



Photograph as catalyst:

An exploration of client experiences with photographs in therapy

by

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Abstract

This study seeks to understand client experiences of exploring a personal photograph in therapy. Its phenomenological approach, situated within a transpersonal paradigm, seeks to understand the intricacies of lived experience in yielding unique viewpoints from client perspectives. It is a qualitative study of the experiences of five participants who, through face to face, semi-structured interviews, attempted to answer the following research question: what is the lived experience of exploring a personal photograph in therapy? Participants were recruited through word of mouth and placement of flyers in counselling and psychotherapy training colleges in London. Interviews concentrated on the recall and description of this past event, elaboration on the occurrence of any inner world processes, and whether the photograph experience held any personal meanings for the participants.

Interview transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008) where four main themes emerged: tension, bridging the past, movement into emotion, and generativity. The study's findings were filtered through Washburn's (2003) spiral theory of human development to deepen understanding of how a photograph may serve as catalyst for self-transformation. The study introduces the use of photographs in therapy as a complementary and beneficial intervention within the field of transpersonal counselling and psychotherapy.

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And thank you to Wieger, for encouraging and supporting me every step of the way.

I, Laura Prins, confirm that the work presented in this dissertation is my own.

Where information has been derived from other sources,

I confirm that this has been indicated in the dissertation.

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Introduction

‘You could not step into the same river twice, for other waters are ever flowing on to you.’

Heraclitus

The idea for this research originated out of a personal transformative experience of revisiting a photograph. For over a decade I was estranged from my father and had remained angry and hurt throughout our separation. As I revisited a photo of us together taken nearly twenty years ago, standing side by side, I noticed something new. In my father’s eyes I read a fragility I had never seen before. This recognition precipitated a heartbreak that initiated a process of forgiveness for him and me, something I simply could not have done before. Through the photo I was able to experience first-hand a paradox of time; in connecting to the past it began to loosen its grip upon me, allowing space for something new to occur.

During the photo experience there was a distinct impression of information that was previously hidden emerging and becoming known. The process seemed indicative of the photograph-as-secret-language theory as depicted by Swanson (1991) and echoed by photographer Diane Arbus’s declaration that ‘a photograph is a secret about a secret’ (Lacayo, 2003). The image of the photo acted as a gateway, or threshold. Once passed through, the ‘secret’ was discerned through an inner world opening, like a bridge or channel connecting the past to the present.

Exploring this further, I looked to others who had written about the power of photographs. Barthes (2000) described his deep experience with the ‘Winter Garden Photograph’, a rediscovery of his mother through the photo’s portrayal of her essential nature. For him photos were contingent, static objects, a closed field of forces with an essence he pronounced as *that-has-been*. In a similar vein, Sontag (1978) discussed photos as ‘memento mori’, objects that encourage participation in the mortality, vulnerability and mutability of a person or thing. Bazin (1980) even drew a parallel between photography and the ancient Egyptian religious practice of mummification in their mutual desires to embalm time.

In a world where everything is in flux, the photograph attempts to stop time and objectify a subject for preservation and observation. Owing in large part to the above mentioned works,

I realised that photos can be understood as attempts to capture the permanence in an impermanent situation. In its endeavours to encapsulate permanence, immortality even, a photograph contains the seeds of paradox and mystery necessary for personal change and transformation.

My personal experience was profound and life changing; it made me question whether others have experienced something similar, ultimately creating a quest for resonance. As a transpersonal psychotherapist I wondered about the applicability of working with a photo in a therapeutic setting. My experience occurred outside of therapy, but what is it like when someone explores a personal photograph in therapy? What happens internally for that individual? What is the meaning and impact of this experience? The topic and focus of this study emanated from these thoughts and questions, and produced the following research question: what is the lived experience of exploring a personal photograph in therapy?

The paradigm underpinning this study is the transpersonal, a discipline concerned with understanding and exploring human life in its fullest and most transformative expressions; anything occurring beyond or through the personally identified aspects of self can be considered transpersonal (Anderson, 1998). Additionally, as described by Caplan, it ‘addresses the full spectrum of human psycho-spiritual development – from our deepest wounds and needs, to the existential crisis of the human being, to the most transcendent capacities of our consciousness’ (2009, p. 231).

The transpersonal encompasses a broad and deep spectrum of human experience that can be defined in myriad ways, all informing an inclusive perspective that often contributes to its elusive and ambiguous reputation. As this study aims to provide insight on the lived experience of a highly specific phenomenon, two aspects of the transpersonal paradigm will be highlighted that will aid in contextualising this study and comprehending the preconceived ideas that I brought in as researcher.

The first aspect is a participatory stance that recognises the primacy of relationship between self and world. Ferrer depicts a participatory spiritual approach as an ‘enactive understanding of the sacred that conceives spiritual phenomena, experiences and insights as *cocreated events*’ (2011, p. 2). As an orientation this can be understood in terms of a dynamic

relationship between spirit/cosmos/life force, self and the world that is experienced through any of the available senses. In approaching this study I arrived with the idea and belief that people understand the world through their relationship to it (Hiles, 2008), and that this is an *active, participatory* relationship between self, spirit and world.

The second aspect is a focus on the transformative nature of the transpersonal. The self participates with spirit and the world, and is transformed and changed by the participation. Valle and Mohs indicate self-transformation as a powerful characteristic of transpersonal/transcendental experience, representing ‘the personal mark these experiences left on the one who experienced them’ (1998, p. 111); self-transformation can be understood ‘as a change in one’s preferences, inclinations, emotional and behavioural habits, and understanding of life itself’ (p. 101). Therefore within the transpersonal realm self-transformation can be seen as a metamorphosis that leads to a change of consciousness.

Rowan (2005) identifies change in terms of a breakthrough process, a continual series of learning, breakthroughs and consolidation that feature in human (personal and spiritual) development. This view of change accords with Heraclitus’ concept of life as the ever flowing waters in a river of existence. Stepping into the river is akin to bending the consciousness back onto itself (self-reflection) and experiencing the resulting change from this activity. As my own experience with photo work initiated self-reflection and transformation, this study explores whether this also transpired for participants by focusing on the subtleties and essences of what occurred, and how, along with the meaning of it for the individual.

This study seeks to understand client experiences of exploring a personal photograph in therapy, and was driven by a desire to perceive the intricacies of lived experience from a participatory, transformational viewpoint within the transpersonal paradigm. A qualitative, idiographic approach utilising semi-structured interviews was found to be the best fit for the research aims and will be discussed in detail in the Method section (Chapter 3). What follows directly is a literature review and survey of the field of photographs that examines its current relationship to the field of psychotherapy and counselling.

Literature Review

Introduction



1827, *View from the Window at Le Gras, Niépce*

The history of modern photography - where a photograph is defined as a permanent image produced through a chemical reaction to light - began with an image produced by the French inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce in 1827 (Newhall, 2009). The word photograph derives from the Greek words *phos*, 'light' and *graphos*, 'writing' and is literally translated as 'light recording' (Moon, 2012). The term was first coined by Sir John Herschel during a presentation at the Royal Academy in London on March 14, 1839.

Photography was at once perceived as an inspired new art form and an important scientific invention (Trachtenberg, 1980); a practice sited at the nexus of art and science replete with quiet echoes of mysticism. From the outset, photography was considered to be an act of the Divine mediated through human activity (Swanson, 1991). Seeing daguerreotypes for the first time in 1830, a French critic pronounced them as 'divine perfection' (Metropolitan Museum of Art, n.d.) and Sir John Herschel alongside the authors Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne described photographs as 'miraculous' (Trachtenberg, 1980). Daguerre related the physical and chemical process of photography as giving Nature 'the power to reproduce herself' (1980, p. 13), a sentiment which at once seems propitiatory and deferential to higher powers.

Bazin stipulates the difference between painting and photography by highlighting the objective nature of the photograph and its ‘production by automatic means’ that provides ‘a certain advantage in virtue of this transference of reality from the thing to its reproduction’ (1980, p. 241). It is this mechanical (re)production in attempting to capture certain philosophical ideals such as Beauty and Truth that sets photography apart from other art forms like sculpture and painting. Consequently there is a natural tension held in the space between the mechanised process of ‘recording with light’ and using one’s own light of creativity and genius to influence the recording. Berger observes that ‘every photograph is in fact a means of testing, confirming and constructing a total view of reality’ (1980, p. 294). This statement captures the arbitrary, subjective nature of the photograph and instigates inquiry: whose, or which, or what reality is being tested, confirmed, constructed?

Photographs in Counselling and Psychotherapy



1852 Photographs from the Female Department of the Surrey County Lunatic Asylum

The first documented use of photographs in a ‘therapeutic’ setting was by British psychiatrist Hugh Welch Diamond, the Resident Superintendent of the Female Department of the Surrey County Lunatic Asylum in a series of photographic portraits taken of patients to document different types of insanity. In his 1856 paper to the Royal Society he proposed three functions of photography in the treatment of mental illness: to record the appearance of

different conditions; to provide identification for readmission; and to aid patients with treatment by providing an accurate self-image (Royal Society of Medicine, n.d.). Diamond's work demonstrates that even during photography's inception it was already recognised as a powerful visual tool for self-reflection.

Documented use of photographs in therapeutic settings goes quiet until more modern times when the use of photographs in therapy was pioneered by health professionals working in North America in the 1970's and formalised as 'phototherapy' by Canadian psychologist and art therapist Judy Weiser (Loewenthal, 2009). Phototherapy is defined as 'using photos and photography as a component of psychotherapy or therapy practice with clients' (Weiser & Krauss, 2009, p. 78). The photograph's role is as functional tool for therapeutic purposes, where the efficacy of the intervention is contingent upon the actual skills of the practitioner (Halkola, 2009).

This differs from therapeutic photography or autobiographic photography, where photographic practices are used by individuals themselves or by others on their behalf for the purpose of creative expression, self-knowledge, and awareness, but typically without the use of a counsellor, psychotherapist or health professional (Weiser, 1999). The work of British photographer Jo Spence (1986), who documented her experience of breast cancer and treatment in the 1982 exhibition "A Picture of Health?", and Cristina Nunez, an author, artist and photographer who teaches her own self-portrait method for exploring one's inner life are representational of the integrative nature of photography as therapy.

Phototherapy is not a separate modality but a set of techniques open to use by therapists of all modalities and approaches. Weiser (1999) delineates five specific practices within the model: working with the projective process, working with self-portraits, working with photos of the client taken by others, working with photos collected or taken by the client, and working with family albums and biographical photographs. The projective method is the cornerstone of all phototherapy techniques and utilises 'the spontaneous associative process of connecting visual stimulus with conscious and unconscious meaning' (Weiser, 1999, p. xix). Berman (1993) relates how using photographs in therapy can promote growth of spontaneity and playfulness by encouraging a client to project themselves physically into the photograph to imagine where they would be and how they would feel. Walker (1982)

advocates a projective method because it allows exploration and the working through of transference, resistance and conflicts. He states that using photographs in therapy stimulates the unconscious and can assist the client to verbalise, recognise feelings, tap into creativity and increase self-awareness of one's perception of the world.

The use of photographs in therapy is used in various demographics and issues such as bereavement (Gough, 1999; Gough, 2003), transsexual identity (Barbee, 2002), addictions rehabilitation (Graf, 2002; Graf & Miller, 2006) sexual abuse survivors (Glover-Graf, 2006; Graf 2002), trauma (Halkola, 2008; 2009), the elderly (Koretsky, 2001; Romaniuk, 1983; Sandoz, 1996) and mental health (Sitvast, Abma, Widdershoven & Lendemeijer, 2008; Sitvast, Abma & Widdershoven, 2010; Sitvast, 2011; Sitvast & Abma, 2012). The writing is varied, ranging from short informative articles (Gough, 2003) to book chapters detailing the use of photographs as creative intervention (Gough, 1999; Glover-Graf, 2006), even teaching presentations (Halkola, 2008). Some research studies focus exclusively on group treatment using photos (Graf & Miller, 2006; Sitvast et al, 2010), or on out-patient psychotherapy (Koretsky, 2001). Methodologies also differ, for example where Barbee (2002) employs a visual-narrative art therapy approach to studying transsexual identity. In conducting the research for the literature review it was found that no term such as 'phototherapy' is as yet wholly definitive or universal within the field, which did lend a certain ambiguity to the research process.

Photographs and Art Therapy

The use and creation of visual imagery in therapy has largely occurred within the domain of art therapy (Glover-Graf, 2006) due to its reliance upon a heavily non-verbal or para-verbal creative process (Rubin, 2001). Art therapists are trained in certain psychotherapeutic approaches (i.e. Freudian, Jungian Analytic, Cognitive behavioural, etc.) but the art process takes centre stage, and the client's creation of art is not viewed as just another psychotherapeutic tool (Rubin, 2001). The underlying principle is that image precedes word, and by invoking the unconscious to spontaneously create images one can bring more of the self to consciousness, thereby encouraging an inner sense of increased wellbeing and wholeness (Wallace, 2001).

