate within counselling psychology has been discussed in the recent ten-year reviews of the Division of Counselling Psychology. Nicholas (2019) predicts a softening of boundaries between disciplines, with counselling psychologists becoming more integrated with other divisions within psychology and other professions beyond. Nicholas (2019) predicts that this will help practitioners serve our clients more holistically, rather than create divides and inter-professional conflicts. By accepting and encouraging this overlap, more clients can be helped and a greater proportion of the public will benefit from support.

Another consideration in the context of the socio-political climate is another of counselling psychology's key principles, the valuing of difference and diversity. This is important for this study and for further research as these values can be upheld both through further study of ethical supervision which acknowledges difference, but also by continuing to investigate and engage with different helping practices like coach-therapy. It has been noted previously that studies have found integrating coaching and therapy has been able to help underrepresented groups (Mumby 2011; Collins 2013) and further study into how this kind of integration can help different populations access help is encouraged.

## **5.8 Summary of the Study**

This study endeavoured to research the experience of supervision in the context of the contemporary integrative practice of coach-therapy. The study utilised the IPA method which supported an exploration of idiographic meaning. The findings suggest that, for the five practitioners who were interviewed, the experience of supervision was challenging and that 'bifurcation and arbitrary lines' were often adhered to which could cause frustration and difficulties in the supervisory relationship. These difficulties were highlighted by another finding that many participants experienced power dynamics and anxiety, rather than the containment and support they wished for. A further finding suggests that integrative coach-therapists may benefit from feeling that their practice is

acknowledged and encouraged, which may help to foster a stronger professional identity.

In conclusion, the findings are reminiscent of much of the previous work into supervisory experience, particularly of the difficulties and complexities that practitioners encounter when negotiating the supervisory relationship. However, this analysis highlights a novel finding that integrative coach-therapist practitioners experience a need for professional identity; a need that supervision can either help or hinder. These findings offer insights for future research and implications for practice, particularly for the study of the experience of supervision and for contemporary integrative work such as coach-therapy. Counselling psychology is a discipline that is ideally situated to explore pluralistic practice like coach-therapy and complex, relational/experiential topics like supervision.

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## Appendix A: Provisional Interview Schedule



### Interview Schedule

#### Introduction

- Participant will be welcomed and thanked for participating in the research.
- The research will be introduced along with the aims of the study.
- The format of the interview will be explained, e.g. semi-structured interviews that will be recorded using a tape recorder. The confidentiality of data collection will be explained as per the participation letter (see other attachments).
- Verbal and written consent (see other attachments) will be gained.
- The nature of the subjective importance of the interview will be emphasized; for example, there are no right or wrong answers.
- The researcher will outline that the interview will be between fifty and sixty minutes.
- The interviewee will be reminded of their own ethical obligations particularly with regard to confidentiality of their clients and their supervisor/supervisees.

#### Background Information

Before we discuss your experience of supervision as a personal consultant, it would be helpful if you could tell me a little about yourself such as your age, gender and ethnicity? When and how many times do you engage in supervision? Do you engage in peer or one to one supervision?

#### Provisional Interview Questions

1. Can you describe your journey to integrative practice?

Prompt: what drew you to integrative practice?

2. What theoretical model(s) do you adhere to?

3. What does supervision mean to you?

2. Could you describe your experience of supervision?

Prompts: supervisory relationship? What happens in supervision? How is it structured?

3. What is most helpful in supervision?

Prompts: Unhelpful? Dilemmas? Tensions?

4. Can you give me an example of a case that you've brought to supervision that you feel is representative of integrative practice?

Prompts: Deepened understanding? Found challenging? Weren't certain that integration wasn't helpful? What's been satisfying or the best experience of integrative supervision?

5. What arises for you in supervision when thinking about theory?

Prompts: What questions around theory have you discussed in supervision? Any concerns?

6. What would help improve your supervisory experience?

7. What do you think may be helpful for other integrative practitioners to consider?

Prompt: For instance, trainees/ supervisors/ trainers?

8. Is there anything else that you would like to share that I haven't asked you about?

#### General Prompts

Can you, tell me a bit more about that, please?

What was that like for you?

How did you feel about that?

Could you give me an example of that, please?

#### Verbal debrief

Thank you for your time. How did you find the interview? Are there any questions you would like to ask me?

The participant will then be given contact details if they have further queries about the research. At this point, contact details and some information about support agencies will be provided should participants need further support.

