

**Meaning-making post an intensive experiential event**

by

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## DECLARATION

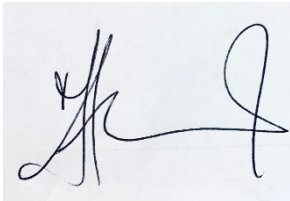
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### MEANING-MAKING POST AN INTENSIVE EXPERIENTIAL EVENT

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## **SUMMARY**

### **TITLE OF THESIS**

Meaning-Making Post an Intensive Experiential Event

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Group relations events are intended to enable transformation through learning, but such collective experiential events are not explicitly focused on enabling individual group members to derive meaning from them. This research aims to explicate individual learning from the experiences of a group relations event, in order to formulate a process for meaning-making post an intensive experiential event. Literature reviewed provides construct definitions of systems psychodynamic aspects, as well as insight, meaning-making, coaching methods and other approaches to facilitating meaning-making. Systems psychodynamics is the theoretical paradigm that informs a qualitative phenomenological research approach. Data analysis adopted hermeneutic phenomenology to allow for the interpretation of the rich data collected. Multiple case studies were adopted using multi-pronged data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews conducted before the event, as well as both a focus group and Free Association Narrative Interviews (FANI) conducted after the event. The results are reported by case, and this is followed with an interpretation of results by various systems psychodynamic themes. Furthermore, the relationship between personality types and defences mechanisms, with the associative techniques to use for each, have been set forth as additional findings in the thesis. The research hypothesis produced by the study is a meaning-making model to facilitate post-group relations event

reflections and debriefing, with the aim of enabling insight formation, learning and adaption by individuals who have participated in such events.

**KEY TERMS:** Systems-psychodynamics; Insight; Meaning-making; Defence mechanisms, Group relations event; Learning; Singleton; Individual in group; Coaching; Reflective debriefing

## CHAPTER ONE

### SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

---

*Whether to see life as it is, will give us much consolation, I know not; but the consolation which is drawn from truth, if any there be, is solid and durable; that which may be derived from error must be, like its original, fallacious and fugitive.*

- Doctor Johnston's letter to Bennet Langton (Bion, 1970, p.7)

How does insight form within an individual in a context, specifically within a system designed to bring about learning? This thesis is focused on this process of meaning-making, post an intensive experiential event taking place. It intends to better understand and explicate individual meaning-making from the outcomes of Group Relations Events (GREs). It is envisioned that this understanding will enable participants of GREs to enhance their learning and meaning-making post such an event taking place, to gain insight into themselves. The present study will focus on enabling meaning-making that may fuel positive change and adaptive behaviour as well as contribute to growth, similar to coaching that aims at delivering individual change and growth.

Chapter 1 provides an outline of the study. The background and motivation for the research leads the chapter, and is followed by the problem statement and the aims of the study. The paradigm perspective is presented to provide context, and thereafter the research design and method is set forth. The chapter ends with an outline of the thesis chapter layout, to provide an overview of how the literature and findings will be reported.

#### 1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

According to Neumann, Keller and Dawson-Sheperd (1997), systems psychodynamics refers to collective psychological behaviour, between and within groups, which enhances understanding of the forces that come from

interconnections. While systems psychodynamics and its roots are discussed in detail in Chapter 2, it is of relevance to note that it is at the heart of group relations, which is the catalysing element of this study. As a field, group relations studies the psychodynamics of a group as a social system (Fraher, 2004). According to the present researcher, an individual's life is a series of events, relationships and exchanges with individuals other than themselves, which connect (or collude) to create a very unique dynamic. However, Lewin (1946, in Fraher, 2004, p.70) suggested that "the group to which an individual belongs is the ground for his perceptions, his feelings, and his actions", and thus a GRE provides the opportunity to explore and understand an individual, not only a group.

Thus, in terms of a GRE, this group formation could be understood as a "rough circle" represented by "futility of the conversation", which is "devoid of intellectual content" (Bion, 1961, p.39). In this way, it is a seemingly random group of people, activities and configurations, that when merged into a group take on a dynamic that is unique to that place and time. Rice (1965) described GREs as experiential learning settings, comprised of challenging tasks and multi-levelled conflicts, which help members to understand both conscious and unconscious influences on the members' authority and performance. The dynamic created by such group formation helps to reveal "who I am" at any given moment (that is, it reveals the self to the self). When one is able to see one's self (that is, increase awareness of oneself), then one gains the insight needed to grow. Jung (1954, in Faber, 1998) stated that everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves. This, as Bion has established, is the benefit that a group potentially holds for an individual. The paradox, however, is that despite group formation, the individual can stay 'lost' in the group.

A GRE was used in the present study to serve as a stimulus and container over four days, leading up to a focus group and individual interviews aimed at facilitating meaning-making. The GRE was the pivotal event around which this study was constructed, based on the understanding that much learning takes place in a group, although this learning is swamped in the collective. As alluded to above, the GRE 'leaves them there' (in the group after the event has taken place), even though the individual does not walk away in the group, but rather leaves as an individual (known



as a 'singleton'). This study therefore focuses on individuals post-GREs, by engaging them with a process to facilitate meaning-making after such an event has taken place. Wallach (2019) suggests that the boundaries created in this form of group learning are not rigid, since the nature of such learning is evolutionary and cumulative. Wallach (2019) therefore recommends the utilisation of post-GRE activities (including a post-GRE debrief, interviews and class work) to provide a forum for participants to reflect on group experiences and therefore, increase their learning. For this reason, this study adopts Wallach's (2019) recommendations and utilises GRE methodologies, focusing on the individuals within a group.

Rice (1965) posited that experiential learning within GREs provides opportunities to understand tensions, conflict and anxiety provoked by uncertainty, using the group (as opposed to the individual) as the unit of analysis. According to Silver (2001, in McCallum, 2008), GREs are set up as a microcosm of the world so that individuals may become aware of, and better understand, their own behaviour. McCallum (2008) highlights that although a GRE provides learning, it does not acknowledge the diverse ways by which individuals make meaning, which he refers to as phases of epistemic complexity and capacity. This, he believes, is a gap in GRE research. However, what an individual is able to yield from the GRE experience is left to his/her own volition and inclinations. The degree to which an individual becomes a changed-individual post a GRE is open to chance. This is because as Miller (1989) explains, while GREs provide experiences to participants, the manner by which participants use and learn from these experiences rests on them individually. He notes that outcomes are "idiosyncratic and unpredictable" (Miller, 1989, p.20). Miller (1989) further describes three levels at which participants may learn; firstly, they learn to identify unfamiliar phenomena; secondly, they find new ways to classify the world; and thirdly, they learn more deeply to effect personality restructuring. However, Hills (2018) explains that finding a research method to explore such complex learning is difficult owing to the fact that research may disrupt the dynamics of the GRE. As Wallach (2019, p.1) states, "we assume that participants are learning, or will learn, from the experience but we often have little evidence upon which to base that assumption", other than that which can be observed during the group event itself.

Although GREs have taken place over the past five decades with thousands of participants, research and evaluation of these events has not been standard practice (Hills, 2018; Wallach, 2014; 2019). For this reason, empirical research studies relating to such are limited in number. Wallach (2014) provides a summary of such research in her review of a field of research studies conducted to established GRE outcomes. Most of these studies focused on measuring participant learning and the factors that help or hinder this learning, during or after a GRE. She cites research that sought to determine the long-term impact of GREs on organisational functioning. This research includes Menninger (1975; 1985, in Wallach, 2014), who reported that positive impact was experienced at both a personal and professional level. Furthermore, she reports on Hupkens (2006, in Wallach, 2014), whose study revealed that the professional mode of the participants (that is, their way of working) had been enhanced.

However, the emphasis of these studies was on participant learning relating to group processes and their dynamics, as well as experiential learning, rather than on personal meaning-making for the individual (Wallach, 2014; 2019). Longer-term follow-up studies reveal that participants increase their learning relating to leadership, authority, power and interpersonal problems in the exercise of leadership (Wallach, 2019). No specific mention is made of participants' developing meaning for personal growth or insight formation. Similarly, in a study by Hills (2018), the majority of individuals who took part in a GRE cited that they experienced group dynamics-related learning post the GRE, rather than garnering personal meaning-making and insights.

In this regard, Hills (2018) sought to determine what learnings and insights were generated by the Leicester conference, including how the conference elements contributed to learning, and how such learning was used after the event. The Leicester conference is a two-week long, residential GRE that has been run annually since 1959 (Hill, 2018). Hills (2018, p.172) reported that "although rating their learning highly, participants often found it hard to put into words what their learning was". Wallach (2014) had similar findings, reporting that participants revealed their learning to be more personal than systemic, and yet difficult for them to define. Wallach (2014) furthermore stated that from her study, personal learning had been

linked to individuals finding their voice (that is, their personal authority) or confidence stemming from GREs. In Wallach's (2019) study, she found that the majority (72 to 86%) of participants found that the conference affected them on a personal level, and approximately 80% of respondents in her study found the conference worthwhile, which replicates her prior findings from 2014.

In Hills' (2018) study, participants related their learning to group-dynamics (or aspects thereof), and none explicitly related to the personal meaning-making or insights they may have garnered from their GRE exposure. Furthermore, Hills (2018) participants found that 'Review' and 'Application' groups significantly contributed to their learning because it afforded them the opportunity to reflect on their experience and relate these to their roles. Furthermore, post-conference questionnaire findings revealed that participants benefitted from the GRE; however, personal development achieved a lower score after the GRE than before. Hills (2018) moreover revealed a desire by individuals for more 'support' by way of guidance of what is expected, through written or teaching materials, or therapeutic processes. In the final questionnaire that Hills (2018) sent out nine months after the conference, the reported learning was similar to what was revealed immediately after the GRE, namely that individuals had greater insight into their own feelings and needs when interacting with others (Hills, 2018). Wallach (2014, p.35) therefore recommends that GRE learning be enhanced through "systematic integration of orientation activities before or in the conference and follow-up experiences post conference" to allow for the evolution of learning.

Fraher (2004) supports the contention that GREs intend to enable transformation through learning. Indeed, Wallach (2019) found that the process of learning and meaning-making for experienced and inexperienced participants was complex and evolutionary over time. However, for an individual to derive meaning from it is not explicitly focused on, within a collective experiential event. The emotional nature of the work may also make it difficult for individuals to explain their learning at the time of the event being completed, and for this reason, many participants report integrating their experience months or years after the GRE has ended (Hills, 2018; Wallach, 2019). This is exacerbated by McCallum's (2008) contention that GREs neglect the span of developmental maturity (that is, their capacity and competence

for making meaning), which varies according to each individual. McCallum (2008) notes that individuals' knowledge affects the manner in which they see themselves and their roles, coupled with a varied capacity for self-reflection. According to Gould (2006, p.3), "learning from experience should be of fundamental concern for those working in the systems psychodynamic tradition, with its focus on development, insight, understanding, and 'deep' change". Gould (2006) assert that this learning (except in therapeutic situations) has not been extensively or systemically explored.

Borwick (2006, p.3) highlights that individuals from various learning experiences might commit to learning, but "they do not change their behaviour one iota". By reviewing multiple group relations and group dynamics influences, this author developed a paradigm of change that would take concepts into action. He captures his learnings from these in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Summary of group learning paradigms (adapted from Borwick, 2006)

<b>School of thought</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Assumption / Drawback</b>
<b>Group Dynamics</b>	Provides an epiphany (an 'ah-ha' experience)	Insight leads to action and "anaemic blandness" (p.4)
<b>Tavistock Institute of Human Relations</b>	Effective for deriving insights; high impact; positive results during reflection but not during the experience itself	Brutal and punitive; negative reactions with the positive
<b>Systems thinking (Milan Family Therapy Institute)</b>	Effects healing with approach and without conflict in short time	Could not translate beyond family systems into organisations

Roles and role analysis emerged based on the understanding from Table 1.1. Borwick (2006) developed his role analysis arising from systemic theories that would deliver fast results without pain to the system, the aim of which was to formulate a programme and/or process that would move individuals from ideas to action, and thus change their behaviour. This approach has been incorporated into the present research methodology.

For a GRE to become 'known' and meaningful, an individual has to make meaning of it; also understood as 'insight'. Moro, Avdibegovic and Moro (2012) describe insight as inner sight that creates understanding through inner eyes and perception; that is, a form of wisdom. They highlight that psychodynamic psychotherapy increases insight through connecting the reactions to unconscious forces, to one's childhood. Insight, although not explicitly defined by Freud (1926, in Moro et al., 2012), is about making the unconscious conscious. Furthermore, insight enhances awareness to effect improved understanding of events (in both an individual's inner and outer worlds), which serves as a learning platform (Moro et al., 2012). Insight formation is thus meaning-making, to which Moro et al. (2012) suggest that discovering meaning is about learning why things happen in one's life, connected to one's past events and leading to new understandings of these events. As noted by Moro et al. (2012, p.355), "insight connects past and present, the content and process into the mental unity". They moreover highlight that while analysis may transform history into personal truth, and interpretation may deliver new knowledge, it is ultimately the individual who needs to digest these to transform them into insights. As mentioned by Moro et al. (2012, p.356), "insight mobilises a new repertoire of behaviour with a tendency to produce an adaptive response of a different kind". Such insight is a key educative concept that is used in systems consulting, as noted by Czander (1993). Thus, reflecting upon one's experiences in a GRE may produce new self-knowledge for an individual to assimilate into his/her mode of engagement with the world, post an experiential event.

Such meaning-making therefore requires a means or method by which to garner such meaning, and enable him/her to find the truth of the event, as it relates to him/her (Bion, 1970). This begins the process of seeing and refining attention by apprehending both internal and external influences. Faber (1998, p.218) suggests that when the unconscious is ruptured (that is, "the presence of the past" occurs), an intervention is appropriate, and Jung (1960, in Henning, 2009) concurs that providing a methodology for individuation is required under such circumstances. Aligned to this is Bion's (1961) aim to enable at-one-ment and what Faber (1998) calls 'one-ness'.

It is safe to assume, however, that it is not necessary to undergo a GRE to discover the workings of one's personal and collective unconscious. A GRE is a microcosm of the macrocosm of our life, which links with Jung's (1960, in Faber, 1998) notion of Hard Synchronicity. In this sense, who a person is goes with him/her wherever he/she goes, because the self is at the centre of the event at the same time as being at the centre of his/her life (Jung, 1954, in Faber, 1998). Jung (1954) noted that if this person could see the dynamic mirrors inside of him/her, then he/she could grow. In group dynamics, he/she is given an opportunity to become aware of his/her valence, in relation to objects around him/her, but this is dependent on the lens that he/she uses to understand the dynamic. A more thorough explanation of this may be found in Chapter 2.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

A GRE holds the potential to reveal group dynamics through which learning can be yielded in a group. Bion (1961) suggests that some participants in groups are able to turn their experience of the group to good account and become akin to Aristotle's 'political animal', achieving growth and development concomitant to being an organism in a proper environment. However, there may be individuals who are not able to turn their experiences from such an event into good account. Bion (1970) posits that a satisfactory outcome for an analysis is the individual becoming reconciled to, or at-one with, himself (at-one-ment), though he does not clarify the intervention methodology that may be useful in achieving at-one-ment and reconciliation. Indeed, Hills (2018) notes that although much literature exists concerning the theory and practice of group relations, the same cannot be said for its research and evaluation. This echoes what Wallach (2014) states regarding the absence of research within the Tavistock Institute, stating that empirical studies of GREs and their outcomes are few in number.

Hills (2018) and Wallach (2014; 2019) both report on what participants learnt and what helped or hindered this learning. Their studies both revealed that the learning that participants experience and share relates to systems psychodynamic constructs. In other words, individuals understand authority, power and dynamics in organisations better after taking part in a GRE. Their studies furthermore evaluate

the relevance of the methodologies for individuals in organisations and/or the efficacy of the events. However, what they do not focus on is the extent of personal learning and insights that are developed because of taking part in a GRE, including learning about self, relationships and relatedness, as well as making meaning from GRE experiences. The present study, on the other hand, will create a reflective space to allow participants to 'find words', thus giving voice to their personal value so that it may be harvested for personal growth. While the studies of Hill (2018) and Wallach (2014, 2019) focused on learning in a GRE, the present study will focus on personal meaning-making, using a GRE as a container for this.