The use of visual imagery is a point of convergence between the fields of photographs in therapy and art therapy. Weiser (1999) states that spontaneously produced images in art therapy are personally coded, non-verbal expressions that share similarity with photographs; both can be understood as private communications between aspects of self. And Martin (2009) observes that the photograph as metaphor can be used to access the unconscious, a view in accord with art therapy's emphasis on accessing the unconscious. However, there are fundamental differences between the use of created art and the use of photographs in therapy. One is that art is created solely via the client's own ability, whereas a photograph is mediated through a mechanised process that creates a certain distance between client and the photographic image. Also, Weiser (1999) notes that art therapy works to bring internally generated information out into the world, whereas phototherapy works in an opposite fashion, promoting activation of the internal world through visual engagement with the photograph. Krauss concludes that 'since art therapy is dependent on externalized internal subjects, and phototherapy is dependent on internalized external subjects, it appears as though they deal with different aspects of personal symbolism' (as cited in Weiser, 1999, pp. 10-11). This study proposes that the differing aspects of personal symbolism are in actuality an imagistic discrepancy between the Jungian concepts of symbol and sign.

Photographs, Signs and Symbols

Jung considered signs to be images which refer to discoverable and specific events or fantasies in a person's life, whereas symbols are images that can induce strong affects yet defy complete or precise verbal description (Edwards, 2001). The dividing line between sign and symbol can be seen as the distinction between surface activity and depth, where signs remain on the surface and symbols touch psychic depth (Schaverien, 2005). Here depth refers to mobilisation of the psyche that can alter perception and transform a psychological state. Schaverien goes further in making a distinction between embodied imagery and diagrammatic imagery, where embodied imagery 'is profoundly symbolic, employs visual metaphor, and as a result touches depth' (2005, p. 138) whereas diagrammatic imagery is like a sign in that it points to something outside itself and 'needs words to embellish its meaning' (p. 145).

Stein (2012) notes that a symbol embodies an unconscious content moving towards consciousness. This content remains opaque until understood cognitively. Jung (1921/2005) expressed the idea that a symbol remains potent and alive so long as its meaning remains unknown. Only once the symbol is understood cognitively, perhaps through metaphor, does it move into historical significance as a sign. A main therapeutic goal in analysis is to convert symbols into signs to free the client's consciousness and libido channels (Stein, 2012).

As photographs are products of physical reality and depict objects, scenes, and people from life they would seem more akin to signs, whereas spontaneously generated images and artwork arising from the unconscious naturally seem more symbolic in nature. However, upon closer reflection it seems there are really two kinds of photographs; ones that would stay on the surface and remain signs, and those that would be symbols. Krauss (1983) states that the viewer's emotional connection with the photograph is what allows bypass of intellectual understandings to move straight to personal truths. Therefore, it can be seen that the emotional connection one has with a photo - whatever the subject matter - determines whether a photo is a sign or a symbol. Perhaps this can all be distilled down to one fundamental question: is the viewer moved, or not?

There is resonance here with Barthes' thoughts on the themes of *studium* and *punctum* in photographs, where *studium* stands for a mindset that is polite, mild, and of general interest and *punctum* encompasses a wounding like a 'sting, speck, cut, little hole' (2000, p. 27). The *punctum* would be that emotional, embodied response one can have with a photograph, an electrical tremor penetrating the senses and cutting through the *studium*, often without initial conscious understanding. Consider the two 1852 photographs of the women from the Surrey County Asylum: was there an emotional charge felt when viewing these pictures?

Photographs and Active Imagination

Active imagination is a form of meditation that was (re)-discovered by Jung in order to access the contents of the unconscious (Hannah, 2000). It is achieved through dialogue with a spontaneously generated internal image, in a liminal space on the threshold between waking and dreaming, but with alertness of mind (von Franz, 1993). It differs from passive

imagination in that there is a conversation being held with no mental control over what happens, allowing the imagination to go where it wishes (Rowan, 2005). Active imagination can be done by visualisation, or by writing or producing art work (von Franz, 1993).

Active imagination takes place in the imaginal realm, a fluid space between the conscious and the unconscious, where images take the place of language (Rowan, 2005). French scholar Henri Corbin, a colleague of Jung's at Eranos, first coined the term imaginal realm, or *mundus imaginalis*, when translating Islamic mystical texts (Cheetham, 2003). For Corbin (1998) the imaginal realm is a place of encounter and union, the meeting of human and divine, a world of soul mediating between Spirit and body through imagery; one accesses the imaginal realm for healing, understanding and growth, in both personal and spiritual capacities.

In a therapeutic context, active imagination is typically conducted through visualisation with spontaneously generated internal images (Rowan, 2005). Photographs are clearly different from internal imagery, yet even so, it seems plausible that a photograph may act as a springboard to trigger formation of an internal image in an individual. As mentioned earlier, the movement of consciousness with photographs is from the external to the internal, so it would be possible for an internal image to be invoked when viewing a photograph. This internal image could then be encountered on its own terms, possibly through active imagination. As the photograph is also a road to the unconscious (Martin, 2009), it may serve as a platform in accessing the imaginal realm.

Photographs and Perception

Perception is defined as a state of being, of becoming aware of something through the senses. One may initially equate perception with vision, of seeing the world in order to organise and interpret it with a mental representation, but this is only part of the story. Noë (2004) argues that perception is a thoughtful way of acting and not something that happens to us, or in us. It is touch-like and enactive, a skillful bodily activity that is intrinsically participatory, where seeing is more like touching than it is like depicting. In Noë's view our perceptual mental pictures are a kind of virtual space that we create through the making or enacting of experience. His sensorimotor, actionist approach presupposes consciousness and subjectivity

(Thompson, 2005) and contrasts with the ecological approach to perception in which information is picked up but not constituted, or accepted as a part of the whole being (Taraborelli & Mossio, 2008).

The concept of sensorimotor coupling says that a cognitive being's world is a relational domain created by that being's autonomous agency and ability to engage with the environment, and is expressed in perception, emotion and action (Thompson, 2005). Sensorimotor coupling is therefore closely aligned to phenomenology and the idea of being embedded in the world, where the creating of experience, meaning and ultimately one's reality are the prime directives (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002). In Merleau-Ponty's view, the world and the sense of self are communing in an ongoing, ever emergent 'becoming' insofar as perception is immersive, conscious and active. He says:

In perception we do not think the object and we do not think ourselves thinking it, we are given over to the object and we merge into this body which is better informed than we are about the world...(2002, p. 238).

This idea concerns the merging of self with an object in order to embody our perception of it, possibly through surrender or an act of will. As a concept it may have interesting things to say about what happens when viewing a photograph, especially considering Noë's (2004) notion that we probe with our eyes in a touch-like way. What exactly are we touching when viewing a photograph? Using Merleau-Ponty's idea, is it possible to merge into the 'body' of a photograph to perceive and enact experience?

Studies done with photographs and infant cognitive development shed some light on the topic, where it was found that infants have difficulty distinguishing real objects from photographed objects (Dirks & Gibson, 1977; Beilin & Pearlman, 1991). Infants grasp at photos picturing real objects as often as grasping at the 3D objects themselves in order to learn about their representational properties and reality (Pierroutsakos & DeLoache, 2003; Yonas, Granrud, Chov & Alexander, 2005). It is hypothesized that the photograph elicits an action plan in the declarative memory that stimulates the impulse to grasp (French, Tumuluru, Walco, Hespos, Uttal & Rosengren, 2012). Here photographs act as virtual simulations of the world taken as 'real' by the brain. Bazin seemed to predict this finding

when he observed that ‘we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced, actually, *re-presented*, set before us’ (1980, p. 241).

Wheeler (2009) considers the use of photographs in neuroscientific research, where photos are deemed effective substitutes for the real object or person. These neuroscience studies explore the biological basis for attachment by measuring brain activity when looking at photographs of loved ones (Fisher, 2002) or comparing attachment patterning by studying brain scans of participants viewing photographs of loved ones versus photographs of their child (Bartels & Zeki, 2000; 2004). Wheeler believes the real point of interest is not that the scientific community employs photographs in these studies, but the tacit assertion that photographs would be accurate and reliable stand-ins for the real person. A recent study (Younger, Aron, Parke, Chatterjee & Mackey, 2010) found that viewing pictures of a romantic partner activates the neural reward systems and reduces the experience of pain. This offers the powerful finding that not only does a photograph accurately stand in for the real person, but can be used as an analgesic for pain management.

Rosy Martin’s (2001; 2009) work with photographs in therapy follows the spirit of sensorimotor and phenomenological theories of perception in placing value on embodiment and creation of experience. Her approach, developed with Jo Spence, is called ‘Re-enactment phototherapy’ and focuses on the ‘performative’ body, where clients embody issues and personal stories by re-enacting them in front of the camera. The aim is to (re)-enact and experience frozen postures and repressed memories to issue in a cathartic release, ideally with transformational results. Once they are produced the photographs are taken to counselling sessions for further reflection and discussion. The entire re-enactment process encourages perception, or becoming aware of something through embodiment, that in turn can produce change, or a new way of being.

Photographs and Memory

Memory refers to the processes that are used to encode, store and retrieve information; operating as a function of consciousness, without memory there would be no mind (Thompson & Madigan, 2005). Memory is categorised into different systems (nondeclarative and declarative), where nondeclarative memory signifies the accessing of skills and habits

without intentional recall, and declarative memory signifies the ability of individuals to *consciously* access and describe memory contents (Squire, 1992). Autobiographical, or episodic memory refers to the memories of an individual's own experiences, and is therefore an aspect of both declarative memory and long-term memory.

Plato and later Aristotle understood memory metaphorically as a wax tablet, where perceptions are imprinted upon the wax in the same way as one would use a signet ring. This concept of memory as a passive system of information storage forms the basis for the identity theory of memory; a long standing theory now at odds with current scientific thought (Bernecker, 2009). As Bernecker contends, memory is an active machine that neither produces an exact duplicate of memory content (as identity theorists claim), nor completely reconstructs each memory anew (as constructivist theorists claim). Instead Bernecker's theory of memory is a middle ground that relies upon contingency, where it is based upon context and similarity yet also takes into account factual truths and authenticity. One *relates* with memory in life. In the case of episodic memories, the notion of authenticity is especially important, for it is an internal criterion in determining the accuracy of one's recall. Authenticity acts as a preservative in memory, and corresponds to personal experience, subjectivity, and resonance. As Bernecker states, 'authenticity doesn't guarantee truth' (p. 216).

This point is interesting when considered amidst research done with photographs and false memories. Garry and Gerrie (2005) review research that shows how both doctored (Wade, Garry, Read, & Lindsay, 2002) and true photographs (Lindsay, Hagen, Read, Wade & Garry, 2004) can produce false memories for personal experiences, and also how true photographs can lead to false memories about the news (Garry, Strange, Bernstein, & Kinzett, 2005). Narratives, however, were found to produce even more false memories than photographs (Garry and Wade, 2005). This research demonstrates the plasticity of memory, and lends credibility to Bernecker's ideas about authenticity and contingency, where an individual's concept of personal truth is malleable and subject to change.

The studies on photographs and false memories are also worth considering in light of a metaphysical concept of memory. Hazrat Inayat Khan, a Sufi mystic, relates that 'the work of memory is not creative but perceptive: to receive impressions and gather them together'

(1995, p. 82). For Khan, memory is a *living* machine, a world in and of itself, not a specific location in the brain. Faulty memory lies in the turmoil of the mind and loss of the innate rhythm of life, where anxiety, nerves, worry and stress take over and inhibit the process of recall. Memory is not just a recording machine, it is also a ‘fertile ground, and what is put there is continually creative, it is doing something’ (p. 84). Memory, then, is seen here as fluid and also malleable in that it is sentient and dynamic. Following Khan’s thoughts, if memory is a sentient world, then one *relates* with it, being to being.

William James (1890/2007) used the term ‘primary memory’ to refer to the contents of immediate, ongoing awareness. Primary memory is now known as ‘short-term memory’, and more recently ‘working memory’, and has close ties with consciousness, perception and attention (Madigan & Thompson, 2005). This aspect of memory functions in the here and now, within direct experience. Experiments studying conscious experience in the form of vivid mental imagery show that images are most vivid and emotionally evocative when they are held in the working memory system (Andrade, 2001). When acting as a visual springboard to elicit memory and mental images (Garry & Gerrie, 2005), photographs may effectively stimulate both the long-term and working memory systems. They may act as a potent trigger of experience, inviting the past into the present moment.

Photographs and Transpersonal Psychology

Within the field of transpersonal psychology, the study of photographs in therapy was found to be scarce. As so little has been done it seemed necessary to reach outside the traditional purview for theories on imagery, memory and perception that aligned with this study’s transpersonal paradigm. Concepts and theories that celebrate humans as conscious, self-reflective, active and creative beings were gravitated towards. One area of overlap between the transpersonal and photographs was found in art therapy, most notably from a Jungian perspective that afforded discussion on photographs and their relation to symbols, signs and the imagination. Otherwise, the field of photographs within transpersonal psychology remained a frontier landscape.