## Appendix B: Information Email

Hello,

My name is Sam Christmas and I am a counselling psychologist in training, currently in my third year of the Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology at the University of East London. As part of my doctoral training, I am currently conducting research on the supervisory experience of integrative practitioners.

This research will aim to gain an understanding of how supervision is currently experienced by practitioners who integrate counselling and coaching, using the personal consultancy model. This is an area of practice that is currently under researched due to its contemporary nature. This study aims to focus on the qualitative experience of individuals and their current observations of supervision within integrative practice.

You will be invited to participate in this study as a practising integrative professional. Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in an interview, lasting approximately fifty minutes to an hour, about your current supervision arrangements and your subjective experience of this arrangement. You will need to be in a supervision at least once a month, with either peers or a dedicated supervisor. You will have at least a year's experience practising as an integrative practitioner, have completed or be enrolled on an integrative training course.

You remain free to ignore this email, and you will not be contacted again. Should you initially decide to participate but then change your mind you would be entitled to withdraw within three weeks without giving a reason and without any disadvantage to you. The study can be carried out at a location agreed together, with effort made to make sure the location offers security, privacy and comfort for both participant and researcher. Skype interviews can be offered if face to face meeting is problematic, but will preferably be conducted in person.

Thank you for taking time to read this email, if you would like to receive further information regarding this study, I would be very happy to email an information sheet with details of what will be involved, what will happen to the information gathered, how to contact my supervisor and how to request information after the study is completed.

I can be contacted on the following email address. [u1517833@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1517833@uel.ac.uk)

Yours sincerely,

Sam Christmas  
Postgraduate Researcher  
School of Psychology  
University of East London  
Stratford Campus  
Water Lane  
London  
E15 4LZ

## Appendix C: Debrief Letter



### **Debrief Letter**

Thank you for participating in this study to explore the experiences of personal consultants with regard to supervision.

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the meaning of supervision and its practice with specific regard to personal consultants. This study is important because it is the first of its kind into the supervision practice of this group of professionals and is one of the first studies into the experience of personal consultants. In this study we asked participants in a semi-structured format for their individual experience to ascertain the current status of supervision in a burgeoning area of integrative practice. Following analysis it is expected that the study will be able to say something about what individuals are currently experiencing with a view into how practitioners are experiencing the integrative boundary in practice and how this is supervised.

Your data will be kept in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy and data will be kept securely on password protected technology and anonymity will be upheld. Using a locked filing cabinet in UEL, all consent forms will be held separately from all other anonymous data so that your personal details cannot be matched to the data gathered. All audio recordings will be destroyed after the research has been completed, however anonymised transcripts will be held for further analysis. All data will be used for the current study and it is possible that the findings will be published by a peer-reviewed journal. Should any studies use data from this research in the future, the data will be anonymized and kept confidential.

However, please be aware that confidentiality of the information provided is subject to legal limitations in data confidentiality. It must be stated, that should the research be made aware of any harm or person in immediate danger of harm the researcher would need to report this to the supervisor of the study. In rare cases, the data may be required to be submitted to a court of law or subject to a freedom of information request.

If you would like to learn more about the topic of this study, references can be provided. If you feel like any of the material that you have discussed during this research has been sensitive or distressing, please let the researcher know. You will also be provided with a list of support agencies and their contact details.

Again, thank you for your participation in our research. If you have any questions you can ask me now or you can contact me on this email; [u1517833@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1517833@uel.ac.uk) or the supervisor of this study; Dr Claire Marshall on [C.Marshall@uel.ac.uk](mailto:C.Marshall@uel.ac.uk). If you would like to receive a copy of the results, please email me and we can send them to you at the end of the study.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Christmas 23/1/2017

## **Appendix D: List of Support Organisations**

### **List of support agencies taken from [Time to Change.org](http://Time to Change.org)**

#### **Mental health charities, groups and services**

Samaritans  
0207116123

Mental Health Foundation  
020 7803 1101  
Improving the lives of those with mental health problems or learning difficulties.

Together  
020 7780 7300  
Supports people through mental health services.

The Centre for Mental Health  
020 7827 8300  
Working to improve the quality of life for people with mental health problems.

Depression Alliance  
0845 123 2320  
Provides information and support to those who are affected by depression via publications, supporter services and a network of self-help groups.

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy  
01455 883300  
Through the BACP you can find out more about counselling services in your area.