A chasm may exist between the group and the individual's experience within the group, which may affect integration. The meaning-making process that this study seeks to clarify will be offered as the bridging mechanism to achieving individual learning and integration thereof into the self. The purpose of the study is to explore means by which learning is not only contained in the group (that is, swamped in the collective), but rather is also transferred to, and integrated into, the individual post a GRE. Wallach (2019) suggests that to increase learning, more structures that enable learning before and after GRE needs to be created.

To address the above issues, this research was designed to answer the following literature and empirical questions:

1. How can the systems psychodynamic stance aid in bringing about individual learning and growth?
2. How do individuals who partook in a GRE make meaning of their post-GRE relived experiences?
3. How are they facilitated to learn and grow, in an interactive guided process informed by systems psychodynamics?

### **1.3 AIMS**

The following general and specific aims were formulated based on the problem statement above.

The general aim of this research is to explore a process of meaning-making, post an intensive experiential event. In doing so, the study aimed to explore what meaning individuals made and personal insights they distilled post a GRE, that could affect their learning and personal growth. This will culminate in the conceptualisation of an intervention (that is, an approach/methodology) aimed at enabling individuals to make meaning of their GRE experiences in order to facilitate their personal growth.

The specific aims relating to the literature review were as follows:

1. To conceptualise the systems psychodynamics stance, its constructs and its application to GREs with a view to understanding its impact on individual learning;
2. To conceptualise meaning-making, insight formation and growth in order to explore methodologies and approaches that can be adopted to enable individual meaning-making and growth; and
3. To integrate meaning-making processes theoretically for individuals within the systems psychodynamic perspective in order to formulate an approach that could be applied post an intensive experiential GRE.

The specific aims relating to the empirical study were:

1. To explore meaning-making post an intensive experiential event; and
2. To present a hypothesised conceptual 'meaning-making' framework demonstrating processes and techniques that may be used in future GREs to facilitate meaning-making for participants.

It is envisioned that this thesis will propose a methodological process that will enable individuals who have participated in a GRE, to make meaning of their experiences in order to gain personal insight and learning. The formulation of the proposed framework/approach will aim to bridge the gap between the event and the post-event experience, and provide an understanding of how participants process their learning and make meaning of their experiences in a GRE (Wallach, 2019). Ultimately, the conceptual meaning-making framework may become portable to life after the event, and be applied in post-GRE processing, interpretation and integration of personal learning.



## 1.4 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

The research has chosen a hermeneutic phenomenological research approach. Phenomenological research, according to Moustakas (1994), involves studying a small group over a period to establish patterns and relationships of meaning. As per Cohen, Kahn and Steeves (2000, p.3), “phenomenological research is used to answer questions of meaning”. Hermeneutic phenomenology takes a hermeneutic (understanding the text) approach to the study of a human phenomena, out of which the researcher aims to “create a rich, deep account of a particular phenomenon, an uncovering rather than an accurate analysis of participants’ descriptions” (Hein & Austin, 2001, p.9).

The study has been conducted within the organisational field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology. The applicable psychological paradigm is predominantly the systems psychodynamic perspective with reference and connectivity to the systems paradigm perspective. This was chosen in order to understand the relationship and relatedness of GRE experiences and the participants’ personal history, and more specifically, the effect of insight and meaning-making formation on individual growth and maturation. According to Czander (1993, p.201), the “psychoanalyst uses systems theory to apply psychoanalytic theory”. He notes that numerous authors support the notion that psychoanalytic theory and systems theory are compatible. The overarching paradigm is systems theory, to which systems psychodynamic perspectives connect (Cilliers, Rothman & Struwig, 2004).

The most significant meta-theoretical concepts that form part of this study are insights and learning, as understood within the systems psychodynamic paradigm. Moro et al. (2012) conjoin the terms ‘meaning-making’ and ‘insights’. This concept has been reviewed and connected to the work of Bion (1961), Freud (1936), Klein (1946), Schafer (2003), as well as other contributors. These authors of psychodynamics are referenced to fully appreciate the role of the unconscious in learning and insight formulation. Cilliers (1999), Hirschhorn (1993) and Sofer (1961, in Rice, 1965) are moreover referenced for their work in which they formulated

psychodynamic principles for dealing with anxieties. Chapman (2010), Kilburg (2002; 2004) and Long (2006), amongst other authors, have also been studied to explore post-GRE coaching and interpretation processing.

The core method applied in sourcing the empirical data for this study is that of exploring the reflections of those who have undergone a GRE, and to establish how they make meaning of their GRE experience together with a re-view of their lives, in an interactive guided process informed by systems psychodynamics.

For the completion of this study, the researcher assumes the following:

- The group experience is different to the individual's experience of and in the group, and as such will not seek to prove this within the scope of the study;
- Each individual's experience is unique and relates to their inner state, which is well established in the systems psychodynamic stance;
- The GRE represents a concentrated interlude of the personal dynamics of individuals who underwent it, which occurs in their lives in a less intense manner;
- For the revelation of their inner state to become knowledge that effects growth, an interpretative framework and process is needed; thus, by applying a meaning-making (phenomenological) approach, the event becomes knowledge; and
- Once the knowledge is explicit and its value evident, then integration of such into their personality (functioning) leads to growth and maturation, which is more 'solid' and 'durable'.

## **1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The design is presented according to the research approach and method used. Each of these aspects will be elaborated upon in detail in Chapter 4, including relevant references.

### **1.5.1 Research approach**

This research study will make use of a systems psychodynamic research approach, with hermeneutic phenomenology selected as the empirical paradigm.

The research design aims to enable an exploratory and qualitative study, utilising a theoretical framework in order to conceptualise and configure an intervention methodology that will facilitate individual insights and integration thereof, post a GRE. The design of the study therefore allows for a qualitative exploration of the application of the meaning-making model / approach, and its effects on insight formation and learning of individuals post a GRE.

As a qualitative, exploratory study, there are no dependant/independent variables, since these will emerge as outcomes. However, it is envisaged that the participants' learning will arise as the dependant variable, while personal history and formative life experiences are the independent variables. Defining these variables allows one to moderate nuisance variables (Huysamen, 2001). The unit of analysis is the individual (not the group), and the outcome of the exploratory study is the formulation of hypotheses (Mouton, 2001).

A process guide (based on the literature that will be reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3) has been developed to structure the discussion by means of reflective conversations (the results of which will be presented in Chapter 5). The systems psychodynamic perspective is a prominent framework of this study.

### **1.5.2 Research strategy**

Multiple qualitative case studies were utilised in this study, using unstructured interviews as well as a focus group to collect the data for the study. The purpose of this choice of strategy was to maximise the depth of data obtained from participants.

### **1.5.3 Research method**

The following sub-sections will briefly highlight the research setting, entrée and establishing researcher roles, sampling, data collection methods, recording of data, data analyses, strategies employed to ensure quality data, and reporting utilised in the study. These are expanded upon in later chapters.

#### *1.5.3.1 Research setting*

This research was conducted in a large South African university, at which a GRE is held for students entering the Doctoral degree in Consulting Psychology. This GRE forms part of the modules within their course work. It acted as the pivotal event around which the study's participants were debriefed via pre- and post-GRE interviews as well as in a post-GRE focus group session.

#### *1.5.3.2 Entrée and establishing researcher roles*

The researcher is an industrial psychologist, and acts as a systems psychodynamically-informed consultant and executive coach. In addition, she is a Doctoral student, interviewer, observer of the GRE, researcher, and specifically, a defended researcher, which will be defined in more detail in section 4.3.2.

#### *1.5.3.3 Sampling*

The sample for this study was drawn from the population of individuals who attended the GRE at the university described above. The individuals were invited to participate, and those who volunteered their participation were selected. Five participants for the process volunteered their time and took part in the pre-GRE interviews. A further participant asked to join the study after the GRE took place, and thus the final sample of six participants took part in the post-GRE focus group and interviews.

#### *1.5.3.4 Data collection methods*

Pre-GRE semi-structured interviews were conducted telephonically with the initial five participants, after which the GRE took place. The GRE itself was followed by a post-GRE focus group that involved all six participants – this took place immediately after the GRE was concluded. Scheduled time slots for the individual post-GRE face-to-face interviews were agreed to at the end of the focus group, and then conducted immediately after the focus group in that sequence.

#### *1.5.3.5 Recording of data*

The researcher took notes in hard-copy during each of the data collection stages. Additionally, digital audio-recordings were taken of the post-GRE sessions, which were then transcribed into written format.

#### *1.5.3.6 Data analyses*

Data was analysed by means of thematic analysis, followed by applying double hermeneutics. These data analysis methods are explained in detail in Chapter 4.

#### *1.5.3.7 Strategies employed to ensure quality data*

Credibility was enhanced in the study by using methods such as triangulation; research competency; and verification of all research interpretations. Transferability was apparent because the findings could be relevant to other situations, and dependability was ensured by checking interpretations and providing detailed explanations of the research design. The researcher's consulting experience within the systems psychodynamic perspective provided a measure of objectivity and orientated her to the study, and authenticity was upheld by equally involving all participants in the research. Strength was upheld by reporting the results of the study separately to its interpretations, and richness was ensured through lengthy interviews taking place. Finally, depth was enhanced by the researcher making use of intuition during data collection, and maintaining an acceptable tone and pace.

Additionally, since validity is the absence of random and systematic error (Payze, 2004), all responses were recorded using an audio-recorder, and were transcribed after each discussion to ensure that no information was lost. This ensured that responses were captured verbatim, thereby preventing any pre-emptive interpretations while responses were being given, which enhanced content or substantive validity. Furthermore, validity was ensured by keeping the empirical design simple and using the research questions to focus the data collection sessions. Consolidation of findings was enabled by way of the post-GRE focus group session held with all participants, which moderated any potential exaggerations by their peers. Methodological reliability was ensured by using reasoned consensus (Payze, 2004) since all of the participants are personally invested in their learning and open to the approach that was utilised.

#### *1.5.3.8 Reporting*

The researcher will report on individual cases for each stage of data collection in Chapter 5, as well as interpret these findings in Chapter 6.

#### **1.5.4 Research ethics**

Research for the sake of research, rather than for the sake of growth and improvement, could be considered a selfish endeavour (Payze, 2004). Faber (1998) notes that psychoanalytical counselling is needed when the unconscious has been ruptured, which he refers to as the “Presence of the Past”. Rice (1965) describes a GRE as an experiential learning event, and Miller (1989) adds that ‘they are left there’ (in the group) and thus the extent of such learning rests on the individual. Providing a formal process or method to enable the achievement of learning for the individual participating in the GRE is therefore an ethical responsibility. Post a GRE, which ruptures the unconscious, the researcher will provide a mechanism for individuation (Jung, 1960, in Faber, 1998) to achieve at-one-ment (Bion, 1961) or one-ness (Faber, 1998), which is morally justified.

To obtain informed consent of participants for this purpose, the specific aims of the study were shared in writing, with the invitation to participate. Participation was

voluntary and contingent on participants understanding these aims. Additionally, owing to the deeply personal nature of the conversations held for this study, anonymity was important. Thus, to protect confidentiality, all interviews were assigned a random name after being transcribed. Recordings were safeguarded, and only the researcher and her supervisor had access to the transcripts.

Potential benefits outweighed the potential harm in the study, since it explored individuals' journeys of discovery at a pace determined by each of them, and garnered insights for their individual learning. The post-GRE interviews (FANI) were aimed at enabling meaning-making by the individual participants, and each participant was allotted time with the researcher to achieve this. Thus, participants were expected to experience immediate benefit, while the researcher's benefit would be deferred, meaning that participants were the most important component of the empirical process.

## 1.6 RESEARCH PROCESS

The process followed in this research is depicted in the table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2: Research process for the present study

<b>PHASE 1</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>
<b>Step 1</b>	A thorough literature review was conducted and presented on the systems psychodynamic stance, GREs, as well as the defence mechanisms employed to defend against anxiety.
<b>Step 2</b>	The singleton within the systems psychodynamic stance was defined, so as to understand how experiences within a GRE can be interpreted and integrated into the singleton. Insights, learning and meaning-making as constructs, as well as how GREs could serve as a vehicle for learning, were investigated.
<b>Step 3</b>	The systems psychodynamic paradigm methods used to enable insight formation, meaning-making and learning, by means of moving from group immersion to self-awareness, were reviewed. This assisted in understanding what methods enhance meaning-making and insight

	formation, and thus could inform the process of learning through experience. The theoretical integration of variables took place, and a conceptual framework / methodology was formulated during this step.
<b>PHASE 2</b>	<b>EMPIRICAL STUDY</b>
<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Population and Sample.</b> A purposeful sample was drawn from a population of individuals who attended a GRE in 2012, and who were open to learning and applying the models. Since the study is an exploratory, qualitative study, the sample size could be small.
<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Measuring Instrument.</b> No specific instrument was used. Two templates were drawn up though; both utilised the literature review in their development. The first template allowed for reflection prior to the GRE with regard to expectations of the event as well as reflection on personal and professional roles; whereas the second template elicited reflection with regard to understanding the roles (normative, experiential and phenomenological; that is, role analysis) drawn from the GRE, completed prior to the post-GRE focus group. The post-GRE interviews allowed participants to reflect on experiences by means of FANI (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008), which were recorded for accuracy.
<b>Step 3</b>	<b>Data Collection.</b> This took place in order to determine the level and degree of personal insights garnered from the GRE; establish the degree to which the GRE dynamics revealed patterns and insights to assisting the singleton to better understand him/herself; and utilise the methodology that could assist with insight formation and meaning-making. This was done in three phases, namely pre-GRE individual interviews; a post-GRE focus group; and post-GRE individual FANI.
<b>Step 4</b>	<b>Data Processing.</b> The pre-GRE interview responses were analysed thematically, in order to understand the themes that emerged from participants. The post-GRE focus group discussion was analysed for each participant, and this contributed to enriching the thematic analysis. The post-GRE interview was transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. The themes from the pre- and post-GRE interviews were compared to establish correlations in themes.



<b>Step 5</b>	<b>Hypothesis.</b> The result of the qualitative study will be a postulated meaning-making methodology, for application as a guided post-GRE reflection and debriefing tool, in order to facilitate processing and learning integration.
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## 1.7 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The manner in which the research report will be set forth seeks to enable the reader to gain an understanding of the concepts that inform the research, as well as its key variables, the findings of the empirical study and its conclusions. Therefore, the chapters are sequenced as follows:

- **Chapter 2:** Systems psychodynamic stance
- **Chapter 3:** From group immersion to self-awareness: Enhancing insight, meaning and learning post-GRE, through meaning-making
- **Chapter 4:** Research design
- **Chapter 5:** Reporting of research findings
- **Chapter 6:** Interpretation of research findings
- **Chapter 7:** Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

## 1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In Chapter 1, the scientific orientation to the research has been discussed. This contained the background, the research problem, its literature as well as empirical aims, the chosen paradigm perspective and a summary of the research design. The chapter ended with the chapter layout for the remainder of the thesis.

## CHAPTER TWO

### SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC STANCE

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#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to set forth the systems psychodynamic stance in the context of this study. Therefore, this chapter serves to orient the reader to the theoretical constructs that inform the study. More specifically, it seeks to place into perspective the theories that underpin systems psychodynamics, as well as various concepts that are highlighted in the empirical section of this study, including group relations, anxiety and defence mechanisms. The participants of this study emerged from a Group Relations Event (GRE) experience, and therefore it is pertinent to understand these system psychodynamic concepts. However, the process after the GRE is individually focused and therefore, some explanations will be offered in this chapter with regards individual defences and personality. Furthermore, the CIBART model, as well as the individual within systems psychodynamics and the singleton, will be explained. The summary concludes the chapter.

#### 2.2 THE EVOLUTION OF SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMICS

The systems psychodynamic stance emerged from the work of Miller and Rice (1967) and the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations over the past 60 years (Dimitrov, 2008). The term 'systems psychodynamics' was first used in print in 1993 by the Tavistock Institute (Fraher, 2004). Czander (1993) describes the systems psychodynamic paradigm as a combination of a 'working outside in' (systems) perspective, and a 'working inside out' (psychodynamic) perspective. It focuses on the group, rather than on individual behaviour (Armstrong, 2005).

Systems psychodynamics is an interdisciplinary field that integrates three disciplines, namely the practice of *psychoanalysis*, the methods and practices of *group relations*, and *open systems* theories (Fraher, 2004), in order to explain

psychological behaviour within and between groups (Neumann et al., 1997). These three disciplines are discussed to follow.