One piece of transpersonal writing was found on the topic of photographs in therapy. A paper originally presented at the 2008 European Transpersonal Association (EUROTAS)

conference offered a correlative viewpoint on the use of photographs in transpersonal psychotherapy. Calabrese (2010) introduces the idea that exploring a photograph in therapy could induce an altered state of consciousness. Using Sontag's position that 'photographs attest to the dissolving action of inexorable time', Calabrese thinks one may enter the void of the photo, move beyond biographical associations, and enter into the stream of continual now-ness. Calabrese relates this dimension to the Buddhism concept of Tathata, translated as 'Suchness'. Tathata refers to the Absolute Reality of things, when one apprehends 'the absence of the division between the knowing and the known' (Kim, 1973, p. 34), thereby transcending duality. Taking this view, photographs can act as portals to move one beyond mind, beyond meaning, to enter into the present.

Establishing a Case for More

Research and readings on the use of photographs in therapy were universal in maintaining that this intervention has beneficial outcomes. However, focus on the use of photographs in therapy primarily concerns technique and usage (how to do it, what it does), whereas far less is known about the specifics of what it achieves (Cronin, 1998). More empirical studies are needed to study the experience, efficacy, and meaning for the individual (Cronin, 1998; Glover-Graf, 2006). It was discovered that currently, studies often concentrate on highly particular demographics and client groups, and little was found that addressed general client work in a more holistic manner. Researchers used their own client work as evidence, and though this method provided many sound clinical examples, it could be also seen as a less objective method of detailing client experience: clients may be sensitive to upsetting the therapist and may employ underreporting, exaggeration or censorship as a means of preserving relationship. This study is different in using participants from outside the researcher's own client base for enhanced objectivity.

In researching the topic of photographs in therapy, no studies were found that explored the experience solely from a client perspective. Also, there were no studies found that approached the topic from a phenomenological perspective, and furthermore no studies that adopted a transpersonal perspective. This study seeks to address the current research deficit by offering a unique take on the subject of photographs in therapy. By exploring lived experience from the client perspective through a qualitative, phenomenological, transpersonal

lens, this study hopes to provide a window into psychic depth; a view currently lacking in the research field. It is hoped that this study may serve as a valuable opening consideration within transpersonal counselling and psychotherapy for the topic area.

Method

This is a qualitative study aimed at understanding client experiences of exploring a personal photograph in therapy. In seeking to understand the lived experience of a specified phenomenon, Husserl's transcendental phenomenology was a natural starting point in designing the study. Though initially conceived as a philosophical system of thought, its methodologies explore the content of consciousness and the individual's experience of the world (Willig, 2001). As depicted by Moustakas (1994) transcendental phenomenology focuses on things just as they are given, seeks meanings from appearances, is concerned with wholeness and acknowledges the role of an intersubjective reality throughout the process (pp. 58-59).

As research methodology, its prime purpose is to detail the texture and structure of experience; therefore meanings and essences are derived primarily through the use of descriptions, not analyses or explanation (Moustakas, 1994). This emphasis on description seemed at odds with the study's aims of applying interpretation to situate and contextualise the findings. As Chamberlain (2000) points out, 'qualitative research should value interpretation over description in order to work in a mode of discovery' (p. 290). Ultimately, the friction between descriptions and interpretation within this framework proved difficult to reconcile (Hiles, 2008) and further research of phenomenological methodologies was conducted.

A switch to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was adopted as it is idiographic in nature, encourages development of shared themes from detailed, personal accounts (Smith et al, 1999) and relies upon interpretation in analysis (Smith et al, 2009). Exploration of meaning is also a main feature of an IPA study (Smith & Osborn, 2008) and was deemed an appropriate fit in better understanding each participant's experience, first individually and then as a whole. Though IPA attempts to capture the texture and structure of individual experience, there is a recognition that direct access is never truly accessible to the researcher and must be mediated through subjectivity (Willig, 2001).

The advantages of this type of study are that it is in-depth, thorough, and has the potential to illustrate the inner workings of memory, meaning and transformative change through the lens

of individual experience. An IPA approach encourages the researcher to hold an empathic yet questioning attitude in order to produce a richer analysis and presentation of findings (Smith & Osborn, 2008). By delving into richly analysed reports, the reader may be better able to resonate with the material: an important validation procedure in determining whether research findings are true or faithful to the subject of study (Braud & Anderson, 1998).

A common critique of IPA research is that findings can come across as shallow and overly descriptive (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Chamberlain, 2000; Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Willig, 2001). Consequently, the overriding challenge of this study is to balance the weight and tone of interpretation with description in order to achieve depth, reflexivity and quality. To achieve best results, Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) argue for a 'less is more' approach: fewer participants in the sample, fewer questions on the interview schedule and fewer themes in analysis. This study is aligned with a 'less is more', quality seeking perspective.

Participants

A small sample size (up to six people) was desired, and recruitment of participants was conducted through word of mouth and placement of advertisement flyers in certain counselling and psychotherapy colleges (Minster Centre, CCPE, Metanoia) and counselling placements (Camden, City, Westminster & Islington Bereavement Service, Kingston Women's Centre). A copy of the advertisement is enclosed [Appendix A].

Participants were screened for the following requirements: he or she must have worked with a personal photograph in a therapeutic setting (one-to-one therapy, any methodological approach was acceptable), be willing to verbalise their experience, and the experience must have occurred no more than 5 years ago in order to retain freshness of recall. A personal photograph was understood to be any photograph that was brought by the client into therapy.

Five individuals were accepted as participants: Amanda, Denise, Michael, Rita and Willa. Three were recruited through flyers and two through word of mouth. Four of the participants (Amanda, Denise, Michael, and Willa) were trainee psychotherapists at the time of interview.

Method of Data Collection

Prior to the interview, participants were emailed a consent form [Appendix B] for review. The consent form provided information regarding interview logistics, transcription, data security, rights to withdraw, refusal of any questions, post-interview contact and confidentiality.

As the nature of this study revolves around recalled experience and its associated meaning, participants were asked not to bring any photographs to the interview. It was thought that if the photo was physically revisited during the interview, a new process of engagement between participant and photo might occur which could potentially alter perceptions and muddy the interview. All participants kindly granted this request.

Prior to the commencement of the interview, participants were given and asked to sign two hard copies of the emailed consent form. Additionally, they were provided a second consent form to sign [Appendix C] requesting permission for a follow up phone conversation lasting no longer than 20 minutes to discuss emergent themes once analysis was completed.

Five semi-structured, face to face interviews were conducted lasting up to 60 minutes in length. Interviews took place in several settings: twice at the CCPE, twice at participants' homes, and once at the researcher's home. Care was taken to ensure privacy, security and confidentiality in all interview settings.

An interview schedule was used to address the main points of exploration [Appendix D]. All interviews were digitally recorded, and participants were offered a digital recording of the interview via email. Directly following the interview participants were given a debrief form [Appendix E].

Ethics

Before beginning the process of participant recruitment, a written letter was sent to each organisation fully explaining the research and requesting permission to post advertisements

[Appendix F]. Permission was obtained in writing by all organisations before posting any materials related to the study.

To ensure participant confidentiality, names were changed to protect identity and no specific identifiable information is presented anywhere in the study. Confidentiality was further ensured by storing digital information in a password protected document on a personal laptop. Signed forms and interview transcripts were kept at home in a locked cabinet.

Participant informed consent was sought at every stage in the study. All information regarding interviews, transcription, data security, rights to withdraw, refusal of any questions, post-interview contact and confidentiality was both verbally discussed and provided in written form. A sensitive yet curious approach was adopted during the interview that stressed the importance of safety and trust. Participants were requested to inform me no later than one calendar month from the time of interview if they wished to withdraw from the study.

All participants were in personal therapy at the time of the interview. A debrief form [Appendix E] complete with my contact details was provided at the interview.

Quality Control

During the course of the study, certain measures were undertaken to assist in providing reliability, validity and authenticity to the final outcome. As Braud (1998) states, ‘validity has to do with whether one’s findings or conclusions are faithful or true to what one is studying’ (p. 213). Within the transpersonal paradigm, validity can be measured in faculties outside of intellect, such as body, emotion, spirit; in short, it can take an expanded view (Braud, 1998). Validity encompasses myriad conceptualisations (such as rigor, trustworthiness, reliability) and is considered difficult to measure in qualitative research without clearer definitions (Golafshani, 2003). In this study validity is interpreted as a well-founded, cogent state that produces reader resonance.

Supervision was a vital component of the research process that provided a regular meeting space in which to be accountable, articulate, thoughtful and critical. Additional, less frequent sessions were held with a supervisor from a different psychological discipline that enhanced

understanding of the study's goals and challenges. Weekly peer support was also carried out in order to debrief and discuss decision making and overall progress. A research journal was kept throughout the life of the study for recording notes, observations, feelings, etc.

Prior to commencement of participant interviews a pilot interview was conducted to gauge impact of questions and initial response. Directly following each interview, process notes were drafted to capture first impressions and salient points to remember before beginning analysis. The analysis process stayed closely aligned to the original words and stories of the participants; interviews were personally transcribed, and transcripts were read over numerous times for tone and content. After completion of data analysis, participants were contacted via phone and email to discuss emergent themes, receive feedback and check for resonance.

Analysis

In answering the research question ‘what is the lived experience of exploring a personal photograph in therapy’ five participants were interviewed. All interviews were recorded and personally transcribed. Analysis of the data was conducted according to a six phase procedure as outlined by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009): reading and re-reading transcripts, initial noting, developing emergent themes, searching for connections across emergent themes, moving to the next case, and finally looking for patterns across cases.

During the initial noting phase three types of codes were gathered: descriptive, conceptual and in vivo. As advocated by Saldaña (2009) in vivo codes use the participant’s exact words to capture specificity of tone and meaning, and were deemed crucial to underpinning the more interpretive aspects of analysis and determination of findings.

Following the six phase procedure, four main themes emerged from the data:

- Tension
- Bridging the Past
- Movement into
- Emotion
- Generativity

These four themes will be presented and discussed using participant extracts from transcripts to provide detail and clarification. The five participants are Amanda, Denise, Michael, Rita and Willa.

Transcript notation used in quoted extracts	
...	significant pause
<i>Italics</i>	spoken emphasis
[...]	material omitted
[the photo]	explanatory material added by researcher

Tension

The participants' experiences of exploring a photograph in therapy were marked by the presence of psychic tension, defined here as a state of mental and emotional strain. Tension was predominately understood and described by participants as anxiety, fear and resistance. It was experienced uniquely, and in varying degrees. Often it seemed to indicate an inner striving, unrest or imbalance due to forces or elements acting in opposition to each other. What follows are accounts of each participant's tension, detailing how it was experienced and outlining what forces were in play. Where applicable the accounts will also show how the state of tension offered an opportunity for a deeper understanding of self.

Amanda described her experience of looking at a photo of herself as a one year old as challenging. When asked to clarify she responded:

I used to have this theory that if you're a pretty baby you'd end up being really like the ugly duckling, whereas if you're an ugly baby you'd end up being a beautiful swan. Because I remember looking at baby photos of my sister, and she wasn't very attractive when she was a child and she is very beautiful now um and I felt that I was a very pretty, pretty baby and didn't feel so pretty later on in life.

Amanda's description is punctuated by comparisons between herself and her sister in terms of beauty and ugliness, childhood and adulthood, and seems to depict an internal struggle for reappraisal of identity and self esteem. Her challenge was to witness and recognise the origins of her tension, a task facilitated by the use of the photo.

Amanda had another experience with a different photo in therapy where she looked back at a painful childhood relationship in which she was bullied by a friend. Amanda said she was continually put down and 'always kind of the underdog' in the relationship, and spoke about how she felt before looking at the photo:

I felt quite, sort of nervous and sick because it felt still quite *big*. Um and I had to remember I was, you know, thirty and not..you know however old, ten or something. Um and I, cause you know I was always felt *huge* compared to her, cause she was quite sporty.

Amanda's tension arose from forces regarding self esteem (physical size) and in recalling these unfavourable comparisons between herself and her friend. When viewing the photo, her challenge was to tolerate the intense anxiety in the present moment when facing the past. It was a challenge to maintain awareness of an adult position and a child position at the same time without becoming overwhelmed.

Later she summarised both photo experiences:

Yeah I think the photo of me and this girl together felt, felt quite evil, it felt quite...do I want to go and relive this again? [...] The baby photo I was thinking oh yeah it's just a baby photo but actually it kind of hit me a bit more, and so it was, there was equal kind of forces in both but not the way I was expecting it to be.

Amanda mentions the presence of unexpected, equal forces in both photo experiences. These forces allude to the presence of tension, some of which was conscious beforehand, and some of which was unconscious but became more apparent during the photo work. The use of the word 'hit' in the statement indicates impact by a force that is unexpected, unseen until it is felt.

As in Amanda's case, Denise also experienced tension with her photo that originated in identity and sibling comparisons:

It was quite sad actually because we were then talking [in therapy] about the fact that my brother is very photogenic and he's got all these beautiful photos but with my mother, she always said to me you're not very photogenic.