PANDAS Foundation  
0843 28 98 401 (every day from 9am-8pm)  
PANDAS Foundation vision is to support every individual with pre (antenatal), postnatal depression or postnatal psychosis in England, Wales and Scotland. We campaign to raise awareness and remove the stigma. We provide our PANDAS Help Line, Support Groups offer online advice to all and much more.

Young Minds  
020 7336 8445  
Provides information and advice for anyone with concerns about the mental health of a child or young person.

Childline  
0800 1111  
Free, national helpline for children and young people in trouble or danger.

Nightline  
Listening, support and information service run by students for students.  
Other places you could go for support  
Age Concern  
0800 009966  
Infoline on issues relating to older people.

Lesbian and Gay Switchboard

020 7837 7324

Provides information, support and referral services.

Refugee Council

020 7346 6700

The UK's largest organisation working with refugees and asylum seekers.

Relate

0300 100 1234

Offers advice, relationship counselling, sex therapy, workshops, mediation, consultations and support.

Counselling Directory

A free, confidential directory of trained, professional counsellors and therapists in the UK.

Anxiety UK

08444 775 774

Works to relieve and support those living with anxiety disorders by providing information, support and understanding via an extensive range of services, including 1:1 therapy.

## **Appendix E: Information Letter**

### **UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

School of Psychology  
Stratford Campus  
Water Lane  
London E15 4LZ



#### **The Principal Investigator**

**Contact Details:** Mr. Sam Christmas

#### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this research study. The study is being conducted as part of my Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology degree at the University of East London.

#### **Project Title**

How do integrative coach-therapist professionals experience supervision? An interpretative phenomenological analysis

#### **Project Description**

This research will aim to gain an understanding of how supervision is currently experienced by practitioners identifying as integrated coach-therapist professionals. You will be invited to participate in this study as a practising professional who has indicated interest in participation. Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in an interview, lasting approximately an hour, about your current supervision arrangements and your subjective experience of this arrangement. You will need to be in a supervision at least once a month, with either peers or a dedicated supervisor.

There are no known physical risks or hazards, however subject matter from your practice may arise and has the potential, like all clinical material, to be distressing. All participants will be given the contact details of relevant organisations for further support should they feel they need it for their mental health, well being or just to talk further about any sensitive material.

There is no obligation to accept this invitation and declining to so will not in any way affect your membership of the Association of Integrative Coach-Therapist Professionals.

#### **Confidentiality of the Data**

The interviews will be conducted in a private and convenient place for each participant. Any data constructed by the research will be kept in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy and data will be kept securely on password protected technology and anonymity will be upheld. Using a locked filing cabinet in UEL, all consent forms will be held separately from all other anonymous data. All audio recordings will be destroyed after the research has been completed, however anonymised transcripts will be held for further analysis. All data will be used for the current study and it is possible that the findings will be published by a peer reviewed journal. Should any studies use data from this research in the future, the data will be anonymized and confidential.

However, please be aware that confidentiality of the information provided is subject to legal limitations in data confidentiality. It must be stated, that should the research be made aware of any harm or person in immediate danger of harm the researcher would need to report this to the supervisor of the study. In rare cases, the data may be required to be submitted to a court of law or subject to a freedom of information request.

#### **Location**

The study can be carried out at a location agreed upon by the researcher and participant, with effort made to make sure the location offers security, privacy and comfort for both participant and researcher.

Equally, interviews can be conducted at the School of Psychology, Stratford Campus, University of East London if this is more convenient for the participant.

**Remuneration**

There is no payment for taking part in this study.

**Disclaimer**

You are not obliged to take part in this study and should not feel that you are obliged to. You are free to withdraw at any time. Should you choose to withdraw from the study you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason. Should you withdraw after the data has been transcribed, approximately two weeks after the date of the interview, the researcher reserves the right to use your anonymised data in the write-up of the study and any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

Please feel free to ask me any questions. If you are happy to continue you will be asked to sign a consent form prior to your participation. Please retain this invitation letter for reference.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor: Dr Irina Anderson, AE 3.22, Stratford Campus, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. Telephone: +442082234498. Email: [i.anderson@uel.ac.uk](mailto:i.anderson@uel.ac.uk)

**or**

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr. Mary Spiller, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.  
(Tel: 020 8223 4004. Email: [m.j.spiller@uel.ac.uk](mailto:m.j.spiller@uel.ac.uk))

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Christmas 23/1/2017

## Appendix F: Consent Form

### Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON



#### Consent to participate in a research study

How do Personal Consultants experience supervision? An interpretative phenomenological analysis.