### **2.2.1 Psychoanalytic theory**

Freud's (1921, in Fraher, 2004) theory of psychoanalysis laid the foundation for systems psychodynamics. Psychoanalytical theory is a crucial element that contributes to the underpinning philosophy of the systems psychodynamic approach (Czander, 1993; De Board, 2014). Psychoanalysis enables individuals to interpret their conscious reality, by highlighting the significance of the human unconscious (Dimitrov, 2008). This author explains that the unconscious is the part of one's being that is hidden from rational thought and emotions, which is sometimes seen as the 'dark side' of themselves. It is driven by personal, repressed infantile histories, and individuals often do not recognise the impact that these histories have on their conscious behaviour (Dimitrov, 2008).

In this regard, Freud built his psychological theory around the unconscious (Dimitrov, 2008). Freud was the first to explicate unconscious processes. He focused primarily on the process of repression, where unwanted and/or distressing thoughts and emotions are deliberately forgotten or forbidden from entering one's consciousness (Long & Harney, 2013). These authors note that once Freud established the structure of id, ego and superego, the unconscious was considered the storehouse of thoughts and feelings that are repressed. Another way to view the unconscious is as a mental network of thoughts, signs and symbols that may give rise to emotions and tendencies; in other words, it is a network that operates between individuals as well as within each of them, akin to a pool of thoughts (Long & Harney, 2013). The associative unconscious, according to these authors, is similar to Jung's idea of the collective unconscious.

Freud (1921, in Fraher, 2004) suggested that individuals are often prisoners to their unconscious; yet, accepting that the cognitive and affective unconscious can be liberating brings understanding of what motivates actions, decisions and reactions. Awareness of the unconscious offers the opportunity to change one's modus operandi. As noted by Dimitrov (2008, p.38), "scratch a man...and you will find a

child....unless we recognise the extent to which our present is determined by our past, we make the same mistakes over and over. The world is full of people who are unable to recognise repetitive patterns in their behaviour that have become dysfunctional”.

Along this line, Long and Harney (2013) describe the notion of an associative unconscious, differentiated from the repressed dynamic unconscious. They explain that associative unconscious holds that all human thought and meaning is connected to an individual's symbolic capacity, which means that all present, past and future thought exists in potential within the capability to utilise and understand signs and symbols. Furthermore, Long and Harney (2013) highlight that human thought is connected, yet unconsciously present in humans. Repressed, inherent and associative unconscious influences conscious thinking, emotions, desires and behaviours in a variety of ways, of which there is no awareness (Long & Harney, 2013). For psychoanalysts, consciousness is the tip of the iceberg, and the unconscious is the mass of the iceberg (Long & Harney, 2013).

The Freudian paradigm of psychoanalytical concepts were presented in binary/dualistic pairs, including id and ego, unconscious and conscious, and life and death instincts. Life instincts (namely *libido*/Eros) are one's life force and are associated with love, while death instincts (namely *morbido*/Thanatos) manifest in aggressive behaviour (De Board, 2014). These two opposing instincts are the drivers of the psyche and contribute to an individual's identity. According to Czander (1993), the psychoanalytic view of man rejects the notion of economic motives purely driving behaviour, but instead posits that man's motivations stem from a neurotic condition. Czander (1993, p.4) describes this as “nothing more than an attempt to blunt the more shadowy wishes and motivations for human relatedness and the fears associated with the creative drive to master and accomplish”. Although Freud was not a group theorist, his influence on Klein's work sufficiently qualifies it as foundational to systems psychodynamics (Dimitrov, 2008; Fraher, 2004).

While Klein (1935; 1950) did not reject the instinct theory, she moved psychoanalysis into the interpersonal world. Klein's (1950) object relations theory (as discussed in Czander, 1993; Hirschhorn, 1993; Miller, 1993; and Rice, 1965)

highlights how people use one another to stabilise their inner lives. This helps to create an understanding of how psychodynamic processes within individuals shape the relationships between them and enable a sense of identity to form, based on the interpersonal experiences of love and hate. Klein (1935) purported that internal objects are representations of instincts modified by experience, and these objects may be people and not things. The 'lost love object', which is not let go of or mourned properly, is introjected, meaning it remains inside of the individual's psyche. Objects relations theory further proposes that maladjusted behaviour stems from interference of the progressive development of the ego by the primary caretaker (Kets de Vries, 2001). This arrested development influences the individual and how he/she relate to others. Moreover, Czander (1993) emphasised object seeking to be an individual's response to the need to be attached, related or connected to other objects (for example, people). Czander (1993) highlighted how an individual's perceptions of external realities are affected by their internal state of anxiety.

Object relations has significance to social orientation and the impulse to form relationships (Stapley, 2006). Stapley (2006) highlights Freud's (1957) contention that the unconscious mind is composed of repressed sentiments that stem from infancy. Repression involves the exclusion of painful and unpleasant content from one's consciousness, thereby moving it into the unconscious beneath the surface from where this content affects behaviour without entering one's consciousness (Plutchik, 1995). Stapley (2006) further presents that introjections create the conscience or superego, which serves as a guide as to what to do and what not to do.

Henning (2009) offers a comparison between the classical psychoanalysis and objects relations theory, which is presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Comparison between classical psychoanalysis and objects relations theory

<b>CLASSICAL PSYCHOANALYSIS</b>	<b>OBJECTS RELATIONS THEORY</b>
Pleasure seeking	Object seeking
Instinctual gratification gives pleasure	Relationships gives pleasure
Adaptation lies within the conflict between Id, Ego and Superego	Adaptation to external environment is a learned process
Oedipal	Pre-Oedipal
Intra-personal	Inter-personal
Work is a battle: Defensive activity designed to satisfy sexual and aggressive impulses	Work is play: Work is viewed as an attempt to master internal conflicts and their resulting anxieties through creativity

Klein (1946) outlined two psychological orientations, which she termed the Paranoid-Schizoid position and the Depressive position. These positions can be understood as patterns of psychological phenomena and functions (such as instincts, thoughts, feelings, anxieties, defences and/or fantasies) that are potentially present in the here and now, and can become reactivated at any point. Klein (1946) also highlights that no clear division can be made between these two stages, as modification is gradual and phenomena of the position remain, overlay and intermingle. Each of these positions is discussed in the following sections.

#### *2.2.1.1 Paranoid-schizoid position*

The paranoid-schizoid is the first position in development and is present throughout life (Klein, 1946). She postulated that healthy development initially requires an infant to split its external world into good (that is, loved and gratifying) and bad (that is, frustrating, persecutory and hated), and to introject and identify with the good. This introjection of the good enables the infant to survive the bad, and later the bad can be integrated and the conflict this produces may be tolerated. Klein (1946) refers to this splitting as 'schizoid', and suggests that this mechanism is the earliest defence against anxiety.

There is no neutral zone in the paranoid-schizoid position, only good or bad (Klein, 1946). As the primary caretaker, the mother represents the external world for her infant and thus holds both good and bad, which leads to feelings of both love and hate towards her. These destructive feelings create guilt and cause paranoid anxiety (Klein, 1946). An infant's survival and self-perseveration is dependent on trust in a good mother. Without the capacity to trust the good object, a basis for a lifetime of mistrust in a hostile world is laid, which may well destroy the individual. These destructive feelings or fantasies manifest as prejudices and unexplained irritations in everyday life (Diamond & Allcorn, 2009).

Diamond and Allcorn (2009) go on to say that this is the earliest form of pain experienced from birth, and is a form of persecutory anxiety. This experience is characterised by efforts to remove or manage emotional pain that comes from loving and hating the same object. This splitting of an object into good and bad becomes, in later years, the basis for stereotypes (Diamond & Allcorn, 2009). The main characteristics of the paranoid-schizoid position is splitting, projection, idealisation, denial, omnipotence, identification and paranoid anxiety (Klein, 1946). The paranoid-schizoid position therefore inhibits true insight into the nature of a problem and its significance (Menzies, 1988).

#### *2.2.1.2 Depressive position*

The depressive position is the second developmental position and involves the integration of the good and the bad parts, and thus the ability to work with paradox. The drive to integrate the good and bad stems from a fear that one's destructive impulses will destroy the 'loved object' (Klein, 1946). An infant realises that bad is located in the same object that is good, and the anger felt for that which frustrates now leads to feelings of guilt (Klein, 1946).

Klein (1946) states that an infant experiences the impulse to preserve the 'good object' and repair any damage that has been done. Klein (1975) suggests that should the infant's depressive emotions not be dealt with successfully, the individual will use the defence of splitting when confronted with rage, guilt and loss in later life.

The drive for reparation comes from greater insight into the psychic reality and growing synthesis, and paves the way for more satisfactory object relations (Klein, 1946). Diamond and Allcorn (2009) suggest that the depressive position enables the containment of emotions and the differentiation of self and others, and that it provides the reflective and empathic exchange that makes for productive, creative and synergistic interpersonal relations.

Development through the two positions continues over the initial few years of childhood, during which anxieties abate, objects become less idealised and terrifying, and the ego becomes unified (Klein, 1946). According to Klein (1946, p.104), “all this is interdependent with the growing perception of reality and adaptation to it”. If development through the initial schizoid phase is arrested, however, and an infant is unable to deal with the depressive anxieties, there is regression to the schizoid position and the danger of ego disintegration (Klein, 1946). This manifests as ‘apathy’ and an introjection of the whole object reveals in his/her later personality. Klein (1946) reports this as characterised by a great longing for a ‘good and complete object’. This includes a desire to love and trust people, in this way unconsciously regaining or rebuilding the ‘good and complete object’ that had been lost, thus reaching a more balanced perspective that the world is not created for oneself. This is foundational to Klein’s (1935) depressive position, wherein positive thoughts and behaviours begin to form.

Reparation integrates the good with the bad parts of the world and brings the ego ideal into alignment with reality (Klein, 1935). An ongoing movement between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive states is needed to maintain the ego ideal in dynamic equilibrium.

### **2.2.2 Group relations theory**

Fraher (2004) and Dimitrov (2008) reporting on the history of systems psychodynamics, highlight three contributions that were pivotal in the development of group relations theory, as follows:

- Le Bon’s (1896, in Dimitrov, 2008) observations of large unorganised groups purports that an individual sacrifices a part of his/her individuality when joining a



group, since he/she becomes more susceptible and open to its influences (Fraher, 2004). Le Bon (1896, in Dimitrov, 2008) observed that the group mind was illogical, uninhibited, intolerant, prejudiced, rigid and submissive to dominant forces. Le Bon (1896) is quoted by Fraher (2004, p.67) as noting that “an individual in a crowd is a grain of sand amid other grains of sand, which the wind stirs up at will”. McDougall’s (1920, in Dimitrov, 2008; Fraher, 2004) work is cited to have expanded Le Bon’s theories, suggesting that disorganised groups were emotional, impulsive, violent and suggestible, which changed considerably when the group became organised and task oriented, since this affected positive group achievements when harnessed. Dimitrov (2008) explains that Le Bon (1896) and McDougall’s (1920) contributions introduced the notion of studying the group as a whole, referring to the group as a social system, and to the individual’s relatedness within this system. This shift of psychoanalytical focus from the individual to the group as a single entity, represents a significant point in the history of group relations (Fraher, 2004).

- The second contribution to the group relations was made by Bion and others post World War II, who shifted the clinician’s perspective from outside the phenomenon to an ‘outsider within’ one (Fraher, 2004). Klein’s (1946) theories on splitting and projective identification, as well as the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, were seminal in the work of Bion, who developed the field of group relations on Klein’s (1946) foundation. Fraher (2004) explains that Bion (1961) supported Freud’s (1922) contention that the family group informed the patterning for all groups. His work involved the study of ‘groups as a whole’ from within, using the self as instrument. From this, he developed a new method of working with groups (Fraher, 2004). Bion (1961) produced the basic assumptions of groups, which will be discussed in Section 2.4.
- The third contribution to group relations was Lewin (1948, in Dimitrov, 2008; Fraher, 2004), who introduced the first experiential learning event, which led to the formulation of the group relations conference. Lewin (1948, in Fraher, 2004, p.70) noted that “the group to which an individual belongs is the ground for his perceptions, his feelings, and his actions”. Fraher (2004, p.70) discusses that the group to which an individual belongs will form the grounds for his/her perceptions, feelings and actions, which indicates the psychosociological influence of groups on behaviour. This contributed to the development of systems psychodynamics

and became known as Lewin's field theory, which focuses on the characteristics of interdependence. This work had significant influence on the Tavistock Institute members.

These contributions, namely the group-as-a-whole perspective; the practice of applying one's self as instrument; and the methods of experiential learning, all provided the foundation for the field of group relations (Dimitrov, 2008; Fraher, 2004). Furthering these contributions, the work of Follett and Mayo (1941, in Fraher, 2004) recognised organisations as complex interactive systems, thereby setting the tone for systems psychodynamics. Mayo's (1933, in Fraher, 2004) famous Hawthorne experiment revealed the impact of interactional variables on motivating people, including the attention paid to workers, their control over their own work, management's willingness to listen, and the need to provide direct feedback to employees. These were identified as important factors at work.

### **2.2.3 Group relations training events**

Group relations (as per above) is defined as the study of the dynamics of a group as a system (Hayden & Molenkamp, 2004). This approach is informed by the work of Freud (psychoanalysis; see Fraher, 2004), Klein (object relations theory; see De Board, 2014), and Bertalanffy (systems theory; see Czander, 1993; De Board, 2014; Hirshhorn, 1993). It applies psychodynamic principles and applies these to the group, as a social system (Fraher, 2004). The GRTE approach suggests that group behaviour is both conscious and unconscious (Miller, 1993). The conscious is clear while the unconscious is unclear and sometimes menacing, which in turn spawns varied defences (Cilliers & May, 2002). Miller (1993) highlights that conscious behaviour is explicit and clear, whereas the unconscious is laden with the unknown, unwanted and often threatening needs and emotions relating to relationships of power, authority and leadership. These develop collectively by the group. When these unconscious aspects rise into the consciousness, anxiety is triggered and the group defends against it (Miller, 1993).

The roots of Group Relations Training events (GRTE) may be traced back to the 1940s (Miller, 1989). Bion's experience in his work in the military training and

rehabilitation of psychiatric patients, convinced him of the importance of treating not only the individual but also the group to which the individual is a member (Hayden & Molenkamp, 2004). The first civilian training group, not military group, was held in 1945 and directed by Bion, Rickman and Sutherland at the Tavistock Clinic – which consisted of 12 members, including A K Rice (Fraher, 2004). Rice was so impressed, he volunteered to become a member of the training group at the Tavistock Institute under the direction of Bion, which met weekly, as a small group for 2 years between 1947 and 1948 (Fraher, 2004). In 1948 Bion conducted some therapeutic groups at the Tavistock Clinic – in which he decided to provide the group with no structure and no direction, to assess the group’s reaction – and his unique response to the group members’ reactions of anger and upset, was that he interpreted these as the group’s dynamic as a whole and not the individual’s (Fraher, 2004). What started as an uncertainty became transformed into a therapeutic technique central to group relations (Fraher, 2004). Bion employed Klein’s innovative method of direct and confrontive intervention while working with the study group, and then later published his findings in “Experiences in groups” (1961). These group relations training events first started in 1957, and held at the University of Leicester, and thus became known as The Leicester Conference. Even though Bion’s work provided the foundational theories for the GRTE, he did not attend a Tavistock Institute conference - it was Rice, with his team, who designed the group relations conference (Fraher, 2004). In 1962, Rice was authorised by the Tavistock Institute to lead the new experiential learning events called group relations conferences (Fraher, 2004).

Group relations training events provide an experiential learning environment (Fraher, 2004). The primary task of the GRTE is therefore to afford the group an opportunity to study their own behaviour in the here-and-now (Miller, 1993). The design of the Leicester Conference informed the emergent format and structure (Fraher, 2004). The conference design evolved to include the the study of more complex group phenomena. Rice, the then chair of the Tavistock Centre and a member of Bion’s earlier study group in 1947-1948, led a change in the conception of the GRTE by adding a large study group and then an intergroup event (Hayden & Molenkamp, 2004). The GRTE is structured into sub-events such as large study

group, small study group, discussion or intergroup events, as well as review and application groups, each with its own distinct tasks as follows:

- **Large study group (LSG):** This normally consists of the entire conference membership, and configured in a spiral seating arrangement. In this group, all members share information about learning within the group. The task of the group is to study behaviours that take place in meetings or crowds, where interpersonal relationships are harder to establish. It is common for subgroups to form, anti-groups to emerge, and fantasies and myths to be played out (Fraher, 2004).
- **Small study group (SSG):** This group is normally comprised of nine to twelve individuals from different areas of life. The task is to give a platform for the group to learn about their own behaviour, more acutely, in the here-and-now (Miller, 1993).
- **Intergroup event (IE):** This is a discussion group in which members learn about GRTE concepts, and study behaviour within and between groups in any way they decide. Relationships and relatedness between subgroups can also be studied (Fraher, 2004).
- **Review/application group (RAG):** Towards the end of a GRTE, members can be assigned to review and application groups comprising five to ten individuals, ideally from similar backgrounds. The aim of the group is to provide an opportunity to make sense of their experiences, review their learning and consider how it could be applied in their everyday lives (Cilliers, 2001; Fraher, 2004; Miller, 1993).