She continued:

I was very much sidelined because my brother was the absolute star of the show. And ah, then it was kind of interesting that I chose this photo where my brother and I were together. I quite often..you know identify myself in relation to my brother.

At this point in the interview there was a noticeable dichotomy between sad feelings and the friendly manner in which Denise related her story. She smiled when relating how her brother was the star of the show, but an uneasy sense of discomfort underpinned the moment. Denise's tension stemmed from a desire to step outside the dynamic of being defined against her brother and be her own person. Additionally, she also wanted to break free of old family scripts:

It's all about looking good. And uh, there's something about...treating people like objects, you know, you're judged on your looks and as long as you look good that's successful.

Breaking free of old patterns and scripts would allow for greater freedom. As Denise put it, 'I was this, this sort of person created by other people and here I am, you know, being the author of my own destiny.' Her tension culminated in a challenge to experience herself as a more autonomous individual, but first she would have to touch the child's sadness that lay behind the judgement and comparison; the integral part of the tension.

Michael's challenge revolved around the desire to relate to others in a different way. He experienced tension at the idea of revealing his photo to his therapist:

I was kind of talking about it and then I remember getting slightly uncomfortable that she might start imagining what the photo might have been. And therefore she might start not listening to me, when I was talking.

Concerned about being heard and understood by his therapist, Michael experienced tension around the opposing forces of revealing and censoring, acceptance and rejection. The tension was amplified by the physical presence of the photo and the way in which it was treated:

She gave me her copy back...and I took it but I felt wow, how rejecting. I've brought something and I've shared it with you, you've discarded it [...] it's disposable apparently.

Michael's relationship with his therapist was a source of tension that reappeared in another experience with a different photo. In the photo Michael was 7 or 8, and dressed in his sister's clothes (a kilt and ruffled shirt) for a wedding. He explained what transpired:

She started saying oh what a sweet lovely photo. No that wasn't what was going on, what was going on in that photo is my...repressed rage at being, as I saw it, humiliated. And and then people..giving me praise for it. And you've just gone and done the same thing, she's just done the same thing.

Michael's tension around revealing pain and being understood was mirrored and recreated in the photo experience with his therapist, where the presence of the photo seemed to have an amplifying effect on the exchange. As Michael recounted this part of the story, there was a frisson in the interview room and the emergence of a testing, apprehensive flavour to the dialogue. The thought that this dynamic could all be played out between us, very easily, came at once. In this moment 'tread carefully' was the overriding message.

Rita's experience also seemed amplified by the presence of the photo. She repeatedly used the words 'uncomfortable' to describe how she felt when using her photo in therapy, and initially found it a 'hard concept' to grapple with. Her tension arose from childhood abuse:

I had something bad happen to me at the age of ten and then I kind of blocked it out, you know obviously didn't just happen at the age of ten but sort of through my young years, and I kind of buried it and buried and buried it.

Rita equated the act of burying with a 'locking down' of both good and bad memories. 'It's made me kind of erase childhood,' she noted. Her tension moved between the poles of suppression and expression, childhood and adulthood, trust and distrust and produced a high degree of mental strain and resistance:

I kept forgetting my photograph, forgetting (making air quotes) sort of you know because I didn't feel comfortable doing it [...] the first day that I decided that I was going to use the photograph I kind of had a real resolve and I kind of *marched* into the room like go on then, do your worst.

Rita's challenge was to face her 'black past' in order to tolerate and allow buried memories to surface. Her voice would lower almost to a whisper during the interview whenever she said the words 'black past'; it still seemed to hold incredible power and sway over her. She would

avert her eyes and there was a sense of holding the breath. In those moments there seemed a choice within the struggle: to speak or not to speak, to hold the past in the dark or bring it into the light of day.

Willa, a doctoral candidate in psychotherapy, described the use of her photo as trying to feel less afraid and encompassed a desire to knock both theory and her intellectual father 'off a pedestal.' She chose a photo of her parents as University students as a way to 'to give it a place in my story, or me wanting to be able to place him in my story.' She spoke about the difference between the man in the photo and the father she knew now, how distant they seemed.

However, her experience with the photo 'stayed at a level':

I was having therapy before work, at 7 o'clock in the morning so um I had to keep myself together anyway, and so forth. So it wasn't set up to be a very deep and moving um session anyway. It was part of a quite cognitive context.

Willa's challenge was to move away from the cognitive context into a deeper, more resonant feeling space. However in her photo experience, she remained 'at a level', perhaps owing to the overall set up of the therapy and a need to keep the experience safe and controlled. In this instance, the tension that manifested as resistance to moving towards affect proved stronger, leaving Willa's tension around her father and self esteem unresolved. When Willa spoke there was often a flat tone of reportage in her statements which seemed to serve two purposes: one was to highlight the resistance and the other to contain it within acceptable bounds. It all lent a curious mixture of competing motives and subtexts to the interview's atmosphere.

Though each participant experienced tension uniquely, a commonality noticed throughout was the tension of exploring the Self through time, of being able to hold and tolerate the forces of past and present to somehow find a way through without buckling under the pressure. The tension seemed to offer up a challenge for change, a window of opportunity unique for each individual.

If viewed as an energetic process, emotional and mental strain can be seen to represent the degree of kinetic psychological energy. The higher the degree of energy, the faster the rate of acceleration, and the more powerful the impact made upon contact to effect change. This can also be understood as amplification. In this process, change and transformation is effected through the presence of tension. Without tension, change is not possible (Hernandez, 2012; Huskinson, 2004; Johnson, 2010).

Bridging the past

The lived experience of exploring a photo in therapy encouraged the forging of connection with the past. Participants spoke about contacting old selves or identities, particular times and memories, and other people. The contact itself was described by participants in myriad ways but overall it was found that bridging the past is an active process made in the present moment through the medium of the photographic image.

Rita contacted her past through her photo and described the experience in several ways, one of which was like opening Pandora's box, another the sense of a door opening. The photo provided Rita access to this inner opening via a sense of transportation:

It's...taking me back to a little girl who's vulnerable and us giving her a voice um...um, so it's not just the face but it's kind of taking me back to the time and that's um for me quite relevant.

When Rita said this during the interview, the cadence and timbre of her voice changed to that of someone far younger. For her, the relevancy of the photo was equally tied to accessing a specific time period *and* contacting her ten year old self. She also described this process in terms of an unlocking:

The photograph has definitely unlocked for, for me um a sort of like a black past where um I've buried everything, and tried to sort of lead a normal life but feel like inside I'm kind of (inhales) you know breaking up but the exterior always stays the same.

The photo served as a key to the unconscious, used to unlock and access submerged memories that contributed to feelings of an internal breaking up. Rita desired to reach behind

the mask she displayed to the world and contact what lay behind it. Her ten year old self was waiting:

We put the photo on the chair as if there were three people in the room [...] it kind of worked because it made me separate...the child from myself to give in our case it's to give the child a voice so um it was kind of setting um her up as an individual at first so that I could almost talk to her.

Rita's contact with the past allowed a channel of communication to flow between her adult self and her child self. Contact was slow and steady, occurring over the course of seven or eight sessions. As Rita explained, 'it's not right *every* week for us.' It was noticed that Rita occasionally used plural pronouns during the interview to refer to her experience; it was uncertain if her use of 'we' and 'our' was also meant to encompass her ten year old self.

Denise also contacted her childhood self, and did so by giving attention to the image:

And I was looking at this sort of rar rar rar active thing going on and it was quite jolly, and then I remember just focusing on the eyes and I was thinking oh was that a bit sad in some ways and...I couldn't quite get away from that focus.

By focusing her attention on the eyes in the photo, Denise connected with her childhood self. The contact, when made, was somewhat unexpected:

There was something about just *gazing* at that image again [...] it just felt very direct and...yeah, it was, it was funny really because I hadn't realised what a..an intimate experience it was going to be.

Etymologically the word *gaze* translates as 'long look.' For Denise, the direct, intimate nature of connection was linked to the act of gazing, of having a long look at her younger self. Earlier she had spoken of childhood family messages around objectification and superficiality, and it seemed that through her photo work she moved beyond these to a deeper and more substantial place within. Several times she made reference to the photo image as

being 'eternal'; perhaps she was also referring to something eternal and lasting encountered within.

Michael connected to his childhood relationship with his mother through a photo of a kitten and a mother cat that he downloaded off the internet. The photo held the tension of their relationship:

There was something..clinging about it, cause the paw that was going over, could have been a ruuuur I'm going to keep you right there kind of a thing. Um and that's very symbolic of my relationship with my mother, who was quite a clinging, demanding woman.

Michael explained that the photo provided distance and clarity to better understand this relationship pattern because 'it's so much easier to see it, when it's kind of *there*, in front of me.' He continued:

[...] it was a gentle unfolding. First of all I saw the togetherness, and then I got a bit more, something uneasy there, it's that paw isn't it, yeah that's what it is...and it just kind of shhhhhew flopped open.

The unfolding precipitated an internal opening, one that bridged the past with the present and the internal with the external. As Michael explained, 'what I was seeing in that photo was actually mirroring what was going on inside my internal process, but I could look at it *removed* a bit.' Acting as symbol, the photo provided the visual information Michael needed in order to recognise the dynamics of his relationship with his mother. He also described how the photo invoked numerous childhood memories, where the cat as subject permitted a safer connection with the past. Michael related his sense of removal to watching a play and becoming a player if he so chose. This analogy indicates the photo's power to provide the freedom and ability to move past ego defenses in order to play out or 'perform' a scene from the past.

Amanda recalled a powerful experience of connecting with her baby self in a photo:

She has that sparkle in her eye and I just thought...if you'd kind of saw the photo you'd just sort of think she's going to be trouble. It was one of *those* moments [...] but I just had that kind of mischievous look.

Initially, the connection was difficult to instigate and Amanda shared that it was hard to 'know' that the baby was actually her. As in Denise's experience, the eyes in the photo were key. When asked what it took for her to make the connection, Amanda responded that it was seeing the sparkle back in her eye. Indeed, throughout the interview, whenever Amanda spoke of her baby self she produced a wry, mischievous smile that left no doubts about the veracity of the connection. She further described the process:

I *really* had to look at it, because normally I just look at photos of me and just go yeah, uh huh, whatever um so it was *really*...it didn't feel like me but when I looked at her I realised that she was still in me so it was quite something to nurture that baby.

Amanda's experience of 'really' looking at the photo echoes the 'gazing' that Denise had earlier described. For both, the process entailed holding a focused attention that connected them to the past and the child within. As Amanda explained 'it was a recognition of um...getting from there to getting to where I am now [...] and realising that she was still in me.' Both Amanda and Denise used their connection to the past as a way of understanding the journey of the self through time.

Amanda also related an additional experience of photo work in which she explored a painful time in her adolescent life of being bullied by a friend. Amanda felt nervous and sick before approaching the photo, as the memories still felt 'evil', 'big' and 'traumatic.' However, in facing the photo something changed. Amanda said 'when I looked at the photo actually she wasn't so much the evil monster that I thought she was,' and 'in that session um I was able to kind of see she was only a child.' Additionally, the connection 'triggered off a lot' of blocked memories that caused Amanda to wonder about the real circumstances of her friend's childhood situation and initiated an internal conversation with her ten year old friend.

Bridging the past seemed to help facilitate a process of reappraisal and demystification that yielded fresh perspective on the bullying. According to Amanda this was made possible due to returning to the 'original source' of the memories:

I could have picked another photo of a friend of mine, um but I think I went back to the original source. I felt like maybe that's what it was. I had to go back to the original but it wouldn't have felt right to go to the other one. Because I'd have had to gone back and unpick it anyway.

Amanda's sense of connection with the original source suggests an inherent intelligence to the process and a movement from unconscious, blocked memories towards conscious, activated ones.

Willa spoke about missing depth and resonance in her photo experience, and how it stayed at the level of thinking. At the time she had made a link between her shaky self-confidence in undertaking a doctorate programme to a remote relationship with her professor father, and had brought in a photo of her parents as students for further exploration:

I think I I did talk about how young they looked and how fresh they looked, I guess *him* was really what I was thinking of but um, and we went, we went on to talk about um...the fact that my dad would have been in the beginning stages of learning just like I am now.

Though there was some established connection with the past, Willa went to say that the experience stayed 'wordy' and 'cognitive', and shared 'I think it would have been a different and more penetrative experience with a different therapist actually.' It seemed something relational was lacking both in her photo experience and with her therapist. Ultimately, Willa's search to bridge the past was based on a longing for depth, feeling, and connection, and went largely unfulfilled at the time.

I think the photo was *there*, it's a, it's an inanimate object but I think the, the richness of it and of that experience was hampered by the dynamic we were in.

Movement into Emotion

For four out of the five participants, the lived experience of exploring a photo in therapy induced movement into emotional states of being. As with the previous theme, the movement into emotion indicates an active process occurring in the present moment. Participants described feeling a variety of emotions with their photo, with compassion and sadness being the most frequently discussed.