I have read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher(s) involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent, I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should I withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use my anonymous data in the write-up of the study and in any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher's Signature

.....

Date: .....

### Appendix G: Exploratory Comments and Emergent Themes Table (P3)

Line no.	Transcript	Exploratory Comments	Emergent Themes
397 398 399 400 401 402 403 404 405 406 407 408 409 410 411 412 413 414 415 416 417 418 419 420 421 422 423 424 425 426 427 428 429 430 431 432 433 434 435 436 437 438 439 440 441 442 443 444	<p>15.19 S: Ok, yea. Erm, so what we've talked about, with that in mind about, about erm integrative practice, what does supervision mean to you?</p> <p>15.35: P: Erm, I think it's a, there's a, at the moment, there's a real range of stuff that goes on for me in supervision. One of the things that has really come to the fore over the last couple of months is it being about self-care, because even when I was dealing with like, well no actually let me. . . When I was dealing with lots and lots of distressed clients coming out of, out of jobs erm, I really carried that with me (S: mmhmm) and there wasn't really anywhere, there wasn't any support in place in that anywhere and I think I did, I mean it naturally came to an end because it ended going into a permanent job for a year, but I think it was, it was almost the fact that I was getting burnt out and I was sort of losing myself a little bit (s: mm). Erm, and that you end up getting into a habit of listening to people and then its almost like when you stop you don't really have a voice anymore, that's the, the only way, that;s the shorthand for describing it, but it was a very sort of weird time, erm and now I'm doing the counselling training you know the things that people are bringing are, you know, levels deeper in terms of the distress they're experiencing, you know so we've erm, I'm dealing with domestic abuse and childhood sexual trauma and you know alcoholism and depression and</p>	<p>Spectrum of "stuff", much like practice – complexity? Range of experiences means describing supervision is complex Supervision is about self-care Linguistic: Pauses, seems to be clarifying in their mind Quantifying distress of clients Weight of distress, burden Needs support in supervision Needs help to carry Emotional baggage Support vs self-care paradox Self takes a hit Practitioner burnout without support Losing identity as result Loses voice to client's distress Confusion and weirdness Hard to describe Can now understand more with training</p>	<p>Carrying the client</p> <p>Self vs loss of Identity</p> <p>Containment</p>

<p>445 446 447 448 449 450 451 452 453</p>	<p>there's a level at which that's much more difficult to place (S:mm). So there's, there's sort of things I've, I've worked out to do for myself, but actually the group supervision is just really good at being able to go "bleugh" and all of a sudden it's a shared experience.</p>	<p>Levels of distress</p> <p>Hard to describe</p> <p>Worked out own methods for distress tolerance also Group supervision good for sharing Dumping distress, Releasing the emotion Experientially richer</p>	
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## Appendix H: Table of Clustered Emergent Themes (P5)