These groups make up the typical structure of a GRTE and is further expanded on in chapter four, in relation to the GRE upon which this study is launched. The construct of GRE has at its core time, space, and task boundaries – time denotes both the strict adherence to timeslots as well as the observations and interpretations in the here-and-now; space infers the place, and task denotes the primary task of the GRE. All these concepts will be explained in more detail below or in chapter 4. Using this approach, a GRTE consultant is actively involved in formulating hypotheses and interpreting current behaviours, and has the responsibility and authority to set time, space and task boundaries (Miller, 1993). According to Shapiro and Carr (2012), the staff of a GRTE strive to provide learning opportunities by

making sense of what they see happening – the consultants' interventions are based largely on the experiences evoked in them by the process.

The Institute for the Study of Leadership and Authority (ISLA), and the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa are well known in South Africa for hosting group relations training events (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000; Cilliers & May, 2002). The growth in South Africa of group relations training model may be gauged by the number of publications to be found in this field (Cilliers, 2002; Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000; Cilliers & May, 2002; Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002) – see reference list.

After having experience a GRTE, it is the individual who has to decide which GRTE experience and learning is valuable and Miller (1993, p.22) says *“what he learns, therefore, is unique to him. He cannot be told what he ‘ought to have learned’: indeed that phrase itself is an expression of dependence on authority. Other people, including the consultant, may offer their view of a situation, but only the individual member is in a position to understand, in light of the role he has, the relationship between what is happening around him and what is happening inside him; hence it is on his own authority that he accepts what is valid for him and rejects what is not.”*

Miller (1990b) suggests that the GRTE model appears to aid in addressing tension between individuation and incorporation, an integral characteristic of the human condition. He goes on to explain that it also promotes application of learning through experience, though this may prove disruptive in the context to which the person is returning. Its aim is to enable individuals to develop “greater maturity in understanding and managing the boundary between his own inner world and the realities of his external environment” (Miller, 1989, p.44). Re-stated in reference to Lawrence (1979), the GRTE is a process that stimulates the individual's struggle with the exercise of one's authority and managing oneself in one's role, thus releasing the individual from the captivity of group and organisational processes (Miller, 1990a). The GRTE creates a simulated environment where the individual's struggle with finding his/her own voice is amplified.

The drawback of GRTE is its tendency to equate the group process and experience with therapy, thereby displacing the primary task of learning and understanding (Miller, 1990b). For the purpose of this study, the term GRE will be used as opposed to GRTE.

#### **2.2.4 Open systems theory**

The third contributor to systems psychodynamics is open systems theory, which provides task and boundary awareness (Fraher, 2004). Bogdanov (1912), von Bertalanffy (1940), and later Prigogine (1970), all cited by Capra (1997), described living systems as open systems, possessing self-regulation as a key property.

A system is defined as “an integrated whole whose essential properties arise from the relationships between its part, and systems thinking, the understanding of a phenomenon within the context of a larger whole” (Capra, 1997, p.27). The word ‘system’ is derived from the Greek work *synhistanai* which means ‘to place together’; therefore, to understand things systemically is “to put them into a context and to establish the nature of their relationships” (Capra, 1997, p.27). Koortzen and Cilliers (2002) echo this view, explaining that open systems theory (from a system psychodynamic perspective) looks at the relationship with, and connection between, other systems. An open system is therefore an “organised, unitary whole composed of two or more interdependent parts, components, or subsystems, and delineated by identifiable boundaries from its external environment” (Stapley, 2006, p.214).

Wells (1985, p.114) highlighted that the group-as-a-whole perspective emerged from the open system framework, which “assumes that individuals are human vessels that reflect and express the group’s gestalt”. According to Cilliers et al. (2004), group-as-a-whole refers to collectivism, which means that one part of a system is acting (or holding emotional energy) on behalf of another. This implies synchronicity in behaviours in the system, rather than coincidence. This has also been reported by Cilliers (2000) and Cilliers and May (2002). To phrase this in another way, group-as-a-whole refers to the collective that forms when systems operate as-one, forming a psychodynamic relation, relatedness and interconnectedness. This implies that no event happens in isolation (Cilliers, 2005).

Along this line, Capra (1997, p.47) offers that “general systems theory is a general science of ‘wholeness’”. He agrees that systems thinking incorporates connectedness, relationships and context, and purports that the fundamental properties of a living system are properties of the whole, which none of the parts possess (Capra, 1997). This author notes that in the systems approach, the nature of the parts can only be understood from the whole. He thus differentiates between analysis (taking something apart to understand it) and systems thinking (putting something together in the context of the whole). Fuqua and Newman (2002) point out that open systems exchange matter with the environment, and are adaptive and able to self-renew.

Flood (1999) suggests that a whole organism exhibits synergy, behaving in a way that is more than the sum of its parts. This synergistic effect occurs when relationships between “the parts of a human system interact in complex patterns” (Fuqua & Newman, 2002, p.87). Ehrenfels was the first to offer the term ‘Gestalt’, which in line with the notion of synergy, asserts that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Capra, 1997).

Systems theory is useful in understanding social systems, and therefore is a valuable framework for individual and small group consultation interventions. This is owing to the fact that individual issues usually exist in social contexts, and small group dynamics are affected by larger social systems (Fuqua & Newman, 2002). Czander (1993) mentions that ‘insight’ is a key aspect of systems consulting, specifically insight into the psychodynamics (covert processes) within the system. He continues by stating that insight is gained by following the aspects of systems theory, namely that living systems are open, and human systems are underpinned by the assumption that unconscious motivation influences and affects the routine functioning of the system.

Fuqua and Newman (2002, p.79) highlight that, “the greatest potential of systems theory is to empower individuals to singularly and collectively take responsibility for the systems in which they work and live, to the end of building and rebuilding human systems to become increasingly responsive to human needs”. In summary, Capra (1997) describes three criteria of systems thinking:

- A shift from parts to the whole, since living systems cannot be diminished to parts but are rather integrated wholes;
- A shift of attention between different system levels, since there is a continual nesting of one system within another, and understanding is facilitated by understanding the context of the system; and
- Systems thinking is network thinking, since interconnected networks are networks of relationships, and a connectedness exists between the observer and the process of knowing. Therefore, what an individual observes is more revealing of our nature than the observed.

### **2.3 ANXIETY AND DEFENCE MECHANISMS**

Anxiety is central to all psychodynamic theory, and activates the responses that individuals will have both consciously and unconsciously (De Board, 2014; Plutchik, 1995; Stapley, 2006). The system acts out its anxiety in a variety of ways (Blackman, 2004). Unresolved anxieties in groups are sometimes repressed, but continue to influence interactions (Menzies, 1993). Individual experiences and mental processes (such as transference, resistance, object relations and fantasy) and the experience of unconscious social and group processes may be both a source of anxiety and a result of unresolved and unacknowledged difficulties (Cilliers, 2005). The following discussion will review anxiety and conflict in relation to their significant impact on dynamics within groups.

According to Hollway and Jefferson (2013), threats to the self produce anxiety, which they suggest is integral to the human condition. Anxiety is believed to be at the root of all perverted and creative work relationships (Hirschhorn, 1993). Thus, Koortzen and Cilliers (2002) purported that understanding the anxieties within groups uncovers the conscious and unconscious motivations behind many self-defeating and ineffective behaviours. Additionally, according to Menzies (1993), anxiety forms the basis of all group behaviour, and the containment of this anxiety is sought unconsciously. As per Hollway and Jefferson (2013), anxiety triggers defences at an unconscious level. They note that there exists a dynamic unconscious that defends against anxiety, significantly influencing people's actions and relations.



Klein (1950) emphasised that in order to understand the effect of experience on an individual, one needs to understand his/her internal state (that is, anxieties) as well as his/her external intrusions that cause pain and/or pleasure. This explains a significant aspect of Kleinian theory, namely her conceptualisation of how the individual perceives the external world in terms of internal concerns, and how his/her experiences in the world reinforce certain anxieties and diminish others.

Cilliers (2013) rejects the notion that systems psychodynamics focuses only on negative behaviours, and suggests that the field focuses on the manifestation of anxiety as well as both conscious and unconscious behaviours, without the judgement that anxiety is either negative or positive. He explains that anxiety denotes an anticipatory energy for the future, which triggers the system to defend in a negative or positive way (Cilliers, 2013). This author further highlights that the positive response cannot be understood without an awareness of the negative response.

Various types of anxiety are as follows:

- Czander (1993) relates that *persecutory anxiety* is a primitive anxiety found in Klein's (1950) concept of the paranoid-schizoid position (as discussed in Section 2.2.1.1). It is paranoid in nature and characterised by splitting, which is schizoid in nature. Persecutory anxiety is associated with the fear of annihilation of the ideal object and the ego, thereby triggering anxiety and conscious fears such as paranoia (Klein, 1935). To manage these fears, an individual employs a number of defences, namely projection and introjection. These are applied simultaneously through splitting good and bad parts to keep persecutory objects from damaging idealised objects contained within the ego (Klein, 1935). The crux of the defensive process is thus to protect the idealised object, and could include the defence of denial. In the extreme, Czander (1993) relates that introjection is inhibited to the extent that all objects are experienced as persecutors, and the individual will struggle to establish relationships, ultimately increasing the likelihood that others would be related to as part-objects rather than whole-persons. In this way, excessive splitting leads to loneliness and feelings of being unsupported. Splitting, projective identification and idealisation are therefore key

to understanding the relationships between individuals and authority (Czander, 1993).

- *Depressive anxiety* is associated with the guilt and remorse associated with the disintegration of the loved object, coupled with a sense of responsibility for preserving it, and the sadness about its expected and impending loss (Klein, 1935). Czander (1993) notes that individuals who are not able to process depressive emotions may result in the use of the defence of splitting when faced with rage and guilt. An individual may regress and remain flooded with anxiety. Klein (1935) highlights that this anxiety also causes the individual to doubt the goodness of the loved object, and she adds that Freud highlighted that doubt in reality reflected doubt of one's own love, resulting in suspicion of all other things. The key defence with this form of anxiety is projective identification (Czander, 1993).
- *Performance anxiety* is a social fear that occurs with individuals who have a fear of performing in public, associated with being humiliated or rejected (Madurai, 2017). According to Mor, Day, Flett and Hewitt (1995), this form of anxiety stems from a perceived discrepancy between the ideal and actual self. They discuss that self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism, together with low personal control, are associated with debilitating performance anxiety. Furthermore, their study provides support for self-regulation, highlighting the importance of personal control and perfectionism in terms of controlling performance anxiety and achieving goals.

Shame at the unconscious level is a signal of anxiety. It is anticipatory of “pending psychological painful feelings of being harmed through unbearable narcissistic mortification and incipient social annihilation” (May, 2017, p.44). She highlights that from a systems psychodynamic perspective, shame is an emotion that is evoked by the devaluation of an individual's actions from the viewpoint of the social other. It is a criticism of self, since the individual feels less than or reduced through a loss of acceptance experienced in the presence of others. May (2017) explains that from a Freudian perspective (that is, unconsciously), shame is a *signal anxiety*, triggering a defence against the painful awareness of negative emotions or intrapsychic conflict, which the ego wants to avoid. Rizzuto (2014, in May, 2017) emphasised that shame is a defence, not against instincts, but rather against the difficulty of not

being worthy or being defective (that is, 'not good enough'). May (2017) describes that shame effects a sense of social annihilation in the form of a loss of social connectedness, which would evoke intrapsychic conflict.

The following section will explore the various forms of defences that manifest as a result of anxiety (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008). Defence mechanisms from an individual, social systems and systems domain perspective will be presented.

### **2.3.1 Defence mechanisms**

To contain anxieties, people tend to employ various defence mechanisms (Blackman, 2004; Czander, 1993; Hirschhorn, 1993; Obholzer & Roberts, 2003). Blackman (2004, p.x) described this simply when he identified that defence "refers to the way the mind shuts feelings out of consciousness". He likens defences to circuit breakers, explaining that when the current is too great, the amperage trips the circuit breaker and cuts the lights. Any attempt by an individual to repair the wiring without good knowledge could lead to short circuits (that is, delusions). As per Cilliers and May (2002), anxiety evokes the use of defence mechanisms to gain a degree of security, safety and acceptance. Plutchik (1995), relating to the Freudian notion of defence mechanisms, describe these as unconscious mental processes employed by the ego to reduce anxiety, since they involuntarily activate when the individual experiences intra-psychic conflict that creates psychic pain and anxiety.

Along this line, Stapley (2006) notes that defence mechanisms are coping methods that become part of the individual's internalised knowledge pool, and serve as an unconscious guide to decision making in situations that resemble the original experience that initiated the defence. While defences serve as coping mechanisms, they may also prevent individuals from dealing with reality and may thus become dysfunctional (Roberts & Brunning, 2007). Yet, understanding how these defences operate may facilitate new learning and readiness for change (Cilliers, 2005). Blackman (2004) identifies that simply understanding feelings does not enable one to overcome one's problems, but sufficient insight into one's defence mechanisms may facilitate meaning-making for the individual.

Because of the nature of this study, it is pertinent to understand defence mechanisms from a group relations perspective, as well as an individual (Freudian) perspective. Defence mechanisms are categorised as individual, socially structured and system domain defences. These will be discussed in the following sections.

### 2.3.1.1 *Individual defence mechanisms*

There are various basic defence mechanisms, which will be discussed in detail to follow as they relate to the present study (Czander, 1993; Stapley, 2006):

- *Denial* is defined as the disavowal of an aspect of conflict (that is, an aspect that an individual does not want to recognise), in such a way that the conflict no longer exists (Conte & Plutchik, 1995). Denial is the mind's way of not giving attention to reality (Blackman, 2004).
- *Displacement* involves shifting conflict or anger from the object that aroused the emotion, to a substitute object that is less likely to retaliate (Blackman, 2004; Conte & Plutchik, 1995).
- *Intellectualisation* involves the use of intellect to defend oneself by becoming fixated by an unusual theory or behaviour, in an effort to avoid facing the anxiety that is being provoked (Conte & Plutchik, 1995). Blackman (2004) describes it as becoming immersed in a fallacious theory in order to avoid affects, which helps the isolation defence.
- *Introjection* is an unconscious internalisation process that involves taking in 'objects' that have been projected by another (including a person, value or concept), in order to establish congruency to alleviate anxiety (Czander, 1993). This can evoke pleasant or unpleasant emotions. Blackman (2004) explains that the introject (that is, the mental representation) is formed and used as a target for affects and fantasies, and may contribute to the development of impulse control and affect-tolerance (namely, ego strengths). Jacques (1971, in Czander, 1993, p.113) suggested that introjective identification is "a process of construction of self-organisation according to a pattern provided by the introject". This happens in an adaptive manner, only when the introjected is consistent with the individual's pre-existing psychic structure (Czander, 1993).

- *Projection* entails splitting off parts of oneself onto others and then getting distance from it (Ogden, 1982; Segal, 1967; both in Czander, 1993). It includes attributing one's unacceptable impulses and unconscious desires and placing them as an 'object' in another (Blackman, 2004). The individual has a conscious awareness that someone else experiences the unwanted feeling because it is a relocated part of his/her personal experience (Buckley, 1995; Cilliers, 2005; Klein, 1946). Klein (1946) noted that projection originates from the deflection of a 'Death Instinct' and assists the ego in overcoming anxiety by ridding it of bad qualities and danger. Projection has benefits in that it enables the individual to control and master internal conflicts actively that may have been passively endured (Czander, 1993). Blackman (2004, p.19) highlights that, "projection is aggravated by deficits in self-object differentiation".
- *Projective identification* is an interactive process where both projector and projectee consciously attempt to induce a particular role or feelings in one another in order to reduce their own anxiety (Knapp, 1989, in Czander, 1993). It is a process by which parts of the self are split off and projected onto another external object, which becomes the container of the projections (Buckley, 1995; Czander, 1993). Thereafter, the projector controls the external object's reactions and behaviours, and connects with the object of projection (Czander, 1993) owing to unconsciously identifying with his/her projected feelings (Halton, 1994). Shapiro and Carr (2012, p.72) describe projective identification as how "we unconsciously attempt to coerce others through covert actions to become the people we need them to be for our own unconscious and neurotic reasons". Blackman (2004) suggests that projective identification may be used in three ways, namely seeing oneself in another and distorting the other; stimulating affects in another that are not liked in oneself; or stimulating affects that one does not like in another and then behaving like the person who evoked the unwanted affects. Ashbach and Schermer (1987, in Czander, 1993) indicated that projective identification could be viewed as a defence where individuals distance themselves unconsciously from unwanted parts and still keep these parts alive in another object. Halton (1994) suggested that projective identification often leads to the recipient acting out the counter-transference that is derived from the projected feelings.