Denise talked about focusing her attention and gazing at her image in connecting with her childhood self. The act produced a shift in perception:

And there was something about kind of gathering information of yes, we're talking about this photo, let's talk about this and I'll give you the information. And then all of a sudden it just, I was looking at...myself, I was looking at the expression in the photo more and more and uh, just sort of felt some real...compassion for myself there.

Denise's statement traces the movement from thought to affect, head to heart that occurs around the fulcrum of sight and perception; the talking ceased, the looking began, and emotion emerged. This process enabled her to feel compassion for her child self. When asked about the impact of this experience, Denise answered:

There was something about connecting with my inner child and having compassion for my inner child which I was working on. And it just suddenly seemed to, to flow, there was something that I really...I really felt it when I was looking at the image, something really shifted in me in a kind of, really heartfelt way.

Here the dynamics of connecting with the child self and feeling emotion for the child self are experienced as a flowing and a shifting; markers that indicate changes in perception. Denise also spoke of the importance of her therapist's presence in the experience:

We were kind of together..looking..and there was a lot of space to to just look. I was being witnessed looking at my inner child and it kind of shifted you know, I was...I don't know it just just kind of shifted with that, with that witnessing...

For Denise space, togetherness and witnessing encouraged movement into emotion. Earlier she had described the experience as being surprisingly intimate. This is interesting considering what Willa had to say about her photo experience, where she was able to connect with the past but remained stuck in a cognitive, thinking state. Denise's statement hints at the importance of therapeutic relationship in encouraging movement into emotion when thinking is the predominant function for an individual.

A similar significance of the therapeutic relationship in eliciting emotion was also found in Michael's descriptions of his experiences, in particular the photo of him wearing his sister's clothes at a wedding. Michael knew the photo represented his repressed rage and humiliation at wearing the clothes and being given praise for it. The pattern was reenacted with his therapist in the session, when she commented on the 'sweet lovely photo.' When asked if he was able to connect with the rage and humiliation, he responded:

I did, yes, and I expressed it, and I told her what was going on, and I told her why I was not...happy with her reaction.

Michael not only connected with the memory and past feelings through the photo, he also re-experienced the emotions in the present moment with his therapist. He equated her response with mother transference:

...and when she became bad mum, by behaving as my actual mum, who would have said oh don't you look lovely in that photo, that really stoked the fires of the transference.

The subject of the photo image (Michael as a child) helped produce a relational experience within the therapeutic relationship that 'stoked the fires' of transference and induced swift movement into emotion. Earlier, this amplification was discussed in the tension theme, when Michael's therapist handed him back her copy of the cat photo, causing him to feel hurt and rejected. In that experience, the photo served as a symbolic object in the room that induced movement into emotion. Whether functioning as subject or object, the presence of the photo assisted movement into affective states.

Amanda shared what it was like in the moment when she connected with her baby self through a photo:

I felt (exhales) um, kind of, part of me felt kind of *sad*, because I knew what she had to go through um I kind of told her don't grow up, don't lose your innocence, don't lose your childhood too quickly.

Amanda felt compassion and empathy through her internal dialogue and connection with her baby self. She was able to reclaim and accept this part of herself back into the fold with love:

...it was very emotional, it was kind of very...(exhales) uh I want to say the word spiritual, cause it felt *really* kind of *powerful* um in the sense that uh, she *was* part of me even though I didn't register it. Um and that I could nurture her in that kind of spiritual way [...] you know there's times where I have to be serious and everything but it's, it's okay for that to happen. Um to have a balance, I guess. Yeah and it's okay to have that sparkle, and that kind of confidence.

There is a palpable motif of self-acceptance in this depiction, where self-acceptance is not just expressed as a quality of affect but in more literal terms. Amanda is talking about accepting an aspect of personality (the baby self and all she represents) back into living conscious awareness. A movement into emotion seems a vital component of this act of reclamation, for without the self-acceptance she would be unable to nurture and express this part of herself.

For Rita, accessing memories of childhood abuse and connecting with her ten year old self through a photo led her to feel vulnerable, scared and upset. It was the visual impact of the photo that prompted movement into emotion:

...um before, just talking the words is so, I wouldn't say clinical but it's sort of like um they're just words, they're not quite as hurtful as a visual aide, because a visual aide kind of makes you (inhales) feel more of uh of the *bad* feelings I guess because you're more back to how you were then.

As discussed earlier, Rita experienced a sense of transportation in looking at the photo when she connected to the past. The visual nature of the photo also initiated a bypass into painful emotions that words had been unable to accomplish. Her use of the term 'visual aide' as a stand-in for photo implies sight and assistance, and suggests an inherent meaning and importance of the photo's helping role. And it was not just about being able to bridge the past for Rita:

To to connect but also, to *feel* those feelings again. In my case I've um you know I've blocked them and buried them and uh um, you you to see the visual aide was much more bringing it back rather than just talking the words, it was feeling the feelings as well to *see* the photograph.

Connecting and feeling were both important parts of the overall dynamic for Rita, and the visual component of the photo played a key role:

To actually see the visual of a ten, of *me* at ten was kind of um, you know just put into place that I was just very young and very, very vulnerable.

In this sentence Rita shifts from saying 'ten', to '*me* at ten', demonstrating the personalising effect of seeing the photo. It was as if she moved near enough to the photo's subject to enable a shift in perception. Though a subtle difference in speech, it speaks volumes about Rita's ability to unearth and accept part of her past. Another important aspect is the tangibility of the photo. This relates to the material quality of the photo as well as the mind's ability to precisely identify the subject. Tangibility was relevant not just for Rita, but for other participants as well. Michael spoke about the importance of tangibility in easing anxiety within relationships:

...at least when we have the photo in front of us, we're both looking at exactly the same thing. I don't have to describe to you what something is like, because you can *see* it, as well as I can, and that's half the battle...for me.

As Michael said this during the interview his voice was soft and tinged with a kind of sadness and timidity that illuminated the risk he was taking in voicing this point. It seemed the

interview served as an important act of self-expression, a tangible symbol of Michael's daring to be in relationship in a different way, despite the inherent anxiety.

Amanda's photo helped validate her memories and assuage self-blame:

Without the photograph it was like um, I might have thought I was making it up or something.

[...] So seeing the photo was actually reaffirming that all this stuff did happen.

Denise spoke about the photo being akin to 'physical evidence.' When her therapist made an interpretation, she was able to see it played out in the photo. Of that experience Denise said:

It was very powerful in that sense to physically see it rather than just think oh okay my therapist may not be quite right about that, maybe that's her stuff you know, but this was really (laughs) black and white.

Tangibility bears influence on the dynamics of bridging the past and movement into emotion, where it acts as a potent visual anchor. Though it could have been included as a major theme in its own right, it was decided to include it here, as it is so interwoven with Rita's ability to access emotions. As she put it, 'you can touch more then so you can feel more um rather than just talking without a visual aide.'

Generativity

The final theme addresses the power of the photo work experience to generate further transformation in life. Participants described internalising the photo image, gaining fresh perspective and insight, and using the photo as a transitional object between therapy sessions. These additional experiences occurred for participants after having had the original experience of working with a photo in therapy.

Michael shared how his cat photo continued to be of service after bringing it to therapy. Years later he remembered it in a different context, when he was about to enter into a new relationship, and said 'it revealed to me..in a very clear way...what was unhealthy about the way I was wanting to embark on the relationship.' Michael described his internal image of

the photo as a 'shorthand' that when remembered in time could be used for protection. The photo, as an internalised message, was used as guidance in life.

During the interview, Michael remarked on how strongly he was connecting to the photos themselves and the details of recalling how he felt in the therapy sessions. The photos became visually present for him:

...yes, cat one on my left, kilt one on my right, um and it's like they're...wow they're *floating* [...] they're 3D, and they're here, I can see you and I can see them, and that's just great.

Michael went on to add that the photos seemed to contain a different dimension, or an added dimension, perhaps offering a clue as to what lay behind his ability to internalise and recall the photos within the present moment during the interview. What would provide the necessary conditions for producing a sense of a different dimension, or depth with the photos? Clearly memory is of paramount importance, so the photo experience in therapy must be memorable. And in order to be memorable, it must also be impactful. Therefore, the impact of the photo experience in therapy stimulates memory and initiates generative powers to flow into life.

Rita's experience can also be considered in this way. Her photo work gave her ten year old self a voice which resulted in the sense of having a third person in the therapy room. Rita imbued her photo with meaning to take with her outside of therapy. As a transitional object, her photo was used as reminder and resource upon which to draw strength:

And I carry my photograph with me and if I feel (inhales) a little bit sort of vulnerable I kind of look at it and think you know, how far I've come and how strong I've become so no-nothing can make me feel as bad as the time when I was ten...

Rita produced an audible intake of breath whenever she said the word 'vulnerable', a method of bolstering inner strength that reinforced the role of the photo as talisman. She added that the photo helped 'pick away at the...behind the façade to realise why I deal with things as I do.' In stimulating memory, the photo work provided access to the child self who existed behind the façade as a living entity in the present moment. This prompted Rita to begin to

change her thinking and behaviours, which ultimately led to a greater understanding of herself.

Amanda also experienced lasting and reverberative effects from her photo experiences. During the interview, when asked about the impact she responded softly that ‘I can still see those photos in my head’ and ‘I can still feel her in me of, you know, in my heart, she’s still there.’ Amanda was able to reconnect in the moment and know that this aspect still lived in her heart, all of which suggested that a longer term process of integration was occurring. There was lasting significance in reclaiming part of herself:

Yeah, um...knowing it’s okay to be mischievous um knowing it’s alright but if I want to cry I can cry [...] it’s alright just to kind of pacify I I guess if things are tough or I’m tired or, you know, whenever things aren’t going right. Um, to be able to laugh you know, at silly things and um...and it’s not all kind of...and it’s having that innocence back.

Amanda’s experience instigated transformation of identity through a reclamation of self, with particular emphasis on recapturing innocence. She also spoke about making peace with the childhood friend that had bullied her:

It’s okay to go back there, cause I can still, it still happened but it’s okay [...] It’s okay to feel sad for that part of my life [...] It doesn’t feel so sinister anymore.

Amanda’s photo experience generated fresh perspective and an ability to make reparations with the past that allowed her to revisit the past without becoming overwhelmed.

For Denise, the experience of connecting with her childhood self was intimate and direct. During the interview she spoke about being in touch with that memory again:

I can see the photo and I can I can feel the feeling and the looking at the eyes and it just feels a bit...it just feels quite, sort of poignant. You know, sad but good in a way you know, tender, kind of tender.

This was by far the most emotive moment in the interview, where a gentle compassion was felt to permeate the room. Denise's ability to reconnect with the memory encouraged reflection on the change she experienced afterwards:

I think that was almost like a ripple effect, it changed our therapy and I think it just changed my feelings about relationships and intimacy in some way that there was some kind of space and interest for that little delicate young part of myself. And, and it was a real, it was a real moment.

The depiction of a moment as 'real' points to the idea that for Denise, the generative powers of the experience lay within the realms of truth and authenticity. This 'realness' is echoed in Rita's experience of picking away at her façade, Michael's use of the cat photo as trusted guidance, and Amanda's heartfelt sense of her baby self.

Denise used the term 'ripple effect' to describe the changes in life that occurred post experience, alluding to the image of water in motion, expanding ever outwards. It speaks to the fluidity of the experience to generate change. Willa, whose photo experience differed from the other participants, also used the term 'ripple effect' when describing its impact:

I think I got more mileage in the ripple effect around it...I got more headway, more profitable thinking from the fact that I took it [issue around father and self-confidence] to different arenas.

Willa referred to her photo experience as part of a series of thinking that was embedded within the wider context of her life. As her experience was deemed unfulfilling, it was interesting that she chose to participate in the study; presumably the fact that it was unfulfilling held some important meaning. Indeed, Willa remarked that it was an example of how she undercut her experiences and 'just another illustration of how I settled.'

What was most striking about the interview was the amount of emergent fresh perspective and insight. At numerous points Willa connected with the memory of the photo in the present moment. In these moments her eyes would light up whenever she gained insight into

the temporary nature of life, her lack of connection to heritage and roots, and inability to look back at the past. One moment seemed particularly representative:

When I think about the photo now...choosing it I suppose and and seeing it...and having it in that therapist's room on the coffee table, the main thing that I'm...thinking about is not the joy of love, or um how optimistic or how lovely it is that they are frozen in time , but the sadness about how things get fragmented. And you get thrown off course...and things. And it's difficult, because I'm saying that *now*, I'm revisiting it *now*, but the use of the photo was as I said, about a year ago...

Willa had a desire to go deeper and delve into richness: with her therapist, her heritage, her family, herself. During the interview there was a sadness and longing coming through in the moments when she connected to the photo in the present moment, despite its physical absence. This ability to connect to the past in the present moment seems an important hallmark of photo work as a generative experience, where the possibility for transformation is always available, now.