<p><b>Creativity (abstraction) (numeration)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity of a team</li> <li>• Pluralism of team</li> <li>• Generative aspect of practice is important both in practice and in supervision</li> <li>• Shared generativity in supervision</li> <li>• Creating options and therapeutic space</li> <li>• Socratic – not knowing the answers</li> </ul> <p><b>Opportunity (abstraction) (Numeration)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity for learning</li> <li>• Time to think</li> <li>• Gleaning information from experience</li> <li>• Exploring felt sense (all from page 10)</li> <li>• Turn taking, opportunity as supervisor</li> <li>• Guidance is given when needed</li> </ul> <p><b>Negative factors in supervision (abstraction)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different settings = different challenges</li> <li>• Irritation at interruption</li> <li>• Frustration at no time to think</li> <li>• The paradox of challenge v interruption</li> <li>• Access to supervisors</li> <li>• Interruption as violence</li> <li>• Anger at directedness of group</li> <li>• Power unequal</li> <li>• Personal meaning can get lost</li> <li>• Need questions rather than opinions</li> <li>• Equity sharing</li> <li>• Reluctance/avoiding of conflict in group</li> </ul> <p><b>Emotional response to supervision (abstraction)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strength and energy needed</li> <li>• Thrilling, “it felt quite exciting” (305) brings thrill of integration to supervision?</li> <li>• Anger – disagreement, irritation</li> <li>• Fury at being in interrupted</li> <li>• Reluctance to criticise</li> <li>• “Deadening” ingenuity</li> <li>• “Fantastic” clarity</li> <li>• Intellectualising vs felt sense</li> <li>• Relief of heavy work being contained by supervision</li> <li>• Shaming for practitioner to cross boundaries and to bring this up in supervision</li> <li>• Empowering to counteract shame</li> </ul> <p><b>Bringing difficulty to supervision (abstraction)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy to light</li> <li>• Anxiety of heaviness</li> <li>• Coaching as a reprieve</li> <li>• Possible anxiety about bringing it</li> </ul> <p><b>Power dynamics (subsumption)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power imbalances</li> <li>• Person centred philosophy of supervisee facilitation</li> <li>• Espousing flat power dynamics</li> </ul>	<p><b>Structure and rigour (Subsumption)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety of clients and logistics</li> <li>• Leadership key in developing as supervisor</li> <li>• Ethical responsibility</li> <li>• Different settings, different needs</li> <li>• Structure is vital</li> <li>• Group dynamics</li> <li>• Different modes</li> <li>• Different functions</li> <li>• Settings</li> </ul> <p><b>Process of Supervision (abstraction)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Micro and macro of supervision</li> <li>• Shared understanding</li> <li>• Thinking v feeling</li> <li>• Whole vs parts</li> <li>• Reassurance of experience</li> <li>• Supervisor as warden – keeping things on track</li> <li>• Collaborative curiosity</li> <li>• Challenge is good (paradox? To interruption?)</li> <li>• Supervision as restorative</li> <li>• Functions of supervision</li> </ul> <p><b>Who’s needs are paramount? (abstraction)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client’s needs as paramount</li> <li>• Supervisees need space and freedom</li> <li>• Supervisee led is better</li> <li>• Supervisor as facilitator of thinking</li> </ul> <p><b>Supervisee Experience (abstraction)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bravery of disclosure as supervisee</li> <li>• Transparency leading to vulnerability</li> <li>• Nature of supervisee anxiety, vulnerability and supervisor containment</li> <li>• Multiple needs of supervisee</li> <li>• Space to cogitate</li> <li>• Two step accountability to supervisor</li> <li>• Client led</li> <li>• Thinking well with space</li> <li>• Parallel process of interview</li> <li>• Space is helpful</li> <li>• Functionality of supervision</li> <li>• Supervisee vs Supervisor</li> <li>• Feeling AND thinking in space</li> <li>• Doing vs being in supervision, advocating both</li> <li>• Reflecting, thinking and informing is enjoyable feeling in peer supervision</li> <li>• Monism vs integration in supervision = no difference</li> <li>• Frameworks are helpful</li> </ul> <p><b>Experience of peer sup (abstraction)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feels less boundaried</li> </ul>
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- Collaboration between supervisor and supervisee
- Not assuming supervisor knows the answer
- Robotised supervisor vs collaborator

**Boundaries (subsumption)**

- Outside of the boundaries
- Fluidity of boundaries
- Levels of boundaries; settings, service, resources etc
- Privacy and confidentiality
- There ARE some rules for therapy
- Blurred boundaries between acting as supervisor and supervisee in p's mind
- Can't have rigid boundary between coaching/therapy in supervision
- Reassurance needed around complexity of boundaries

**The value of 121 supervision (subsumption)**

- 121 better for individual client sup
- Difficulties and dynamics is brought to 121
- Supervisor tells it like it is
- Likes the challenge of supervisor
- Challenge is two ways
- Helps with confidence
- Helps with exploration of interpersonal dynamics
- Helps with system and context
- Other perspectives
- Negative feelings can be identified
- Monetary value of 121 supervision = higher value experience
- Values experience of supervisor

**Recommendations for supervision (subsumption)**

- Being truthful is good as supervisee
- Supervisor must know purpose
- Supervisor must be flexible to integrative practice
- Supervisee must trust that they will not be shamed
- Supervisors must have empathy for shame fear
- Freedom
- Supervisor should acknowledge limits

**Recommendations for Peer supervision (subsumption)**

- Future practice recommendation: supervisor communion
- Supervisor group identity?
- Would help with identity
- Realisation that might need to be restructured
- Would be helpful to reflect/change

- Less focussed
- Not as useful as other supervision formats
- Not necessarily about setting and more about group dynamics
- Informal support
- Helping each other's development
- Idea formation/creativity
- Info sharing
- Networking
- Opportunities to grow practice
- Problem sharing/problem solving
- Shared dilemmas
- Space to think about being int practitioner
- Realisation that might need to be restructured
- Anger at group dynamics
- Camaraderie of group
- Shared sense of integration/values
- Differences of group supervision are implicit
- Interruptions out of group awareness
- Violence to thought process in group
- Structures could be better
- Others have been through similar journey in peer supervision