- *Regression*: Under stress, there is a retreat to earlier, more immature patterns of behaviour (Buckley, 1995; Plutchik, 1995). Plutchik (1995) describe regression and acting-out in the same way.
- *Repression*: Similar to isolation, this involves the exclusion from consciousness of an idea or emotion to avoid threat or painful conflict (Buckley, 1995; Plutchik, 1995). It entails pushing thoughts that are uncomfortable into the subconscious (Blackman, 2004).
- *Reaction formation* occurs when individuals develop exaggerated opposite attitudes and behaviours in order to prevent the expression of unacceptable desires, especially ones that are sexual or aggressive in nature (Buckley, 1995; Plutchik, 1995). According to Blackman (2004), perfectionism and hyperpunctuality involve reaction formation.
- *Rationalisation* involves the unconscious manipulation of one's opinions so that the forbidden or unpleasant can be evaded and its reality denied. In this way, an individual creates false but credible justifications (Plutchik, 1995).
- *Splitting* occurs when objects (either a person or concept) are split into two parts, namely the 'good' and the 'bad'. While most adults are able to see others as whole beings, under stress the primitive experience may be evoked to polarise the split of 'good' and 'bad' objects in this manner (Buckley, 1995).
- *Sublimation* involves dealing with anxiety by redirecting inappropriate urges into more socially acceptable actions. This is considered an adaptive defence, as it has positive effects both for the self and others (Buckley, 1995; Plutchik, 1995).

According to Plutchik (1995), there are numerous other defences in addition to those defined above, such as *compensation, fantasy, affiliation, devaluation, dissociation, passive-aggression, and suppression*. Blackman (2004) describes 101 defences, and suggests that there are many more. A discussion of these goes beyond the scope of the present study, since they were not employed by participants in the empirical research.

### 2.3.1.2 *Social system defences*

Jacques (1955, in Long, 2006) proposed the idea of social systems being a defence, if a whole social system could be constructed to defend its members (and the integrity of the system) against anxieties. In essence, he hypothesised that a primary cohesive aspect that binds individuals into institutionalised association can be a defence against anxiety. This is because the members would externalise their impulses and internal objects, and pool them into the social institution (Long, 2006).

In agreement, Menzies-Lyth (1960) reports that social systems support individual defences, and individuals use their social systems to enable defences against anxiety, guilt and uncertainty. Menzies-Lyth's (1960) study of nursing staff considered how they used the organisation in dealing with their anxieties, which revealed the formatting of social systems as defences. The primary task of hospitals is to care for those who cannot care for themselves, and most of this responsibility falls upon the nursing staff. The nursing staff experience the full and unrelenting stress of this task, which by normal standards is frightening and distasteful, and gives rise to mixed feelings such as pity, compassion, guilt and anxiety. Therefore, a confluence of structure, culture, mode of functioning and social organisation aids in providing support to deal better with anxiety, which leads to socially structured defence mechanisms (Menzies-Lyth, 1960). This author explains that the important aspect of these defences is the attempt by the individuals to externalise and make substantive in the objective reality to their characteristic psychic defence mechanisms.

According to Menzies-Lyth (1960), a social defence system therefore forms over time due to the collusive interaction and unconscious agreement between members as to the shape it will take. Thereafter, it becomes part of the external reality with which old and new members become accustomed. The social defences created to reduce anxiety may narrow their range of experience and understanding, just when it should be expanding (Hirschhorn, 1993).

Menzies-Lyth (1960) categorised such socially structured defences, which function simultaneously and interact with each other, as follows:

- **Splitting the nurse-patient relationship:** The closer the relationship between nurse and patient, the greater the impact of anxiety, therefore splitting the contact of nurses. The total workload is broken into tasks, and nurses only perform a few of these for all patients, thereby restricting contact and guarding against anxiety.
- **Depersonalisation, categorisation, and denial of significance of the individual:** Reinforcing task-list system is the use of devices embedded into the structure and culture that depersonalise or eliminate the individual distinctiveness for parties. This objectifies the person, reducing the patient to a condition; for example, referring to a patient as 'the liver in bed six'. The nurses' uniforms are a symbol of their required inner and behavioural uniformity.
- **Detachment and denial of feelings:** The nurse has to learn professional detachment, controlling his/her feelings and refraining from over-involvement. The objectification of patients assists with the detachment. They are required to deny feelings and are encouraged with advice such as 'pull yourself together'.
- **The attempt to eliminate decisions by ritual task-performance:** Making decisions that affect the patient could evoke anxiety, so the number and variety of decisions are minimised.
- **Reducing the weight of responsibility in decision making by checks and counter checks:** The final decision is delayed by the common practice of checking and re-checking validity of decisions, and involving others in the process of checking.
- **Collusive social redistribution of responsibility and irresponsibility:** This comes from a collusive system of denial, splitting and projection that is culturally accepted and required.
- **The reduction of the impact of responsibility by delegation to superiors:** It is typical that delegation happens from manager to subordinate, while in hospitals this is often the reverse, since tasks are forced upwards to denounce responsibility for performance.

According to Fraher (2004), both the work of Jacques (1952) and Menzies-Lyth (1960) enabled advancements in systems psychodynamics. Fraher (2004) reports that organisations (that is, groups) develop mechanisms to defend against anxieties inherent in the system by establishing methods to help members deal with disturbing



emotional experiences. These then become part of the organisational culture in terms of the way the organisation works. Reiterating this, Brown (2003) states that at an interpersonal level, individual defended subjects form groups and create social defence systems. These individual defences against anxiety are supported by unconscious collective agreements to conduct work in a certain manner. Hinshelwood (1991) defined the following as key features of social defence systems:

- A social defence system is collective and offers support to defend against anxiety, to the members who unconsciously employ it;
- It protects members from experiencing unpleasant and overwhelming emotions; and
- Once adopted as a social system defence mechanism, others are pressured into adopting it, resulting in a rigid institution.

Hinshelwood and Skogstad's (2005) anxiety-culture-defence model proposes that anxieties arising in individual's responses to work tasks will trigger primitive anxieties, which are experienced by many that lead to a collective defence. This collective defence then becomes part of the culture and structure of the system (that is, the way things are done). The social defences created to reduce anxiety may narrow their range of experience and understanding, just when it should be expanding (Hirschhorn, 1993).

### *2.3.1.3 System domain defences*

The system domain includes all institutions with a similar primary task (Bain, 1998). Owing to the similarity of primary tasks, the defences remain unchanged as these are ingrained in the structures, authority systems, professional training, funding, technology and knowledge bases (Hyde & Thomas, 2002). The system domain defences, according to Bain (1998), are therefore the behaviours, experiences and expectations that an individual internalises from his/her past experiences and that are taken with him/her wherever he/she goes.

## 2.4 BASIC ASSUMPTIONS THEORY

Fraher (2004) explains that when individuals come together in groups, their primitive feelings and defences are mobilised on behalf of, or in service to, the group. Splitting off of 'bad' is projected onto authority, and it is authority that regulates the boundary of the group. Individuals in a group thus behave as a system and the primary task is that of survival. This is the motivating force for them, and offers the framework for understanding group behaviour (Bion, 1961). Bion (1961, p.59) explains that group members deposit unconscious material that forms what he describes as "the existence of a group mentality", which he believes to be the "unanimous expression of the will of a group – an expression of will to which individuals contribute anonymously". Weinberg (2007) writes that the basic assumptions is an example of the group unconscious – and explains that the group, when regressed will behave 'as if' its members have a shared hidden purpose. The basic assumptions can also be regarded as collective defence mechanisms resorted to in order to cope with deep anxiety (Weinberg, 2007).

An advance by which to understand basic assumption (ba) functioning as it occurs in groups comes from Bion's (1961) contributions. In his work with groups, he explains the existence of two levels, namely the sophisticated work group (W-group) and the basic assumption group (ba-group). The W-group "meets for a specific task" and is thus outwardly focused on the task (Bion, 1961, p.98); on the other hand, the ba-group is inwardly focussed on itself (Banet & Hayden, 1977). This inward focus creates an inevitable tension that is balanced by various behavioural and psychological structures like individual defence systems, ground rules and group norms (Banet & Hayden, 1977). Bion (1961, p.93) states that there is an emotional state associated with ba-functioning, which appears to be "experienced by the individual in their entirety". He posits that the emotional state is in existence and the ba-functioning is deduced from it. The ba-group thus refers to the emotional states that predominate the mode of group functioning (Bion, 1961, p.98), which sometime supports, but more often hinder, task achievement by acting out possible defences (Fraher, 2004). Basic assumptions behaviour will therefore destabilise the group, away from the task, and evokes primitive fantasies and anxiety (Bion, 1961). The systems psychodynamic approach thus recognises these two groups at play, both

of which are real, and which operate and present simultaneously (Bion, 1961; Miller, 1993; Rice, 1965).

According to Koortzen and Cilliers (2002), basic assumptions are largely accepted as the cornerstones of the study of organisational dynamics. The basic assumptions put forth by Bion (1961, p.63) highlight that “people come together as a group for purposes of preserving the group”. The basic assumption, as far as the group is concerned, is an unspoken, implicit assumption that gives meaning to the behaviour of the ‘group as a whole’, without needing to be made explicit. Bion (1961, p.94) has explained that “individuals behave as if they were conscious, as individuals, of the basic assumptions, but unconscious of it as members of the group”. Thus, he notes, the group is neither conscious nor articulate, since this is left to the individual. Unlike the W-group, which requires capacity, the ba-group depends on the individual’s valency, which is defined as “a capacity for instantaneous involuntary combination of one individual with another for sharing and acting on a basic assumption” (Bion, 1961, p.153). Bion (1961, p.153) states that, “participation in basic-assumption activity requires no training, experience, or mental development. It is spontaneous, inevitable, and instinctive”.

Bion (1961) related that the three primary basic assumptions are dependence, pairing and fight-flight, which are seen to displace each other over time. Table 2.2 outlines the characteristics of these three primary ba states (as presented by Bion, 1961), according to their emotional states, predominant defence mechanisms, object relations, narcissistic features, mythic features, roles, biogenetic core and anxieties provoked, as associated with each.

Table 2.2: Characteristics of the basic assumption states (adapted from Bion, 1961, p.94-95; Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002, p.128-129; Schermer, 2000, p.141)

	<b>Dependency</b>	<b>Pairing</b>	<b>Fight-Flight</b>
<b>Basic assumption drive</b>	The group exists to be supported by a leader, on whom it depends for	Coming together as the group is saturated in messianic hope, for the yet ‘unborn’	The group has come together to fight something or to run from it.

	protection and nourishment.	genius (that is, the leader to be).	
<b>Emotional state</b>	Feeling of security is linked to feelings of inadequacy and frustration, and is dependent on the designation of power (omnipotence) and knowledge (omniscience) to an individual.	Feeling of security is sought from the pairing, and the hope that a “person or idea will save the group... from feeling hatred, destructiveness, and despair” (Bion, 1961, p.151); ironically for it to do this, the messianic hope must never be achieved; only by remaining a hope, does hope persist.	“Security is tempered by the demand of the group for courage and self-sacrifice” (Bion, 1961, p.95); thus, the feelings the individual does not want to feel causes him/her to split from the group and his/her own “groupishness”, that is, “his alienable quality as a herd animal” (Bion, 1961, p.95); he/she will try to split off the security yielded from group membership and these disliked feelings.
<b>Predominant defence mechanisms</b>	Introjection; idealisation; devaluation.	Denial; repression.	Splitting; projection.
<b>Object relations</b>	Leader as ‘container-breast’; object hunger/object loss.	Condensation of Oedipal and pre-Oedipal object relations via the primal scene.	Bad, externalised object is pervasive; internal world is object-less.
<b>Narcissistic features</b>	Over-idealisation of leader is defence	Narcissistic self-object; merger with pair.	Primary narcissism; narcissistic rage.

	against narcissistic injury.		
<b>Mythic features</b>	Leader is anti-hero, prophet and deity.	Messianic myths; myth of birth of hero; creation mythologies.	Struggle between good and evil; paradise lost.
<b>Roles</b>	The 'dual' of the leader; dependents and counter-dependents.	Over-personal and impersonal; 'Mary & Joseph'.	Fight leader; flight leader.
<b>Biogenetic core</b>	Child rearing and bonding.	Reproduction and production.	Protection of group from danger.
<b>Anxiety provoked</b>	No anxiety is provoked by realising a dependence on power of another; insecurity.	Anxiety is provoked by realising the individual and group are subservient to the unborn genius.	Panic is characteristic of fight-flight groups.

These three primary basic assumptions will each be described in Sections 2.4.1 to 2.4.3 to follow. Thereafter, secondary basic assumptions (namely one-ness and me-ness) will be presented in Sections 2.4.4 and 2.4.5.

#### **2.4.1 Basic assumption dependency (baD)**

Bion (1961, p.147) reported that “the first assumption is that the group is met in order to be sustained by a leader... for nourishment, ...and protection”. They “meet together to obtain security from one individual on whom they depend” (Bion, 1961, p.66). The group members unconsciously project their dependency onto persons or things that represent authority (Cilliers & May, 2002). Koortzen and Cilliers (2002) described this basic assumption of an individual as the unconscious dependence on an imaginary parental figure or system, and when these needs are not fulfilled, the individual experiences frustration. They report that these frustrations are due to projections of individual insecurities or anxieties.

The group selects a leader who has supernatural powers, rendering members powerless and dependent, and when the leader fails to meet these unrealistic expectations, the group becomes disappointed and seek a replacement who is also doomed to failure (Fraher, 2004). The typical reaction to this is to establish structures, which can be seen as an attempt to manipulate authority (Czander, 1993). Supporting this view, Koortzen and Cilliers (2002) state that this defence mechanism may be considered a manipulation of authority, living out the fantasy of feeling safe and cared for. Reich (1928, in Czander, 1993, p.101) highlighted that, "...every social organisation produces those character structures which it needs to exist". Structure is viewed as a rational response to the needs and strategies of organisations, but Czander (1993) asserted that structures could also evolve from a set of psychodynamics that are not goal-related, and could be counterproductive to the organisation.

Bion (1961, p.81) highlights that in baD, "flight is confined to the group", while fight is to the figure assigned authority. He describes the characteristics of this group as including immaturity in individual relationships and inefficiency in group relationships, suggesting that fearfulness becomes the foremost quality of the individual within this group. Furthermore, Bion (1961) posits that there appears to be a lack of belief that they could learn something of value from each other. Operating with a dependency assumption requires charismatic leaders who are similar in their sense of helplessness, inadequacy and fear of the external world (Kets de Vries, 2004).

According to Bion (1961, p.91), "if the individual were prepared to suffer the pains of development, and all that that implies in efforts to learn, he might grow out of the dependent group", which could result in the individual creating a pull towards a group structured to pairing or fight-flight. However, Kets de Vries (2004) notes that dependency impairs critical judgement of group members, leaving them unwilling to take initiative.

### **2.4.2 Basic assumption fight-flight (baF-F)**

In groups who operate under baF-F, there is a predisposition to the system according to friend or foe (Kets de Vries, 2004). Bion (1961) hypothesised that owing to the primary task of the group being survival or preservation, the group knows only one of two techniques, namely fight or flight. Fight reactions are demonstrated through aggression, scapegoating, attack, rivalry or competition towards self, peers and/or authority. Flight reactions, on the other hand, are typically manifested through fleeing from or avoiding the task at hand, and by withdrawal, rationalisation, intellectualisation, fleeing into the past or future, and/or illness (Kets de Vries, 2004; Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). With the latter, there is a general tendency to avoid the 'here-and-now', and refer to aspects 'out-there' (Banet & Hayden, 1977; Bion, 1961; Hirschhorn, 1993).