In Willa's above statement there is an impression of a movement towards closure, where she said things and understood things during the interview that were perhaps left unsaid or undone in her earlier photo experience; this gave a distinct impression of something being worked out for her, between us, during the interview. Though her initial photo experience was disappointing, ultimately it proved generative, where her memory of the photo and feelings of disappointment proved powerful enough to stimulate new understanding.

Denise, in describing her photo experience, summarised the generative dimension of photo work beautifully:

...a photo's just like a tiny fragment and it's almost like let's stop the film and just look at something, pay attention. And it changes and it changes, and it's like oh my goodness you know...and and you could just go on really, looking at this, it's quite eternal in some ways.

Summary of findings

The four themes of tension, bridging the past, movement into emotion, and generativity are dynamic and kinetic in that they delineate movement and activity. In analysing participant accounts it was found that the themes exist in relationship with one another like ingredients in a recipe, or agents in a chemical reaction. One of Rita's statements illustrated this, where she related how her photo work helped with connecting to the past, feeling the feelings, and seeing the photo; all within the same sentence. For Rita, each part made a valuable contribution to the whole experience: there was no particular primacy, more an intricate process that facilitated inner change. Rumi's poem *Chickpea to Cook* captures the idea, where the cook says to the chickpea:

Don't you try jump out.
You think I'm torturing you.
I'm giving you flavour,
so you can mix with spices and rice
and be the lovely vitality of a human being
(Barks, 1990, p. 138).

Tension can feel like torture. For participants, where they tolerated this and continued with the photo work, tension mingled with the past and with emotion to generate self transformation. Whilst the mingling of 'ingredients' was unique to each participant, the main themes seemed to emerge from their accounts like entities acting in an evolving, chemical process highly reminiscent of cooking; each theme could be tasted on the palate, but overall served to comprise and enhance the dish. Applying the metaphor of cooking suggests that when exploring a photograph in therapy, the themes of tension, bridging the past, movement into emotion, and generativity combine to create an experience that is repeatable, unique, and greater than the sum of its parts. The following Discussion section expands on this idea in greater detail, exploring how the use of a photograph in therapy helps facilitate a process of self-transformation.

Discussion

Through adopting a phenomenological approach situated within a transpersonal paradigm, this study attempts to answer the following question: what is the lived experience of exploring a personal photograph in therapy? Five participants (Amanda, Denise, Michael, Rita and Willa) were interviewed, and four main themes emerged out of analysis and were presented in the previous chapter: tension, bridging the past, movement into emotion, and generativity. This discussion critically evaluates findings by exploring these themes in relation to the following topics: phototherapy, perception and memory, transpersonal counselling and psychotherapy, and other therapeutic interventions. Also included is a critique of the study, considerations for future research, and a claim to an addition to knowledge.

Findings in relation to phototherapy

One interpretation of this study's findings points to the *catalytic nature* of exploring a personal photograph in therapy, in that it can hasten and facilitate access to psychic tension, movement into emotion, bridging the past, and generate new experience. This is not an original view concerning photographs in therapy; several phototherapy practitioners have written about this intervention as a catalyst, whether in relation to narrative (Wheeler, 2009), to communication (Martin, 2009), even to psychotherapy in general (Walker, 1982). This study agrees with others that exploring a personal photograph in therapy is catalytic, and furthermore believes it is catalytic for the purposes of self-transformation; this topic will be addressed later in the discussion on findings in relation to transpersonal counselling and psychotherapy. First, it seems necessary to define the meaning of catalyst for the sake of clarity. The word itself derives from the Greek *katalyein*, 'to dissolve', from *kata* 'down' or 'completely', plus *lyein* 'to loosen' ('Catalyst,' 2010). Hence a catalyst works to dissolve down or loosen something, but what exactly? In this study several participants achieved sudden insight and felt deep emotions during their photo experiences. Denise, for example, experienced a sudden inner 'flowing', alluding to the presence of an inner channel clear of obstructions. It was as if certain psychological barriers loosened or dissolved when engaging with the photograph that allowed something new to emerge into conscious awareness.

Therefore, the experience of exploring a photograph in therapy can be understood as a catalyst in helping to loosen or dissolve barriers between conscious and unconscious content. Through the findings - much of which was articulated in the participants' own words - one gets an idea as to which psychological barriers were loosened for participants in their experiences of working with a photograph in therapy (i.e. rejection, self-censorship, repression of past material) as well as which were not (i.e. resistance towards emotion and affect); at least not right away. Willa, for example, did not find her photo experience in therapy to be catalytic, yet during the interview was able to discuss why, describe what she thought was missing, generate new insights, and feel emotions like sadness and longing; all suggestive of catalytic experience, but moving with its own unique rhythm, pace and timing. Perhaps Willa's original experience in therapy had planted a seed that awakened when the time was right? Rita's experiences with her photograph also moved with a slower pace, where she brought her photograph into therapy for exploration numerous times over a period of months. Given the vast amount of resources Rita used in creating and maintaining barriers to her submerged 'black past', one can understand her need for safety and slower pace. In contrast, Amanda's experience of reclaiming her baby self occurred during one therapy session, leading to the point that not only does working with a photograph in therapy loosen psychological barriers, it does so according to the individual's own pace.

Due to its catalytic nature, the use of photographs in therapy is powerful work which can result in transference re-enactment. In discussing 'Re-enactment therapy', Martin (2001; 2009) states how the presence of the photograph can amplify the client's past relationship dynamics, bringing them straight into the therapeutic relationship; something also witnessed in the study. Michael's account, where transferentially his therapist became 'mother' during the photo experience, speaks to the potency of this intervention. In the end Michael terminated the therapy, partly due to the therapist's 'clumsy handling' of his material during the photo work. At several points during Michael's interview it seemed a similar re-enactment could have occurred when discussing his photograph(s), where a simmering anger entered the room and threatened to explode. In contrast Denise, Amanda, and Rita spoke about the gentle, kind and spacious qualities they experienced with their therapist. Whatever the outcome, the participant accounts demonstrate this intervention's effectiveness in bringing client and therapist *into relationship*. Martin (2009) advocates clear contracting and boundaries with clients prior to any photo work, something this study would also support. It

is a powerful intervention, requiring therapeutic sensitivity to transference and potential re-enactment.

This study's findings help fill the deficit in phototherapy research in understanding the lived experience as it occurs for an individual, especially an individual *outside* the researcher's own clinical practice. By providing a neutral, safe interview space, it was hoped participants would be able to say whatever they wanted to say, resulting in more authentic accounts. Most current phototherapy research is mined from the researcher's own clinical practice (Glover-Graf, 2006; Koretsky, 2001; Walker, 1982), describes techniques of working with photographs (Berman, 1993; Weiser, 1999), or explores theory (Halkola, 2009; Wheeler, 2009). This study is unique in that it attempts to understand the phenomenon as it was experienced and articulated by the clients themselves; vital information for any therapist with an interest in phototherapy.

Findings in relation to perception and memory

The four themes of tension, bridging the past, movement into emotion, and generativity signpost an essential finding; that the use of photographs in therapy is *relational* work, where the client relates to the photograph within the therapeutic relationship. In particular, the relational dimension of working with a photograph has much to inform and teach about memory and perception, especially in terms of accessing the present moment. The theme 'bridging the past' refers to times when an individual interacts with his or her memory in the present moment; it was experienced during interviews in moments when a participant's past came alive in the room, where events, people, and images felt accessible and spirited. During these times the room was charged with a spontaneous vitality that often accompanied awareness of emotions such as compassion, tenderness, even wonder; feelings I was also able to name and experience alongside participants. These were direct, powerful experiences of entering the present moment through a relational dimension which deepened understanding of participants' inner worlds; perhaps these interview moments echoed or reflected something from the participants' original photo experiences?

This study found a similarity amongst participants who reported their photo experiences as having initiated personal change: during the photo work, all interacted with memory *as it*

appeared in consciousness, meaning at some point they relinquished mental control and allowed the experience to unfold. The use of visual imagery such as a photograph helps bypass cognitive filters such as rationalisation, verbalisation, or other protective defenses to provide easier access to the unconscious (Weiser, 1999). A photograph's visual content represents known, conscious signifiers (people, places, things) yet can also symbolise unconscious material hovering on the threshold of consciousness, a pattern evidenced by some of the participants' strong attractions to particular photos without knowing why. These attractions could refer to Bernecker's (2009) concept of authenticity, where one feels an inner resonance that validates and promotes one's subjective memories. Therefore any strong yet mysterious attraction to a photograph may signify that meaningful content may soon emerge from the unconscious concerning memory. In this study Michael, Amanda, and Denise chose particular photographs without knowing why; their lack of preconceived notions allowed for more open explorations in therapy that yielded unexpected results. For example, Denise was drawn to her child self's eyes in the photo, and was surprised to find sadness there. The surprise bypassed cognitive control, enabling Denise to interact with memory in the present moment without falling into the usual pattern of dismissing her child self. This meant Denise could relate to her child self *as she appeared*, an experience she described as unexpected, intimate, and tender.

As Khan (1995) observes, memory is alive, a sentient world we relate to as if being to being; a question that emerged through research was how does one relate to memory in this way? This study found that one answer is to interact with memory through perception. Perception is a state of becoming aware of something through the senses in a touch-like, enactive way (Noë, 2004). Becoming aware of something means that one is aware of their awareness. It means one is conscious of what is occurring through the senses as each moment unfolds; not an easy feat, as one must first bypass cognitive control. A photograph becomes integral in this process by acting as a springboard to memory (Garry & Gerrie, 2005) to help an individual create a bridge between the past and the present. Rita's work with her photograph illustrates this, where she used her photograph to encounter her 8 year old self, bringing her alive in the therapy room to enable dialogue between her, Rita and the therapist. This allowed Rita, as her adult self, to feel the vulnerability of her past self in the present moment. In linking short term memory with long term memory, Rita could relate with her child self and with her 'black past' in conscious awareness. Michael's experience also demonstrates

this, where his kilt photograph enabled him to embody his child self's feelings of humiliation and rage in the present moment through the therapist's response to his photograph. For Rita and Michael, their photograph provided the means to relate with memory through perception.

From sensorimotor (Noë, 2004; Thompson, 2005) and phenomenological (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002) perspectives, perception concerns embodiment and creation of experience. Therefore in photo work, when a client looks at a photograph it is important that what they see (or remember) is anchored not only in the mind, but in other senses like the body and affective states; this seemed to produce a more resonant experience for participants like Amanda, Rita, Michael and Denise. Willa was disappointed in her photograph experience, and attributed this to staying 'only in her head'. Her experience provides an important clue about perception: the mind can be a highly effective barrier. This point was further illustrated through Amanda and Denise's accounts, where both described discrepancies in the act of seeing. Amanda said she needed to 'really look' at the photograph in order to connect with her baby self, and Denise described how 'gazing' at her photograph assisted connection with her child self. For both there were clear differences between instinctually relying upon the faculty of sight, and applying conscious awareness to the act. Initially it seemed that mind acted as barrier to perception, kicking in only when they became aware of looking at their child selves. Denise described this moment as a 'shift' that occurred when she focused her gaze upon the eyes in the photo. This finding highlights a distinct difference between sight and perception, where sight is one of the body's sensory faculties and perception is one's conscious awareness of bodily faculties like sight, touch, and affective states.

Sight does not define perception; it is but a dimension of it. This is an important distinction to maintain when working with a photograph in therapy, where there is often an inherent belief that 'seeing is believing'. Research into false memories and photographs demonstrates the lasting power of this belief (see Garry & Gerrie, 2005), something Bernecker flags and dispels when he claims that 'authenticity does not guarantee truth' (2009, p. 216). Hence, an individual experiencing a memory as authentic does not automatically make the memory factually true. Authenticity, also known as subjective experience, is a marker of perception, where one consciously determines the resonance, or sensate feeling, of a personal memory. In the humanistic, existential and transpersonal therapies, emphasis is placed on authenticity, on respecting and attempting to understand the client's subjective experience of life (Rowan,

2005); a quest for resonance, not a search to verify facts. It is the client's internal response to a photograph that matters in therapy, not the factual truths of what occurred based on the photographic image. In working with photographs seeing is not believing, *perceiving* is believing.

Others have hinted at the difference between seeing and perceiving, further highlighting the differences between the two actions. Author and poet Henry Thoreau wrote 'the question is not what you look at, but what you see' (1851/2012, p. 86), alluding to the mobilisation of consciousness necessary for perception. Photographer Dorothea Lange also touched on the dichotomy between sight and perception:

This benefit of seeing...can come only if you pause a while, extricate yourself from the maddening mob of quick impressions ceaselessly battering us all our lives, and look thoughtfully at a quiet image...the viewer must be willing to pause, to look again, to meditate (Elliott, 1966, p. 6).