**Supervisor Experience (abstraction)**

- Responsibility to challenge supervisees
- Interruption can be challenged by supervisee
- Supervisee dependant
- Willing to be vulnerable again
- Stepping back so impulses are not acted on in relationship
- Supervision is Supervisor dependant or supervisee dependant?
- No assumptions as supervisor
- Responsibility of supervisor
- Ethical considerations are responsibility of supervisor

**Bringing Integrative work to supervision  
(subsumption)**

- Doesn't bring heavy work to 121 because doesn't expect client work to bring that anymore
- Paradox of structures and rigidity vs clients could bring anything
- Contracts and delineation
- Easier to assert position dependant on supervision setting
- Valuing experience of supervisor
- Empathy of leadership
- Supervision helps with knowing boundaries of practice
- Supervision provides direction
- Empathy for supervisor boundary issues

### Appendix I: Cross Reference of Themes to Participants Table

Superordinate/Subordinate Theme	Representation of themes by line number for each subordinate them across Ps					Number theme representations across P's
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	
<b>Bifurcation and arbitrary lines</b>	√	√	√	√	√	5
The Big Split	812	1147	738	582		4
Boundaries – clarity or confusion	831	640	911		745	4
Contracts – the red tape		1089		788	615, 685	3
<b>Detective Work</b>	√	√	√	√	√	5
“Supervisor” implies a kind of hierarchy	321		212	682	735, 763	4
Picking the bones	326		492		883	3
Fear of “am I doing the right thing?”		609	1118		780	3
The self-censoring editors	345		972, 1342	744		3
<b>A conscious sense of belonging</b>	√	√	√	√	√	5
Needing time and space		535	525	720		3
Carrying the person		452	500, 888		191	3
A sense of all different perspectives	174	546	444		502, 800	4
Integrative supervision – it would be utterly bloody marvellous	897	1067	1133, 1142		1408	4

## Appendix J: Notice of Ethics Review Decision

### UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON School of Psychology

#### REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT TO AN ETHICS APPLICATION

#### **FOR BSc, MSc/MA & TAUGHT PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE STUDENTS**

**Please complete this form if you are requesting approval for proposed amendment(s) to an ethics application that has been approved by the School of Psychology.**

Note that approval must be given for significant change to research procedure that impacts on ethical protocol. If you are not sure about whether your proposed amendment warrants approval consult your supervisor or contact Dr Mary Spiller (Chair of the School Research Ethics Committee).

#### **HOW TO COMPLETE & SUBMIT THE REQUEST**

1. Complete the request form electronically and accurately.
2. Type your name in the 'student's signature' section (page 2).
3. When submitting this request form, ensure that all necessary documents are attached (see below).
4. Using your UEL email address, email the completed request form along with associated documents to: Dr Mary Spiller at [m.j.spiller@uel.ac.uk](mailto:m.j.spiller@uel.ac.uk)
5. Your request form will be returned to you via your UEL email address with reviewer's response box completed. This will normally be within five days. Keep a copy of the approval to submit with your project/dissertation/thesis.
6. Recruitment and data collection are **not** to commence until your proposed amendment has been approved.

#### **REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**

1. A copy of your previously approved ethics application with proposed amendments(s) added as tracked changes.
2. Copies of updated documents that may relate to your proposed amendment(s). For example an updated recruitment notice, updated participant information letter, updated consent form etc.
3. A copy of the approval of your initial ethics application.

Name of applicant: Samuel Christmas  
 Programme of study: Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology  
 Title of research: The experience of supervision for integrative coach-therapist practitioners: An interpretative phenomenological analysis.  
 Name of supervisor: Dr Claire Marshall

Briefly outline the nature of your proposed amendment(s) and associated rationale(s) in the boxes below

Proposed amendment	Rationale
To change the title from “How do personal consultants experience supervision: An interpretative phenomenological analysis” to the above, i.e. :“The experience of supervision for integrative coach-therapist practitioners: An interpretative phenomenological analysis.”	This change has been made to reflect the research question of the study and the recruited participant pool.

Please tick	YES	NO
Is your supervisor aware of your proposed amendment(s) and agree to them?	√	

Student’s signature (please type your name): Samuel Christmas

Date: 27/08/2019

<b>TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEWER</b>		
<b>Amendment(s) approved</b>		
<b>Comments</b>		

Reviewer: Milda Perminiene

Date: 03/09/2019