Shapiro and Carr (1991) highlight that the two elements of this basic assumption remain connected by fight *and* flight (fight-flight), rather than fight *or* flight (fight/flight). Bion (1961) posits that both fight and flight have the same underlying dynamic, and that leadership is recognised as those who identify the enemy and mobilise the group to attack and/or run away (Fraher, 2004; Obholzer & Roberts, 2003). This occurs while group members remain suspicious and preoccupied with rules and procedures (Obholzer & Roberts, 2003).

### **2.4.3 Basic assumption pairing (baP)**

Bion (1961, p.72) reported the tendency of a group to "break up the fight-flight culture by establishing pairing relationships". This assumption is a response to anxiety or loneliness, and therefore an attempt to pair with others who are seen as being able to alleviate such anxieties (Cilliers & May, 2002). When this basic assumption is in play, it is attributed to the group feeling that its survival is dependent on creating or reproducing (Bion, 1961; Cilliers & May, 2002). Pairing also implies that the group will be split, and thus pairing off some individuals will break the whole, allowing for the establishment of a smaller system (Cilliers & May, 2002; Hayden & Molenkamp, 2004). Pairing thus has the effect of creating conflict, both within the

group and between the group and other systems (Banet & Hayden, 1977; Bion, 1961; Hirschhorn, 1993).

Fraher (2004) reports that the basic assumption of pairing is evident when the group pin their irrational hopefulness for the future on two of its members, so that their pairing will conceive and give birth to a new group, and thus a messiah or reparative experience to bring peace. Bion (1961) suggests that anxiety in baP stems from feelings that both the group and its individuals assume subservience to the unborn messiah (that is, genius). BaP may also manifest in splitting, and according to Koortzen and Cilliers (2002), may evidence intra-personal conflict and ganging up against those perceived as aggressors or authority figures. Obholzer and Roberts (2003) states that with this defence against anxiety, the leader represents the hope for a better future, while inhibiting the actual from happening.

#### **2.4.4 Basic assumption one-ness (baO)**

Koortzen and Cilliers (2002) reported that Turquet (1974) added an additional two assumptions to Bion's original basic assumptions, namely 'one-ness' (baO; also referred to as 'we-ness') and 'me-ness' (baM). BaO is described by Turquet (1974, in Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002, p.269) as occurring when "members seek to join a powerful union with an omnipotent force, surrendering self for passive participation, thus experiencing existence, well-being and wholeness". Lawrence, Bain and Gould (1996) added that in this regard, group members experience existence only through membership of the group. Thus, by being passive and sublimating the self to the union of the group, an individual experiences existence and wholeness. The ability to think independently is lost when this assumption mode is adopted (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). This type of behaviour is typical when a group is striving towards cohesion and synergy, believing that problems will be solved by the unified force of the group (Banet & Hayden, 1977; Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). This assumption is considered a further stage of regression, beyond dependency to existence itself (Shapiro & Carr, 1991).



#### **2.4.5 Basic assumption me-ness (baM)**

BaM relates to a retreat into individualism. According to Koortzen and Cilliers (2002), it is an attempt to avoid the outer world (reality) and find solace in the individual's inner world. The tacit assumption of the group's members is that the group is to be a non-group; in other words, only the individual (rather than the group) is important (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002).

Lawrence et al. (1996) suggest that within baM, there is the denial and exclusion of the outer environment, and a focus on the individual's own inner reality. They suggest that there exists anxiety related to being enveloped by the group, and moreover there is a move to avoid being part of a group, and thus members behave as if the group is a non-group (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002; Lawrence et al., 1996). Lawrence (2000) posits that baM becomes more prevalent as conscious and unconscious anxieties increase. Thus, this author states that some individuals tend to retreat deeper into their inner worlds, which is referred to as socially induced schizoid withdrawal.

While these basic assumptions form the basis of the psychodynamic theory of groups and group behaviour, they also point to a number of concepts that are relevant to understanding group dynamics and singletons within a group (which will be explored in Sections 2.6 and 2.7). The CIBART model will be discussed in the following section.

### **2.5 CIBART MODEL**

Green and Molenkamp (2005) formulated the BART system, which is an acronym for four elements, namely Boundary, Authority, Role and Task. Since the Tavistock conference (which is a form of GRE) is a means of learning through experience and reflection on one's experience, these authors provided this model as a system to facilitate such learning, but suggest that it is only a partial view of such learning (Green & Molenkamp, 2005). They explain that in GREs, participants may learn about the group's reaction to authority, personal tendencies towards taking up roles, and group resistance to tasks. Since the unit of analysis within these conferences

is the group, they highlight that it creates regression in the individual participants, which in turn creates anxiety that offers the opportunity for profound learning or deep defensive resistance.

The CIBART model is the product of Cilliers and Koortzen (2005), who added Conflict and Identity as two additional elements to Green and Molenkamp's (2005) original conception. It was conceived as a consulting model to be used typically in work with individuals (specifically leaders), relating to a variety of dynamic behavioural aspects and their related anxieties and confusion. Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) suggest that the model is useful for understanding, qualitatively assessing, and resolving the underpinning causes of conflict for an individual in a group. Typically, the model is applied collaboratively by teams and consultants working through the six constructs (namely Conflict, Identity, Boundaries, Authority, Role and Task), in order to understand such behavioural manifestations and their origins, purpose and representations (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). The six constructs are discussed to follow.

### **2.5.1 Conflict**

Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) describe conflict as a natural human occurrence that acts as impetus for performance, innovation and creativity. These authors note that it is to be found between two or more parts of a system: namely, within the individual (intra-personally between feelings and ideas); between team members (interpersonally); between groups (inter-group); and/or within a group (intra-group between subgroups). Understanding such conflict dynamics enables insight into the individual's unconscious conflict dynamics and builds a competence in listening, and thus, exploration of conflicts at every level are encouraged (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005).

### **2.5.2 Identity**

According to Cilliers and Koortzen (2005), identity can be viewed as the fingerprint of a team or group, since it is the unique characteristics that differentiate the team, its members and their tasks, climate and culture from others. The leader's

personality has a significant influence on the identity of a group, and a lack of identification with this creates heightened anxiety. Contributing to anxiety is also a lack of clear identity boundaries (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). When there is a misalignment between an individual's identity and that of the leader or collective (that is, the group), it may result in feelings of not belonging, helplessness and hopelessness. It is the leader's role to establish the identity of the collective and to build trust relationships that are meaningful and hopeful (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). Another aspect, according to these authors, relates to how individuals in the group deal with changes in configuration (such as loss or new roles). How individuals in a group deal with these are important for sustaining and understanding identity.

Jenkins (2004, p.4) writes "all human identities are by definition social identities" – he explains that it is within interaction that individual and collective identification come into being. Reicher, Spears & Postmes (1995) relate that social identity theory originates from inter-group relations research, which posits that subjects define themselves in terms of the groups to which they are allocated, that group meaning depends on social comparison, and that members will strive to make their group better in order to achieve a positive social identity. Immersion in a group reinforces the salience of the social identity at the expense of personal identity (Reicher, et al., 1995). Jenkins (2004) defines social identity as the internalisation of collective identifications, and suggests that it has a more profound influence on individual behaviour.

Jenkins (2004) writes that identity is often tied in with classification – and furthermore that identities exist, are claimed or acquired and allocated within power relations. He draws an interesting distinction between the nominal identity and the virtual identity – i.e. the name and the experience of an identity. It is possible Jenkins (2004) says for individuals to share the same nominal identity and for them to have very different experiences thereof. This is pertinent to mention in light of South Africa's Apartheid history – wherein social identity was used for classification, and the lived experience of people within assigned social identity were in fact very different.

Weinberg (2007) asks what connects a group of people, tie them together to make them feel that they belong to the same group? He explains the unconscious connection between people (group unconscious), and this infers the presence of a higher level of unconscious, i.e. the social unconscious which is timeless and out of space (Weinberg, 2007). Due to its timelessness, members are able to re-enact in the here-and-now, relationships and emotions from the remote past. Weinberg (2007, p.309) clarifies the term social unconscious means “that they behave *as if* their members have similar elements in their individual unconscious. They share anxieties, fantasies, defences, myths, and national memories. They co-construct a shared conscious”

### **2.5.3 Boundaries**

Boundaries refer to the physical and psychological demarcation around a system, set to contain anxiety and thus control safety (Cilliers et al., 2004). Boundaries in this framework are derived from Lewin’s (1958, in Miller, 1990b) work, and both separate and connect a system to its environment, and facilitate an exchange. Miller (1993) purports that boundaries are more like regions than lines, owing to (a) the changing of the relation between tasks of different interfacing systems, and (b) the identity shift, of which renegotiation and redefinition is ongoing. Miller (1990a, p.172) notes that this region is the site of those roles that mediate between inside and outside: “in organisations and groups this is the function of leadership and in individuals, it is the ego function”.

With regard to the systems psychodynamics stance described earlier in this chapter, this approach regards organisations (and groups) as open systems with insulating and permeable boundaries, which regulates interaction or exchange with the environment (Miller, 1993). Green and Molenkamp (2005) define boundary as the container for group work. The leader’s role is to act on the boundary (Fraher, 2004; Miller, 1993) and manage the degree of influence in both directions. Too much flexibility may be disruptive to task achievement, while boundaries that are too rigid may create closed-off systems and inflexibility. As described by Czander (1993), relationships are formed within a system to provide for integration, stability and coherence in order to strengthen the system’s security, while relationships across

the boundary facilitate interaction with its environment to provide nourishment and stimulation. He goes on to state that all systems survive “as a function of their ability to manage their boundaries” (Czander, 1993, p.179). In line with this, Miller (1993, p.11) notes that, “survival is therefore contingent on the appropriate degree of insulation and permeability in the boundary region”.

Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) liken boundaries to the skin that protects and holds a physical body together. Ambiguity about this demarcation creates dysfunction and sub-optimal task achievement (Czander, 1993). Miller and Rice (1967) assert that ultimately, the health and survival of a system will depend on a suitable mix of protection/insulation and permeability in the boundary region.

There are different boundaries without which anxiety will be heightened, namely time, space/territory and task (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) describe the aspects of these boundaries as follows:

- *Time* boundaries relate to start and end times for work, tasks, meetings and so forth, which may be controlled or manipulated by others and may effect a sense of being overwhelmed. Green and Molenkamp (2005, p.2) state that when participants understand the rigidity of the time boundary, they learn “when it is over, it is over”. The time boundary in the set up of GRE, also denotes the mode of observation and interpretation of the consultant – in the here-and-now;
- *Space* boundaries reference the area of activity (such as one’s work) and the proximity to others, considering that individuals have varying degrees of personal space that they can tolerate; and
- *Task* boundaries include the performance criteria of agreed content of work (primary task), since when individuals work outside of the agreed content, it is referred to as anti-task behaviour.

Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) recommend understanding how *time* is used and what frustrations are experienced with regards to time boundaries; how *space* serves as a container for an individual’s security and how this space is occupied; and how the grouping of *tasks* create meaning and/or confusion. These boundary aspects impact on the degree to which identity shapes individuals, since a lack of boundaries creates anxiety.

#### 2.5.4 Authority

Authority is the right to do work (Green & Molenkamp, 2005). In line with this definition, Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) define authority as the power to effect tasks that are officially afforded to the team and its members. However, Stapley (2006) point out that power and authority are different. Power is the capacity to influence others, which is *projected into* a role (Czander, 1993; Stapley, 2006). On the other hand, authority is the right to act within terms of authority, which is *contained within* a role (Czander, 1993; Stapley, 2006).

Thus, Obholzer and Roberts (2003) holds that authority is the right to make decisions that are binding on others, explaining that it may be delegated from above or below within a hierarchy. They note that full authority does not exist, but rather they conceptualise the term 'full-enough' authority, which occurs when the authorised individual recognises his/her authority and the limits of said authority, which leads to ongoing regulating (enhancing and draining) within the system. 'Good enough' authority is affected by the authority from within, which relates to his/her relationships with past authority figures from his/her inner world (Obholzer & Roberts, 2003). Should this be limiting, these authors refer to this as barracking by the inner world authority figures, by which self-doubt inhibits external authorisation, while the opposite leads to an inflated sense of self. Dimitrov (2008) cites Friedrich's assertion that authority is legitimised by the recognition and acceptance of those subjected to it. Furthermore, Obholzer and Roberts (2003) connect Klein's (1935) depressive position to being authoritative, and her paranoid-schizoid position to being authoritarian. Authoritative is a depressive position, in which the individual is in touch with the roots and sanctioning of his/her authority and its limitations, whereas authoritarian involves being cut off from roots of authority and processes of sanction (Obholzer, 2003).

Gould (1993, in Hirschhorn & Barnett, 1993) distinguishes between organisational authority and personal authority, explaining that the former is delegated to roles, thus affording the 'right-to-work', while the latter is a vital part of an individual's sense of self regardless of the role that he/she occupies, thus affording the 'right-to-be'. This is the right to exist as oneself in one's role. These aspects ('right-to-work' and

'right-to-be') have consequence responsibilities and accountabilities. Gould (1993, in Hirschhorn & Barnett, 1993, p.52-53) highlights that:

*Personal authority is experienced when individuals feel entitled to express their interests and passions, when they feel that their vitality and creativity belong in the world, and when they readily accept the power and vitality of others as contributors to their own experience. They give themselves and others permission to be vital, or in a word, to be authentic-in-role.*

Gould (2006) explains that personal authority operates on a continuum: At the one end of the spectrum is a mature, realistic and robust sense of personal authority, while on the other end are individuals who experience difficulty with their authority. These difficulties manifest as excessive; grandiose; narcissistic; the belief that one could do or have everything; or the belief that they are allowed nothing. This is believed to be shaped by family relations, especially those in authoritative roles (that is, parents), who legitimate or de-legitimate the child's interests, thereby authorising or de-authorising their vitality in terms of their real self (Gould, 1993, in Hirschhorn & Barnett, 1993). These authors explain that the manner by which an individual interprets and internalises these experiences determines his/her sense of personal authority, but reparation is possible with intervention and learning.

There are three levels of authorisation that are afforded to those who represent others across boundaries in a system, since unclear authority boundaries restrain and disempower (Dimitrov, 2008). These levels are as follows:

- *Representative authority* suggests that sharing and giving sensitive information across the boundary about the system is restricted;
- *Delegated authority* implies more freedom in sharing, but with clear task and content boundaries being defined; and
- *Plenipotentiary authority* affords the individual liberty to use his/her own discretion in decision-making to cross the boundary.

Dimitrov (2008) asserts that authority relationships activate Bion's (1961) ba-groups, in the form of an unconscious level of functioning based on assumptions

that members have about how they will have their needs met. These ba-groups affect authority in different ways, as discussed in Section 2.4 and summarised as follows (Dimitrov, 2008):

- BaD reveals a manipulation of authority;
- BaP demonstrates a 'ganging up' against authority;
- BaF/F generally entails a fight against authority;
- BaO involves members uniting with powerful force and surrendering themselves in order to keep safe; and
- BaM entails an individual withdrawing from a group into his/her inner world, away from authority.

### **2.5.5 Role**

Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) define 'roles' as the boundary around work. It is central to individual activity, capturing the defined behaviour, authority, culture, duties and responsibilities delineated by set boundaries and formalised under a recognised title (Cilliers & Harry, 2012). Czander (1993, p.302) discusses that, "entry into a role is a complex psychological process". This author qualifies this by noting that identification is core to the process, and that taking on a role involves renouncing that which is not part of the role.

Czander (1993) explains that conformance to role requirements enables the binding function that serves as a defence against anxiety. Hirschhorn (1993) mentions that when such anxiety drives behaviour, an individual sees others in the team not as they are, but as what he/she needs them to be, so that others take up a role in his/her internal drama. According to Cilliers et al. (2004), taking up a role involves both conscious and unconscious boundaries around the manner by which individuals behave.

Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) refer to three types of roles, which are also mentioned by Obholzer and Roberts (2003) as aspects of primary tasks. It may be assumed that since these terms are used for task, they may also be applied in the context of roles, as follows:



- a) *Normative role*, which is attributed by the group regarding what the job or role entails, by means of the objective job description;
- b) *Existential role*, which is the individual's role as seen by others, including how others believe he/she is performing it; and
- c) *Phenomenological role*, which may be conjectured by other's unconscious behaviour.