Here Lange provides instruction on perception: look thoughtfully, pause, look again, meditate. In contemplating her statement, it seemed she was describing 'respect', a word originating from the Latin *re-* meaning 'back' (as in repeat) and *specere*, meaning 'to look' (as in spectator); taken together, these root words mean 'to look again', or 'to notice with attention' (Müller, 1861/2010). Lange's statement subtly equates the act of perception with respect. In this study, four out of five participants described how the act of 'noticing with attention', or 'looking again' at a photograph in therapy had initiated some form of understanding, change and healing. This study proposes that what was occurring for these participants in therapy was an act of self-respect, encouraged by the medium of the photograph. Engaging in acts of perception, or self-respect, may be important work for certain clients in therapy, and thus worth pursuing with photographs. As mentioned earlier, a catalyst encourages perception by breaking down or dissolving the psychological barriers. What this study found was that the use of a photograph in therapy can act as a catalyst to perception, or self-respect.

Findings in relation to transpersonal counselling and psychotherapy

Up to this point the discussion has detailed the following characteristics regarding the experience of exploring a photograph in therapy: its catalytic nature; its relational nature; interaction with memory as it appears in consciousness; relating to memory through perception; differentiating sight from perception; and acting as catalyst to self-respect. This has helped set the scene in order to relate the findings to transpersonal counselling and psychotherapy practice, where the dimension of self-transformation will be addressed specifically. The themes of tension, bridging the past, movement into emotion and generativity all play a part in self-transformation; what follows is an attempt to answer how, and in what ways they inform the process of self-transformation. Washburn's spiral theory of human development will be used to better understand the studied phenomenon as it pertains to the transpersonal.

In reading Washburn's *Embodied Spirituality in a Sacred World* there was an immediate recognition that the participants' photo experiences were moments embedded within a greater process of self-development. In his book, Washburn (2003) presents a theory arguing that human development follows a spiral path. This theory is grounded in earthly experience, where spiritual development is embodied and various stages 'worked through' in life. Originating in psychoanalytic depth psychology, Washburn's spiral perspective states that early in life the ego separates from the essential sources of life (deep psyche, or Dynamic Ground). Later, if one is to achieve a healthier, more integrated way of being in the world, the ego must return and reopen itself to the deep psyche, allowing the sources of life to re-awaken. As Washburn states 'we must spiral back to the deep psyche if we are to spiral up to life lived in its fullness' (p. 2). This theory traces development through three stages (pre-personal, personal and transpersonal), and defines six major dimensions of experience that unfold along the spiral path as one moves through these stages: the unconscious, the energy system, the ego system, the perceived other, the experiential body, and the life-world.

During the pre-personal stage of development, the ego undergoes separation from Dynamic Ground and from other individuals in life. This is a necessary phase of development where the child begins to view his or her self as distinct from others. The personal stage is the continued development of the ego through to maturity in adult life. The transpersonal stage

can be thought of as the reemergence of the Dynamic Ground back into life. Washburn (2003) relates how this is a potential stage; not everyone will partake of the transpersonal stage. Movement from the personal to the transpersonal entails entering a path of development that leads *beyond* the mature ego. One must spiral down to Dynamic Ground in order to reconnect with Spirit and go beyond ego. This phase is defined as *regression in the service of transcendence*, where the Dynamic Ground opens as a psychic underworld. Washburn (2003) equates this process to a dark odyssey into the unconscious, fraught with unleashed energy and the return of repressed material. The ego experiences conflict within itself, where psyche seems to split into ‘bivalent’ (opposing) extremes. This bivalent power marks the liberation of Dynamic Ground into consciousness, and ego must withstand and transcend these forces. It is a necessary yet challenging phase one must go through in order to experience regeneration and integration of self.

There were found to be three strong links between this study’s findings and *regression in the service of transcendence*. One link was the ego’s experience of bivalence, or conflict through opposing forces. The theme of tension, with its emphasis on mental and emotional strain, seems to echo this phase. All participants experienced tension in some form in their photograph experiences, where tension accompanied the ego’s approach to the unconscious, and to repressed material; then the photograph became, as Rita called it, a ‘visual aid’ in assisting this journey. For participants, tension often indicated an inner unrest due to forces or elements acting in opposition to each other. During their accounts, tension seemed to amplify the closer they came to revisiting repressed material. Amanda felt sick and anxious before exploring her photograph, and described a felt sense of ‘evil’ around what the photo represented. Rita described her fears of uncovering her buried ‘black past’, and Michael related how his therapist became ‘bad mother’. These descriptions all accord with what Washburn says about bivalence, where the ego feels caught between forces of good and evil, of light and dark. During this time the individual perceives both the inner and the outer world through the bivalent filter. As a result the photograph becomes invested with bivalent power, where it seems to both contain and/or amplify the tension for the individual. Using Washburn’s theory, the theme of tension can be understood as the ego’s anxiety in meeting the unconscious, where contact with the past may threaten to overwhelm.

The second link between this study and *regression in the service of transcendence* is that of regression. For Washburn regression concerns journeying to the unconscious and meeting repressed material with an adult perspective. Clarifying this phase, Washburn states:

...it is a revisiting of the past in the present moment, thus regaining what was lost as a turning point in personal and transpersonal development (personal communication, August 6, 2012).

Regression is the often difficult and painful ‘service’ that helps one to transcend the constraints of the past. Rita’s account demonstrates what this might look like in the therapy room, where again and again, she used her photograph to contact and vivify her 8 year old self. The photograph was sometimes put on a chair to encourage dialogue. Through this process, Rita began to access unconscious, repressed material; material she referred to in terms of burial, darkness and ‘locking down’. The themes of bridging the past and movement into emotion appear in regression, where the use of perception and memory is crucial to the process. Rita was able to relate to her memory in the form of her 8 year old self, being to being. She did so through perception, where she could speak with her child in the present moment and feel the vulnerability and sadness of her child self.

Moreover, the photograph became a transitional object for Rita, something used for psychological comfort and to support development of the self (Winnicott, 1953). Winnicott’s clinical discovery of the transitional object originates out of research on the mother/child relationship. A transitional object is designated by the child and exists in an intermediate zone between self and other as a third object; Winnicott is most interested on the *use* one makes of the object in self-development (Vanier, 2011). Here Winnicott’s focus on ‘use’ may parallel Washburn’s idea of ‘service’, where both concepts function as paths to transcendence: one from a child perspective, and one from an adult perspective. According to Winnicott, the therapist’s role is reparative, providing a ‘good enough’ environment for the client to venture out of his or her protective shell (Vanier, 2011), what Rita referred to as her ‘façade’. In Rita’s case, when outside of therapy, she used her photograph as a visual reminder of her personal strength and courage, a talisman commemorating survival of traumatic experience. As transitional object it became a bridge between her false self (façade) and her true self (represented by her 8 year old self) that facilitated communication and contact.

Bollas (1987) writes about the adult life phenomenon of searching for objects identified with metamorphosis of self, or ‘transformational objects’. These objects signify an individual’s deep desire for an experience of self-transformation. Bollas believes the infant has knowledge of mother as transformational experience, not just as object. Therefore, the transformational object differs from the transitional object in that the object becomes ‘known’ as a recurrent state of being rather than as a direct representational object. In Rita’s case her photograph may have become both kinds of objects, serving both as direct representation of her child self and her past, and as urge for self-transformation. The transformational object interpretation can be applied to the other participant accounts: might their experiences with a photograph in therapy represent a desire for metamorphosis, and a way of connecting with that drive?

This introduces the third link between this study and Washburn’s theory, that of transcendence. To transcend is to move or go beyond the range or limits of something (‘Transcend’, 2010) and in Rita’s case this would equate to transcending the abuse experienced in childhood. In psychological terms transcendence could be translated as healing, growth, or transformation. As seen earlier, Rita used her photograph in ‘service’ of transcendence. At the time of the interview, she was firmly situated in this process; there was a strong mix of fear, darkness, hope, and light surrounding her experience. It would be interesting to see what occurs for Rita 6 months, a year, 5 years on. What her account demonstrates is the *evolving* dimension of photo work, and in a greater sense, transcendence. This relates to the generativity theme of this study, where Rita’s photograph could be revisited again and again in therapy in an evolving process of self-transformation. This is also represented by other participant experiences like Willa’s, where the mere thought of her photograph at a later date (during the interview) generated new insight and understanding. Transcendence, as mediated through regression, works over time. It includes catalytic moments, or turning points, but it is a life long process.

Washburn (2003) writes that transcendence presages regeneration in Spirit, where Dynamic Ground begins to express itself in positive, benevolent ways. The connection between transcendence and regeneration is fluid and overlapping, and links to the theme of generativity, where something is created or generated through the photo experience in therapy. As evidenced by this study’s findings, there are different ways this may be

expressed. One is Michael's experience of his cat photo becoming an internalised image used for guidance in relationships, a personal 'shorthand'. Another way regeneration can manifest is through experiences like Amanda and Denise had in reclaiming, accepting, and nurturing their child selves. Washburn stresses the importance of being in contact with the child perspective, that playful, open and instinctually spiritual dimension of life. Contact with these forces comes from mending the ego system, moving from a egoic split in self-representation to that of integration. This echoes Bradshaw's (1999) thoughts on inner child work, where finding and reclaiming one's child results in spiritual regeneration, transformation and creativity. Amanda spoke of her photo experience with her baby as 'spiritual' and loving, and Denise related the tender compassion she felt towards her child self. Bradshaw goes on to state that the child is the one who unites opposites, one who heals and makes whole. Used as visual anchor to encourage memory and perception, a photograph can play an important role in therapy when working on developing relationship with the inner child.

Findings in relation to other interventions

Weiser (1999) takes the approach that phototherapy and creative arts interventions are not mutually exclusive but interrelated, portraying phototherapy as a set of useful techniques that therapists from any modality can use in client work. This study adopts Weiser's view when comparing the use of photographs to interventions commonly used in transpersonal counselling and psychotherapy such as sand play, visualisations, dreamwork, and art creation. Whilst all are separate interventions, they are complementary in working to stimulate the unconscious through nonverbal means. All of these methods activate inner process, and rely upon symbolic visual representation to move information from unconscious towards conscious understanding; using photographs is just another way to do this.

Interventions such as visualisations and dreamwork often seek entry to the unconscious through active imagination, where the client dialogues with internal imagery (von Franz, 1993). As seen in this study, it is possible to use a photograph to initiate contact with the active imagination. One example is Amanda's description of internally conversing with a childhood friend who bullied her, an experience initiated through engagement with her photograph. Sontag describes photos as magical attempts to 'contact or lay claim to another

reality' (1978, p. 16), a possible reference to the imaginal realm, where active imagination takes place; a fluid space between the conscious and the unconscious existing outside of mental control (Rowan, 2005). Winnicott, in discussing the use of transitional objects, relates how an individual places the object outside his or her omnipotent control, thereby perceiving it 'as an entity in its own right' (as cited in Bernstein, 2011, p. 129). Winnicott's concept of transitional object use is linked to active imagination in that one may perceive an object as a separate entity from self and dialogue with it in the imaginal realm, as Amanda did with her childhood friend via her photograph.

There are several reasons why the use photographs in therapy stands out from other interventions. One is an externalised, visual component that lends a certain distance or sense of space in engagement; participants like Michael and Denise commented on this. The photograph is mediated through automatic means, by a machine, and not produced by hand, or internally generated. Perhaps because of this, most participants experienced the photograph as a direct yet gentle way of working. There is also the element of choice in selection, where a client decides which photograph to bring; even if this reason is not consciously known. The same cannot be said of dreams, visualisations, or art work, which are spontaneously generated from within. The direction of consciousness with photos moves from the outside in (external world to the internal one), which also differs from other methods. Photographs have a documentary aspect to them which proved important to participants like Rita and Denise, who related how the tangible, visual depiction of particular times, places and people encouraged and eased their ability to connect with the past. Photographs are universal objects possessed by most individuals who may find them a more 'acceptable', easier entrée to the inner world. It was surprising that research on photographs in therapy was virtually non-existent in the transpersonal field, especially as three of the participants in this study had a transpersonal therapist when doing photo work. Due to their ubiquitous societal presence, catalytic nature, and ability to activate inner process through imagery, the use of photographs in transpersonal counselling and psychotherapy seems a complementary yet unique intervention that sits comfortably within the field.

Critique of the Study

One of the main critiques in this study is the use of trainee psychotherapists as participants. Four of the participants were trainees at the time of interview; three from a transpersonal integrative background, and one from a humanistic integrative background. Only one participant was from a layperson's background. It would have been useful to have had one more layperson participant to balance out the study for the sake of deeper comparison. Use of trainee therapists as participants was a practical decision based on interest in the study. Initially there were concerns that the language used would lean towards psychological terminology, making it easier to hide experience between jargon. It was a pleasant surprise to find this occurring only occasionally; overall the trainee psychotherapist participants seemed to inhabit the client perspective easily. Comparing the interviews between trainees and the layperson, little to no difference was found in terms of depth or articulation of inner processes. It was noticed that the one participant who expressed disappointment in the photograph experience was not seeing a transpersonal therapist.