Cilliers et al. (2004) assert that incongruence between these three roles would increase anxiety and thus detract from effectiveness.

Cilliers and Koorzten (2005) describe organisational role analysis (ORA) as being informed by a double reality, in terms of the personal history of the individual and the system within which his/her role/s exist. The working hypothesis, according to these authors, is that individuals design and enact their role/s based on past relationships and experiences, and that drama in the system mobilises childhood dramas. ORA thus enables an individual to understand and disentangle the complexities of his/her past, thus aiding in differentiating reality, illusion and fantasy, and in so doing, regaining personal authority (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). ORA is further expanded upon in Section 3.5.2.

### **2.5.6 Task**

Tasks are the fundamental component of one's work. In the here-and-now, one's primary task serves as his/her dynamo or driving force (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). Clear primary task boundaries enable task performance, and adherence indicates contained anxiety (Cilliers & Harry, 2012). As mentioned in the previous sub-section, Obholzer and Roberts (2003) posit that what individuals perceive as their primary task may often explain the dynamics in organisations. They note that three kinds of primary tasks exist, namely:

- a) *Normative task*, which is the formal and official task as defined by the main stakeholder in the organisation;
- b) *Existential task*, which is what the task holder believes he/she is executing; and
- c) *Phenomenal task*, which is the task as inferred from the behaviour of other employees.

Obholzer and Roberts (2003) furthermore highlight that an analysis of these three tasks will identify discrepancies, and thus warns that a group that does not know (or seek to know) its primary task will dismember or create a new primary task, which is also known as anti-task behaviour. Diversion into anti-task behaviour creates confusion and free-floating anxiety (Cilliers & Harry, 2012; Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). According to Cilliers and Koortzen (2005), it is useful to explore one's readiness and resilience to cope with the complexity of a task.

## **2.6 THE SINGLETON IN GROUP RELATIONS**

An individual entering into a group brings a particular presence, and this is the focal point of the present study that requires attention. The individual entering the group is known as 'the singleton', a concept first introduced by Turquet (1975). In Turquet's (1975) work on the study of the phenomenology of the individual's experiences with regards to his/her changing membership in a large group, he highlights that an individual comes into a group as "I" (that is, one who has not yet achieved a role status), whom he defines as a singleton. A singleton is "not yet part of a group but attempting both to find himself and make relations with other singletons who are in a similar state" (Turquet, 1975, p.94). A singleton is therefore one who at this point is not yet a part of his/her group, but endeavours to form relationships with other singletons, and in doing so, finds him/herself (Lawrence, 2000).

Lawrence (2000) explains that those who are willing to transcend the boundaries of their individuality become individual members (IM) and form relationships with other singletons in the group, thus becoming a 'converted' singleton (Turquet, 1975; Lawrence, 2000). As the group becomes meaningful to the IM, the evolution continues in that he/she can convert to MI (membership individual). Miller (1990a) reports on the threat of annihilation here, in that the singleton experiences an attempt to convert him/herself from IM to MI, known as 'creature of the group'. As theorised by Le Bon (1896, in Fraher, 2004), a person gives up a part of their individuality when joining a group. Any fears of being obliterated by a large group could set the tone for a group becoming a repository for negative emotions.

Turquet (1975) goes on to explain that the transition in group life from singleton to IM, between IM and MI, and from IM back to singleton after the event is so fluctuating, that it makes the personal boundary or 'external skin' very important. In each of these phases, there is the potential opportunity for choice and thus the expression of individuality ("I-ness"). Asserting "I-ness" may include an increase in distinctive behaviour that may bring pressure to convert to MI. Turquet (1975) explains that for the singleton to become an IM, he/she will require a boundary or skin that serves to define and limit the self, which he also refers to as a 'second skin'. This second skin is an internal separator that allows the singleton to distinguish his/her background that shaped him/her, and to which the singleton may return. This boundary enables an individual to overcome the dilemma of "this is me, that is not me" (Lawrence, 2000, p.317). This author highlights that those who refuse to make any of these conversions are unable or unwilling to undergo such changes in state.

Lawrence (2000, p.318) describes that the 'here-and-now' may be separated from the individual's past by the second skin as follows: "While the presence of the past gives rise to a sense of continuity of growth out of all our yesterdays, the singleton's immediate experience is nevertheless one of discontinuity, of being other than he was yesterday". This author explains that this discontinuity and dislocation can be frightening, but necessary to raise larger existential issues for the individual. Furthermore, one's history allows for psittacosis (that is, knowing how to be new and avoid repetition) as well as aphasia (that is, escaping tradition), in the sense that, "we must sit in the seats of our ancestors, i.e. we must turn our ancestors out of them" (Lawrence, 2000, p.318).

From Turquet's (1975) phenomenological experience, Lawrence (2000) highlights three aspects:

- A matrix is a place of origin and growth from which something is bred, developed or produced. It holds the potential creativity of a group;
- The theme of dislocation implies a state of bewilderment, termed by Turquet (1975) as "disarroy", which he defined as an overwhelming experience that the world cannot be the same again. This is essential for learning, since the disarroy

represents the fulcrum or swivel point on which the individual may lean towards knowing or not-knowing; and

- The large group is a framed event that mimics a collective (like society), thus providing a realistic sense of behaviour of people in the collective.

Lawrence (2000, p.320), in an attempt to explain his experience in large groups, described it as bewildering and unfathomable. Captured through a poem, he described that, “mind holes in blind spaces are ours of choice, questing neoteric echoes of our voice”. This author interprets this as entailing digging into (or mining) the mind to discover one’s voice in the midst of a history of voices. In describing the experience, patterns of thoughts, perceptions and ‘understanding’ emerge to frame the event, which he named the ‘blind space’ (that is, “a ‘nothingness’ of being in the abyss and seeing the void”) (Lawrence, 2000, p.320). He goes on to explain that in naming the experience, the possibility of knowing the experience is lost.

Bion (1961, p.141) highlights that in “contact with the complexities of life in a group the adult resorts, in what may be massive regression, to mechanisms ... typical of the earliest phases of mental life”. Bion (1961, p.142) goes on to posit that “the belief that a group exists, as distinct from an aggregate of individuals, is an essential part of this regression, as are also the characteristics with which the supposed group is endowed by the individual”. Bion (1961) aptly describes the existence of the group as a fantasy, given substance by this regression which ensnares an individual in a loss of his/her individual distinctiveness (Freud, 1921, in Bion, 1961), thus obfuscating the observations as aggregations of the individuals. Bion (1961) has demonstrated that individuals need groups in order to establish their identity, to find meaning, and to give expression to different parts of themselves. Hollway and Jefferson (2013, p.17) aptly describe the Kleinian view of “how the self is forged out of unconscious defences against anxiety”. They go on to describe the movement between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, whereby the former splits ‘good’ and ‘bad’ (with the bad being located elsewhere), as opposed to the latter, where both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ may exist in the same object. Bion (1961) highlights that the group also needs its individual members to contribute to its tasks and partake in the processes that maintain its distinctiveness, thereby paradoxically threatening individuality.

Turquet (1975) explains that externally, the presence of others enables a definition of what is 'me' and what is 'not me', while internally, boundaries between past and future (that is, then and now) do the same. In the absence of this, the individual is relegated back to the "undifferentiated non-singleton matrix" out of which he/she developed (Lawrence, 2000, p.321). Anzieu (1971, in Miller, 1993, p.179) describes the group as both "all-gratifying mother" as well as "destroyer of identity", and goes on to highlight that asserting individuality exposes the individual to exploitation and attack on the one hand, or falling into an infinite void on the other. Turquet's (1975) work begins to conceptualise the struggle between individuation and incorporation, which is well aligned to the present study.

Bion (1961, p.90) notes that the group "is more than the aggregate of individuals, because the individual in a group is more than an individual in isolation". This highlights the problem of group therapy, in that the group is often used "to achieve a sense of vitality by total submergence in the group, or a sense of individual independence by total repudiation of the group, and that part of the individual's mental life, which is being incessantly stimulated and activated by this group, is his/her inalienable inheritance as a group animal" (Bion, 1961, p.90). Bion (1961, p.91) moreover notes that, "there is a matrix of thought which lies within the confines of the basic group, but not within the confines of the individual".

Miller (1993) explains that the Leicester Model has proven effective in assisting with the tension between individuation and incorporation (which is an inherent human condition). He suggests that it helps to confront the instability of individuality and autonomy within the safe confines of a group process, by allowing insight into how the individual is unconsciously involved and drawn into group processes, thus becoming less vulnerable to it and more effective at self-managing it. Miller (1993) goes on to explain the importance of how the individual deals with the experience, and learning from this experience. He notes that these experiences are personal and private. When GRTEs are effective, the effect could be rebellious in that individuals begin to question status and exercise their authority; and on the other hand, a GRTE could result in individuals feeling distressed and displaying strange behaviour (Miller, 1993). Such are some of the limitations of GRTEs.

## **2.7 UNDERSTANDING THE INDIVIDUAL WITHIN SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMICS**

While much is detailed about a group's existence within systems psychodynamics, the individual in systems psychodynamics requires further emphasis. To this end, this section will explore aspects including, but not limited to, containment, valence and transference/counter-transference, with special consideration given to the impact that these have for the individual.

### **2.7.1 Psychoanalytical perspectives**

Freud (1921, in Winter, 1999) criticised the notion of a separate discipline of social psychology differentiated from individual psychology, noting that it is a distinction without a difference. He highlighted that society pre-exists the individual, and social configurations have been handed down as already shaped by preceding generations. The cause of these cannot be found within the individual, but rather it is the other way around (Bion, 1962; Winter, 1999). Qualifying his position, Freud (1921, in Winter, 1999, p.254) stated that "group psychology is therefore concerned with the individual man as a member of a race, of a nation, of a caste, of a profession, of an institution, or as a component part of a crowd of people who have organised into a group at some particular time for some definite purpose". According to Winter (1999, p.254), "Freud contends that theories of mass psychology like Le Bon's have neglected to define the 'bond' that unites individuals, which might be precisely the thing that is characteristic of a group".

As Bion (1962) asserts, group dynamics are helpful to an individual's understanding of self, and in line with this, Winter (1999) writes that psychoanalysis has been a study in social psychology, citing Freud's (1921) assertion that an individual's relations with family are in fact the main subject of psychoanalysis. This is the pursuit for greater understanding of self, in terms of the search for truth. Grinberg (2000) has highlighted that comprehending the universe in which individuals live may create fear, and thus the search for truth is constrained by an individual's intelligence and emotional inheritance. Furthermore, the fear of uncovering the truth may be

overpowering (Grinberg, 2000). For this reason, an individual could resist such insight by constructing a barrier, which is determined by his/her anxiety experience and which may present as a defence mechanism. Grinberg (2000) suggests that Bion (1962) follows in the Freudian tradition, since he purported that the love of truth formed the basis of the analytical relationship and therefore denounces shame and deceit.

While the group is more than the sum of its members, it is also important to note that an individual's real significance cannot be fully understood until it is operationalised in an intelligible field, within a group (Bion, 1961). This is underpinned by Freud's (1921, in Bion, 1961) search for the explanation of neurotic symptoms, not in the individual, but in the individual's relationship with objects.

However, the psychoanalytical process of learning through insights reduces such psychotic anxieties and create changes in the individual's ego, continuing to remodel it in future experiences. Over time, the capacity for creativity and discrimination, as well as reality thinking, will continue to develop (Grinberg, 2000). Grinberg (2000, p.177) reports that "transformation in O are related to experiences of deep change, mental growth, insight and 'becoming O'". He explains that transformation in **O** relates to authentic insight, which is feared as it requires being oneself (that is, one's own truth) that carries with it the requirement to accept responsibility for that which it entails. Insights will be discussed in more detail within Section 3.2.

### **2.7.2 Containment**

The genesis of the concept of containment is to be found in Bion's work, germinating from Klein's (1946) conception of projective identification (Parry, 2010). While projective identification serves as a defence against anxiety (Buckley, 1995), containment involves two psyches in which projective identification is more of a symbolic process wherein parts are projected as a means of communication, to enable examination of the parts in a psyche that is strong enough to contain these until reclamation is possible (Charles, 2002; Cilliers et al., 2004). Bion (1962) explains that an aspect of projective identification deals with the modification of

infantile fears, wherein the infant projects 'bad' parts of its psyche into an object ('good breast'). The projected carries in the 'good breast' until it has been modified to the degree that what was projected may be tolerated by the infant, and is re-introjected (Bion, 1962).

From this, Bion (1962) formulated his idea of a container and contained, namely that the contained is that which is projected, while the container is the object into which the contained is projected. He highlights that, "container and contained are susceptible of conjunction and permeation by emotion. Thus conjoined or permeated or both they change in a manner usually described as growth" (Bion, 1962, p.90). Furthermore, Bion (1962) posits that container and contained have a mutual dependency that afford benefit without harm to either. He goes on to explain that should the mother not accept feeling projected, then the infant is left feeling that his fears lack meaning and will therefore re-introject not the original fear, but rather a 'nameless dread'. Shapiro and Carr (2012) describe containment as the holding environment required for human development to occur. Without feeling secure, an individual may not be able to cope with his/her anxiety and thus would not be able to learn.

Bion (1962, p.36) moreover introduced the concept 'reverie' to describe the "state of mind which is open to the reception of any 'objects' from the loved object", and is thus able to accept these projections, filter and understand the experience, and allow the infant to gain a sense of self through these reflections. Parry (2010) explains that it is a way to actively engage with the infant to teach him/her how to detoxify and metabolise the projection; thus by demonstration, the mother shows how confused emotions can be endured, shaped and formed. Containment therefore refers to the mechanism by which emotions and its containment can be managed (including being experienced, avoided, denied and/or kept in or passed on), so that its effects are mitigated or amplified (Cilliers et al., 2004). In this regard, Parry (2010) points out that Bion (1961) aligns to the Freudian and Kleinian perspectives in the view that tolerated frustration is a significant invigorator of development.



The consultant's role in group relations is thus to act as a container during the processing of change (Miller, 1990a). The consultant filters and manages the anxiety or threatening emotions of the group, so that they may be processed by the group (Cilliers et al., 2004; French & Vince, 1999). Miller (1990a) highlights that the consultant uses transference and counter-transference, understanding the manner by which he/she is used and the emotions evoked in him/her, to lift out underlying and unspoken issues in the group, so that what is repressed by the group may be expressed by the consultant. In this regard, Bion (1970, p.73) states that, "psychoanalysis cannot 'contain' the mental domain because it is not a 'container' but a 'probe'.

### **2.7.3 Transference and counter-transference**

Cilliers et al. (2004) describe transference as a common phenomenon in human interpersonal relationships. It is defined by Cilliers et al. (2004) as an unconscious replication of impulse, pain, defence and object relationships as they occurred in the past, but that are inappropriate in the 'here-and-now'. Transferences refer to how one's internalised images of others, often derived from childhood, determine the recreation of familiar relationships and conceal the complexity of the individuals that they engage with (Shapiro & Carr, 2012). Cilliers et al., (2004, p.73) define it as, "an unconscious repetition or replication in a more or less crystallised or fossilised way, of impulse, pain, defence, internal and external object relationships, as they have occurred in the past (stemming from a past experience)". Generally, these authors suggest that this tendency would be deemed appropriate in the 'here-and-now', but the transference holds an implicit record of its aetiology, both social and psychological. Freud (1914, in Hatcher, 1973, p.381) highlights that transference is, "a piece of real experience, but... it is of a provisional nature".

Dimitrov (2008) adds that transference confuses time and place and that essentially, transference implies that no relationship is new but rather replication of prior relationships. Transference may pattern through idealisation or mirroring (Dimitrov, 2008). The former is a means to cope with feelings of helplessness, and thus idealised transference acts as a protective shield, whereas in the latter, an individual imitates being and behaving, and becomes collusive (Dimitrov, 2008).

Therefore, Cilliers et al. (2004) says transference contains a coded of the social and psychological cause and in groups, manifests as the group's distortion of the 'here-and-now reality of the relationship with the consultant.

Counter-transference is the state of mind wherein other people's feelings are experienced as one's own (Halton, 1994). Shapiro and Carr (2012, p.72) define counter-transference as "our unconsciously derived reactions to being seen as someone we do not feel we are". Goldin (2017) says that these unconscious reactions make it difficult for a consultant to remain completely neutral and requires of the consultant to attend to their own tendencies to defend or distort these transferences – which reflects both the inner world of the consultant as well as the other. These reactions should be learned from and managed – and could provide useful data for enriching understanding (Goldin, 2017).