Another critique pertains to the research emphasis on dimensions of activity and process, a focus exemplified in decisions like the categorisation and labelling of the main themes, and the use of Washburn's (2003) dynamic spiral theory of human development in the discussion. The decision to focus on processes and dynamics was taken because participants used active language in describing their experiences. Interviews were imbued with a vital spontaneity that produced new insights and understandings for participants; a sense of taking the original experience and moving it forward in understanding. This indicated an evolving process at play, and heavily influenced the decision to filter findings through a context of life-long self-transformation. In qualitative research, the idea of the hermeneutic circle involves looking at the parts to understand the whole, and looking at the whole to understand the parts; the IPA model encourages this iterative process of moving between part and whole (Smith et al, 2009). In this study, focus on processes and activity represents the 'whole' of the experience, whilst individual details from participant accounts represent the 'parts' of the phenomenon.

The limitations of this study are such that the constraints of time, a small participant sample, and the chosen method of IPA in studying a discrete phenomenon narrow and tighten scope

for analysis and interpretation. What follows are some additional ideas for research that emerged during the course of this study that were unable to be fully addressed at this time.

Considerations for future studies

Doy (2004) describes photographs as ‘significant ego-documents’, and views photographs as transitional objects used for gaining a deeper understanding of self. Whilst this study touched on the idea of photographs as transitional objects/transformational objects facilitating aspects of self-transformation, there is scope to explore the idea further in terms of the therapeutic relationship. In this study, when participants were asked to describe the therapist’s role in the experience, answers varied from guide and witness to provocateur; all participants remarked how the therapeutic relationship altered because of it, as if the experience produced catalytic change not only within them, but also within the therapeutic relationship. Due to time constraints this study was unable to follow this thread further, but it was wondered how the experience changes the therapeutic relationship. How might this alter the course of therapy? What was it like to for the therapist in this experience, what did they learn? Future studies could research photographs as transitional/transformational objects in the therapy room, exploring how they function as these objects and how this impacts on therapeutic relationship, especially in terms of unconscious dynamics like re-enactment and transference.

Another topic for consideration is that of trauma and photographs, a seemingly untapped resource for research. Halkola’s (2008) presentation on the use of photographs with trauma clients lays the ground work for future research when she describes how trauma cuts into the soul, effects disorders in autobiographical (episodic) memory, and disturbs one’s life narrative. Halkola states that using photographs in therapy can help restore memory, repair narrative, and integrate the trauma into life, but less is known about how, and in what ways they do this. As evidenced by Rita’s experience of childhood abuse, we can lose parts of self during traumatic events; a photograph could assist in reclaiming and restoring these aspects of self. Research into the use of photographs in trauma therapy could be beneficial for practitioners in further defining and understanding their role for healing.

Addition to knowledge

‘A photograph is always invisible, it is not it that we see.’

Roland Barthes

The above statement summarises the principle challenge faced in researching inner experience with respect to photographs: articulating the ineffable subtlety of *that which cannot be seen*. Just as the photograph was found to loosen psychological barriers between conscious and unconscious content, this study’s research process ran a parallel course in attempting to understand what was ‘seen’ in participant accounts, both consciously and unconsciously. Best advice to future researchers concerns allowing enough time and inner space to work with, process, and contemplate the material, knowing that the task involves making the implicit explicit.

This study’s addition to knowledge lies in its attempt to understand a discrete phenomenon: what is the experience of exploring a personal photograph in therapy? Research involved a process of discovery in allowing findings to emerge from the collective voices of the participants. Its phenomenological approach, situated within a transpersonal paradigm, yields unique viewpoints from client perspectives; currently a missing dimension in research on photographs in therapy.

Certain characteristics of the experience of exploring a photograph in therapy were detailed: its catalytic nature; its relational nature; interacting with memory as it appears in consciousness; relating to memory through perception; and differentiating sight from perception. Additionally, the concepts of memory and perception were discussed from a transpersonal perspective, adding knowledge of how they contribute to and impact upon an individual’s process when working therapeutically with a photograph.

The study’s findings were filtered through Washburn’s (2003) spiral theory of human development in order to deepen understanding that a photograph may serve as a catalytic aid for self-transformation. Specifically the phase bridging personal and transpersonal stages of development, *regression in the service of transcendence*, was used in exploring how tension, bridging the past, movement into emotion, and generativity produce an evolving process that

has the potential to transform self, again and again. Used in this way, working with a photograph can be understood as an act of self-respect, where one gives attention and focus to one's inner world through (self)-consciousness and (self)-reflection.

The mingling of dimensions such as reality, image, time, and subjectivity contributes to the usefulness of photographs within a therapeutic context, where a photograph acts as catalyst in helping dissolve or loosen psychological barriers between conscious and unconscious content; and in doing so, enabling a process of self-transformation. This study hopes to raise awareness of the use of photographs in therapy in order to promote it as a complementary, useful, and beneficial intervention within the field of transpersonal counselling and psychotherapy.

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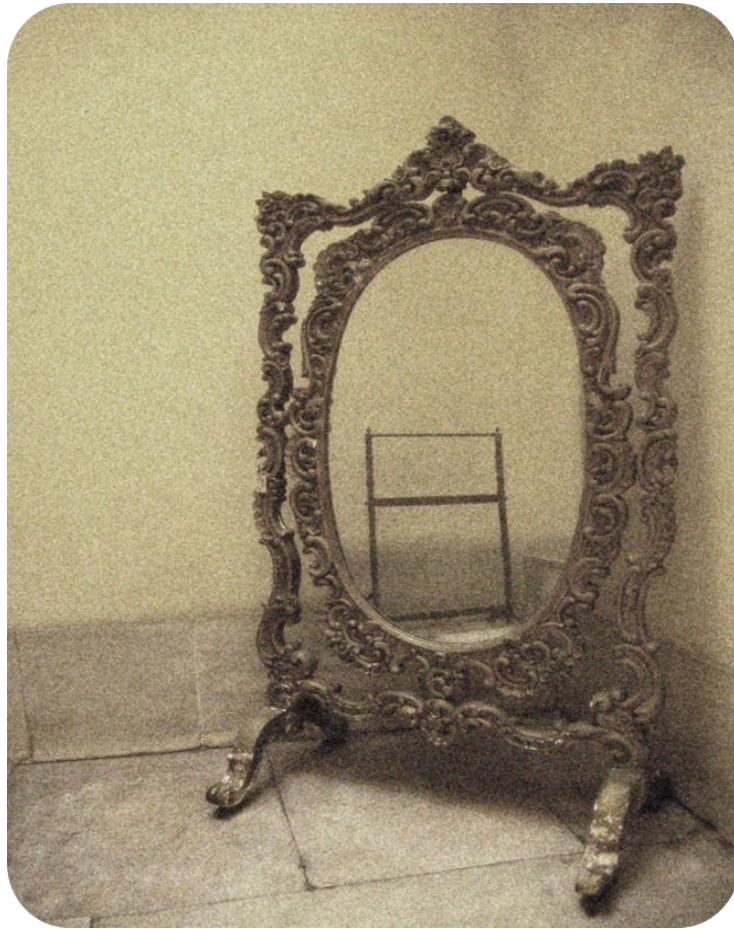
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Appendices

[Appendix A]

Photographs in therapy



Have you had a meaningful experience with a photograph in therapy?

I am looking for people to participate in a research study seeking to understand the experience of working with a personal photo in therapy.

I am interested in learning about your experience and exploring its meaning. We would have one face-to-face interview lasting up to 90 minutes, and one follow-up phone conversation.

If you are interested or want to know more, please contact **Laura Prins** at **07768812476** or on email: **lauraprins@gmail.com**

[Appendix B]

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Study: Client Experiences of Working with a Photograph in Therapy

I am undertaking this research study for an MA in Transpersonal Counselling and Psychotherapy, in association with the Centre for Counselling and Psychotherapy Education (CCPE) and Northampton University. The research is being supervised by the CCPE <http://www.ccpe.org.uk/>

This research study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of what it is like to explore a personal photograph in therapy. I am interested in discovering what happened for you, what impact this may have had on your life, and what role your therapist played in the experience. I am also interested in exploring what this experience means to you.

Your Participation in the Research Study

What happens if you join this study?

If you decide to participate we will have one interview of up to 90 minutes in length. The interview will take place in a private and secure space and will be digitally transcribed. Should you want a digital copy of our interview, I am happy to send this to you via email.

Prior to our interview, I would ask that you not revisit the photograph. I would also ask that you do not bring the photograph to the interview. This is because I would like to hold the focus to the memory of your original experience in therapy.

You may be contacted again for a brief follow-up phone conversation to go over any themes I have identified from the interviews. I will provide you with a consent form at the time of the interview to request this additional contact.

I will personally transcribe the interviews to assure confidentiality and security of all information.

What happens if you want to change your mind?

You have the right to withdraw from this study one calendar month after our interview without giving any reason. I will completely respect your decision, and will immediately destroy any data you have provided.

Should you want to pull out of the study at a later date I would request a conversation to discuss your decision.

Are there any risks?

I am very sensitive to the fact that you will be sharing personal information with me, and want to assure you of confidentiality and security in every step of the research.

During our interview you have the right to refuse to answer any question.

I will be storing digitally recorded interviews in a password protected folder on my laptop. Interview transcripts and signed consent forms will be kept in a locked safe in my home office. All materials will be destroyed once the research has been marked.

I will change all personally identifiable details when writing up and presenting the research.

You will be provided with my contact details should any questions, comments or issues arise.

Thank you for taking the time to read through and consider this information.

I welcome any questions or comments you may have.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Study: Client Experiences of Working with a Photograph in Therapy

Name of Researcher: Laura Prins

Participant to complete each section. Please initial each box.

1. I confirm I have read and understand the information sheet dated (date) for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I have one calendar month from the date of the interview to withdraw from the study, without giving any reason. Any information I have given will then be destroyed.

 3. I understand that I may be contacted after the interview for a follow-up phone conversation.

 4. I agree to take part in the study
-

Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Date

When completed, 1 copy for participant and 1 copy for researcher

Second Draft Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Study: Client Experiences of Working with a Photograph in Therapy

Name of Researcher: Laura Prins

This research study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of what it is like to explore a personal photograph in therapy. I am interested in discovering what happened for you, what impact this may have had on your life, and what role your therapist played in the experience. I am also interested in exploring what this experience means to you.

After the interview, I may contact you by phone for a follow-up conversation. This would be to go over themes that I have identified from the interviews. I'd like to check out these themes with you for any resonance. The conversation would last no longer than 20 minutes.

Participant to complete each section. Please initial each box.

1. I confirm I have read and understand the above for this study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary.
3. I agree to be contacted for a follow-up phone conversation lasting no longer than 20 minutes.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Date

When completed, 1 copy for participant and 1 copy for researcher

[Appendix D]

Draft Interview Schedule

Participants have the right to withdraw from this study one calendar month from the date of the interview without providing any reason. This decision will be fully respected, and all data will be immediately destroyed. If for any reason a participant wishes to withdraw from the study past this date, the researcher will request a conversation to discuss the decision. During the interview participants have the right to refuse to answer any question.

Main Questions

1. Describe your experience of exploring a personal photograph in therapy.
2. What does this experience mean to you?
3. What has been the impact of this experience on your life?
4. What role did your therapist play in this experience?

[Appendix E]

Draft Participant Debrief Form

Thank you for taking part in my research study, your time and effort is greatly appreciated.

This research study is part of requirement for an MA in Transpersonal Counselling & Psychotherapy and is in association with the Centre for Counselling and Psychotherapy Education (CCPE) and Northampton University. The research is being supervised by the CCPE. <http://www.ccpe.org.uk/>

This study seeks to gain an understanding of the experience of exploring a personal photograph in therapy. It is also interested in understanding what this experience means to you. Should you have any questions, comments or feedback concerning the study, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me. My contact details are:

Laura Prins

Mobile: +07768812476

Email: lauraprins@gmail.com

If you feel you need any additional support as a result of your participation in this study, it may be helpful to contact either the UKCP <http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/index.html>, tel: 0207 014 9955, or the BACP <http://www.bacp.co.uk/>, tel: 0145 588 3316, for a listing of qualified therapists. Additionally, I would be able to help you with a therapist referral.

Once again, many thanks for your participation. I wish you all the best.

Kind regards,

Laura Prins

[Appendix F]

Draft Permissions Letter

[Date]

Dear _____:

I am writing to request permission to post advertisement flyers in a permitted area of your organisation. The flyers concern participant recruitment for a research study entitled: Client Experiences of Working with a Personal Photograph in Therapy.

For this research study I am seeking individuals who have worked with a personal photograph in therapy within the past 5 years, and are willing and able to verbalise their experience.

Through conducting face-to-face interviews with participants, the study is seeking to understand what it was like for the client to work with a photograph, as well as explore the meaning clients make of this experience. It is also interested in exploring the impact of this experience on the client, as well as the perceived role of the therapist in the experience.

This research study forms part of a requirement for an MA in Transpersonal Counselling & Psychotherapy, and is in association with the Centre for Counselling & Psychotherapy Education (CCPE) and Northampton University. The research is supervised by the CCPE.

In conclusion, I would like to ask if I could place flyers at your organisation. I have attached a copy of the flyer for your records. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this letter or my research, please contact me at my email address below.

Kind regards,

Laura Prins

Email: lauraprins@gmail.com

Enclosure