In comparison, Obholzer and Roberts (2003) describe counter-transference as experiencing other people's feelings as one's own. Counter-transference is an individual's unconscious reactions to being viewed in a way that does not align to how he/she sees him/herself (Shapiro & Carr, 2012). Cilliers et al. (2004) describe counter transference as a defence mechanism utilised by consultants, since it stems from the consultant's projective identification and leads to triggering of repressed emotions (such as anger or guilt).

Levinson (1972, in Dimitrov, 2008) stated that interpretation of transference and counter-transference enables understanding of the subjective meaning of actions and experiences, both individual and collective. Furthermore, Dimitrov (2008) explains that the 'fit' between the present event and earlier occurrences in the history of an individual is based on pattern matching. In other words, transference is described by Dimitrov (2008) as the act of using relationship patterns from past exchanges to deal with present situations. Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) explain that pattern matching is the entanglement in 'displacements in time' that individuals tend towards, which results in confusing the present within the past and re-living it, thereby behaving towards others as if they were from the past.

Dimitrov (2008) as well as Shapiro and Carr (2012) suggest that it is important to be aware of transference and counter-transference, and be able to recognise personal predispositions through self-reflection in order to distinguish these from larger system dynamics.

#### **2.7.4 Valence**

Valence refers to the system's unconscious predisposition or vulnerability to be drawn into a basic assumption functioning, and thus receive projections, identify with these and counter specific group transferences (Cilliers et al., 2004). Cilliers and May (2002) define valence as the predisposition (of individuals or the group) to accept or attract projections by others (individuals or groups). Valence is used in physics "to denote the power of combination of atoms" and thus eclipses Freud's (1921, in Bion, 1961, p.175) terminologies such as 'imitation' or 'suggestion'.

Bion (1961, p.116) states that valency is "the individual's readiness to enter into combination with the group in making and acting on the basic assumptions". Furthermore, he explains that it is the instantaneous capacity to combine with "other individuals in an established pattern of behaviour – the basic assumptions" (Bion, 1961, p.175). Amerlius and Amerlius (2000, p.257) reference Bion's definition as the instantaneous, involuntary combination of individual to group, and furthermore state that valency is "a pattern of relatively stable reactions to various group situations". Amerlius and Amerlius (2000) go on to suggest that individuals that compose the group may be regarded as resources for creating a group culture, while group culture, once formed, influences the behaviour of the individuals. They cite the work of Thelen (1954), who developed a method for portraying group personality or valency of an individual, using a test called Reaction to Group Situation Test (RGST) in which individual valency could be captured and used to predict individual group behaviour from the knowledge of this valency.

## **2.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the origins of the systems psychodynamic perspective were explored. Furthermore, significant aspects of the stance were explained as they

relate to the study, including anxiety and defence mechanisms and Bion's basic assumptions theory. The consulting model of CIBART was described, as these are elements that enable improved understanding of the individual and group dynamics. The singleton and an understanding of the individual within psychodynamics were reviewed.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FROM GROUP IMMERSION TO SELF-AWARENESS: ENHANCING INSIGHT, MEANING AND LEARNING POST-GRE, THROUGH MEANING-MAKING

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#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter intends to clarify meaning, insight and learning, together with the processes that enable meaning-making for and by an individual. In so doing, it explores aspects of attention (Bion, 1961; Bion, 1962) and interpretation (Bion, 1970). It will furthermore connect various approaches or models (Cilliers, 2005; 2011; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1987; Kilburg, 2008b) to clarify the approaches within systems psychodynamics that seek to facilitate learning through meaning-making. The constitution of psychodynamic coaching is informed by the seminal work of Brunning (2006a), Chapman (2010), Kilburg (2002; 2004) and Long (2006). These will be explored with varied applications (Cilliers, 2011; 2012) in this chapter. This will be done in order to forge a foundation for formulating a perspective on meaning-making processes that could be used by an individual post an existential experience (that is, an intensive experiential event). The chapter concludes with an integration of the presented literature.

#### 3.2 EXPLORING INSIGHT, MEANING-MAKING AND LEARNING

The term 'insight' has been used in literature to describe many inter-related concepts, including psychological mindedness, recognition of psychological difficulties, and awareness of one's behavioural patterns (Johansson, Høglend, Amlo, Bøggwald, Ulberg, Marble & Sørbye, 2010). These authors attest to the sparseness of empirical research relating to the role of insight in dynamic psychotherapy.

Meaning is intertwined with insight, as this section seeks to demonstrate. According to Czander (1993, p.201), "a key educative concept used in systems consulting is 'insight,' specifically, insight into the psychodynamics, or covert processes found in

organisations". According to Krauss (2005, p.763), "meaning and meaning making have many implications for learning". Learning from experience enables growth, which requires insight. Elliott, Shapiro, Firth-Cozens, Stiles, Hardy, Llewelyn and Margison (1994) describe insight as both simple and difficult to define, since it is a sense of sudden realisation of a previously missed perceptual pattern, also understood as an epiphany to a puzzle. Elliott et al. (1994) note that insight remains an elusive construct with little being defined with respect to its properties, the factors that give rise to it, how insights unfold, and the consequences thereof. This is supported by Schafer (2003), who asserts that the development of insight is continuous, never knowing where it begins or ends.

In an attempt, therefore, to fully define this concept, Moro et al. (2012) describe 'insight' as inner sight that creates understanding through inner eyes and perception; that is, a form of wisdom. In other words, an insight is an opening that has arisen from a radical awakening to the 'new' and is often followed by a reflection (Hyypä, 2014). Insight, although not explicitly defined by Freud (1936), is also about making the unconscious, conscious. Moro et al. (2012) note that insight is about gaining an increased awareness of one's mental state, and this leads to enhanced perception and understanding of the individual's inner and outer worlds.

In this regard, Myerson (1960, in Hatcher, 1973) describes psychoanalytic insight and reality-oriented insight. Psychoanalytic insight effects an internalised version of the analytic process, while reality-oriented insight is less open to unconscious conflict, rather renouncing the conflicted part of him or herself (Hatcher, 1973). Moro et al. (2012) state that insight may be both intellectual and emotional, but suggest that emotional insight is superior. This is because as Hatcher (1973) explains, emotional insight requires an integration of emotional contact and intellectual comprehension to make meaning of an unconscious conflict.

Elliott et al. (1994) clarified that insight has four components, the first of which is a *metaphoric vision* (that is, 'figuratively seeing', which can include metaphoric illumination). For example, stating that 'the situation made me see' or 'the lights went on' correlates with the etymology of the word 'insight' that means "internal seeing" (Elliott et al., 1994, p.449). The second component is *connection*, implying that

insight enables an individual to make a connection, and see patterns and linkages (that is, 'put the pieces together'). This could include reasons, causes and categories for the insight. The third component is *suddenness*, implying that an individual 'clicks' or has a 'light bulb moment'. The fourth component is *newness*, in which an individual experiences a sense of discovering something that he/she did not previously know (Elliott et al., 1994).

Thus, insight is associated with gaining understanding, which implies that an individual will 'see the light', realise what something means, and get to the cause or correct answer (Schafer, 2003). Indeed, Schafer (2003, p.15) highlights that, "without insight their lives will be cursed with blind repetitions of their painful pasts". While analysis may transform history into personal truth, interpretation may deliver new knowledge, and it is ultimately the individual who needs to digest these to transform it into insights (Moro et al., 2012). As noted by Moro et al. (2012, p.355), "insights connects past and present, the content and process into the mental unity". They also connect meaning-making to the learning agency in childhood.

In this way, learning comes from working at the edge between 'knowing' and 'not-knowing' (Simpson & French, 2001). These authors note that Bion's (1970) 'growth of mind' comes from exposure to truth, and suggest that learning equates to Bion's (1970) 'growth of mind'. Insight enhances awareness to aid in an improved understanding of events (in inner and outer worlds), which serves as a learning platform (Moro et al., 2012). In agreement, Schafer (2003) notes that insight refers to getting beneath the surface of things that are 'out there' and 'in there'.

Bugental (1967, in Keeney, 1983, p.22) highlighted that, "man's awareness about himself acts as a constant 'recycling' agency to produce changes in himself". As explained by Moro et al. (2012, p.356), "insight mobilises a new repertoire of behaviour with a tendency to produce an adaptive response of a different kind". However, they go on to note that insight is disabled with defence mechanisms (which were previously discussed in Section 2.3.1). Schafer (2003) adds that the path to insight is often difficult, since it exacerbates anxiety and/or guilt, and it can therefore induce resistance to accepting the insight. However, when an individual

becomes aware/conscious of his/her inner conflicts and defences, what has been suppressed is revealed (Moro et al., 2012).

Discerning insight is crucial as a curative factor (Schafer, 2003). This is because it is constructed collaboratively between the individual and the analyst, and it enables the discovery of an enhanced perceptual pattern. In principle, it enables the individual to make new meaning of old events. Although Freud (1936) did not use the term 'insight' explicitly, he did contend that uncovering of unconscious material was a crucial curative factor (Johansson et al., 2010). Benjamin (1995) mentioned that awareness and insight do not assure a cure to an issue though, but an analyst needs to assist the individual to process the new 'material' in a non-defensive manner.

Elliott et al. (1994) assert that insight is central to psychotherapy. In agreement, Johansson et al. (2010), citing a study by Sandler, Dare and Holder (1973), suggest that enhanced self-understanding is considered instrumental to change throughout the history of psychoanalysis. According to Frosh and Baraitser (2008, p.358-359), "the truth of psychoanalysis lies in its power as a social, sense-making discourse", adding that research does not uncover 'truths' but rather exposes the ways in which people understand these. As per Moro et al. (2012), psychodynamic psychotherapy increases insight through connecting the reactions to unconscious forces to one's childhood, and they cite Freud's (1936) emphasis that insight into something previously unconscious can provide new meaning to psychic content. Freud (1917, in Schafer, 2003, p.5) highlighted that, "analytic insight has been understood to refer to the analysand's rational, conscious and preconscious grasp and modification of the unconscious issues that, pre-analytically, have been lived out in blind repetitions".

Insight formation is thus a meaning-making process, to which Moro et al. (2012) suggest that discovering meaning is about learning why things happen in one's life, connected to past events and leading to new understandings of these events. Frankl (1963) used the term, "will to meaning", but less explicitly stated that individuals make meaning, which is a conscious and individual choice. A search for meaning has led individuals to extraordinary lengths of endeavours; but simply



understood, meaning is made in every moment of our lives. Individuals have a natural leaning to understand and make meaning of their lived experiences (Frankl, 1963). How an individual punctuates an experience (as termed by Spencer-Brown, 1973) depends on how he/she draws distinctions, culminating in a variety of realities being created simultaneously (Keeney, 1983). Meanings are both the cognition of one's view of reality, as well as that with which actions are defined (Krauss, 2005). Life experiences create and enrich meaning, and meaning provides explanations and guidance for experiences (Krauss, 2005). Therefore, as explained by Becvar and Becvar (2009, pp. 66-67), within a systemic perspective, "causality becomes a reciprocal concept to be found only in the interface between individuals and between systems as they mutually influence each other".

Krauss (2005) suggests that individuals draw meaning from, or give meaning to, experiences; in other words, experiences starts to make sense when an individual applies his/her psychological functioning of translating it into how he/she feels or thinks about it. Thus, it is the individual's phenomenological world (his/her subjectivity) that forms the core of meaning (Krauss, 2005). As per McArthur (1958, in Krauss, 2005), "people have the freedom to choose meaning", and therefore meaning is the underlying motivation behind thoughts, actions and the interpretation and application of knowledge. Frosh and Baraitser (2008) add that the individual is a source of meaning-making agency.

Bion (1961, in Grinberg, 2000) suggested that the analytic relation is based on the pursuit of truth, which is essential for mental growth, since without truth, the mind stagnates and will not develop. However, the fear of knowing the truth due to arrested intelligence or emotional heritage blocks access to insight. These collusions are demonstrated through defences such as idealisation, adjudication of omnipotence and intellectualisation. Grinberg (2000) suggests that learning through insights reduces the anxieties that trigger such defences, and support remodelling the ego and enabling ongoing learning. Thus, according to this author, learning from experiences, which have been lived yet not fully understood, move beyond the experience to 'knowing about something' (transformations in **K**; Bion, 1970) and ultimately getting to 'be the something' (transformations in **O**; Bion, 1970).

Transformation in **O**, which is real and authentic insight, is resisted because it requires taking responsibility for one's own truth. However, Eigen (1998, in Simpson & French, 2001, p.55) stated that, "**O** can be the ultimate reality of a session, emotional truth of a session, growth of the experience of an analysis, the ultimate reality of the personality. It can be creatively explosive, traumatically wounding, crushingly uplifting". Knowing is an activity by which an individual becomes aware of an emotional experience and can formulate an abstraction from it to enable learning from experience and enhanced understanding (Grinberg, 2000). According to this author, evolution implies that through intuition, one is able to connect seemingly incoherent and unrelated phenomena in a way that produces coherence and meaning. He notes that this is an important step to 'at-one-ment' with **O** and describes the capacity for unification or 'being-one'.

Meaning and meaning-making have implications for learning, which is defined by Mezirow (1994, in Krauss, 2005, p.763) as a "social process of construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to action". Learning is thus a mechanism for finding or making meaning in life (Krauss, 2005). When feedback is able to change the method and pattern of performance, it is referred to as learning (Wiener, 1954, p.61). Frosh and Baraitser (2008, p.350) refer to the individual's subjectivity as most significant aspect of learning, since it is the "meaning-making activity through which people forge their lives, their narrativising core". Hollway and Jefferson (2008) indeed posited that humans are psycho-social beings because of a unique life history that transforms one's inner reality, thus creating a system of meaning that pre-exists in any individual.

### **3.3 GROUP RELATIONS EVENTS AS A PLATFORM FOR INDIVIDUAL MEANING-MAKING**

Miller (1993) highlights that GREs have proven to be effective in addressing the tension between individuation and incorporation, which is a tension that has not been fully resolved. While members of groups learn (Miller, 1993), it is not clear to what degree individuals learn from such events (Borwick, 2006; Gould, 2006; McCallum, 2008).

Whether group encounters can effect learning for the individual is in part clarified by Winnicott (1971, in Lawrence, 2000), who notes that the cultural experience is located in the potential space between the individual and the environment. How the individual uses this space depends on his/her formative experiences, which determines the distinction between 'nothing-but-me' and an external omnipotent object that controls 'me'. Lawrence (2000) suggests that GREs offer individuals an opportunity to explore this potential space, and in turn, this can be transferred to other interfaces within the environment. This author reports that Winnicott (1971) also described a third area other than individual and society, which is present between the inner, personal psychic reality and one's actual world. Lawrence (2000) suggests that a GRE offers an opportunity to discover and remake experiences in this third area. GREs, according to this author, are a nexus between the individual and society, and offer an opportunity to reflect on connections between private concerns and public issues. He notes that an individual is a social group, holding in his/her mind a cluster of images of prior relationships that form a version of society.

GREs help an individual to rediscover the moment; to be the internal space between first and second skins; to aid the experience of internal disarray; to reorder feelings in a different manner; and to provide an epiphany in the form of a moment of significant revelation. Shapiro and Carr (2012) highlight that GREs concern learning and the unconscious mind, including gaining understanding of the group as a function of the individual as well as the individual as a function of the group. This enables the individual to experience the self in relation to others and thus begin to see oneself as others do.

Furthermore, Hyyppä (2014) reports that GREs have forged the foundation for the development of Listening Posts (LP). Dartington (2000) reports that OPUS (Organisation for Promoting Understanding of Society) developed Listening Posts as a research methodology which enables participants to reflect their experiences in the role as citizen to reflect on what may be going on in society at the moment. The aim was to investigate two aspects of varying importance, namely the individual and society, while simultaneously acknowledging the meaningfulness of each. Originally developed in the late 1970's by Miller and Khaleelee and established as

a methodology by OPUS in 1990 (Khaleelee & Miller, 1985). This is discussed in more detail in Section 3.4.3.

According to Grinberg (2000), the tension between analyst and analysand to tease one's truth is important. In so doing, finding the truth requires that the assumption of what one's universe is, needs to be challenged, which goes beyond the notion of 'oneself'. Grinberg (2000) points out that the boundary of the self may be the skin, but he questions whether one's mind is inside of this skin or with the other; in other words, how an individual's mind functions is determined by experiences with the 'other' and are not restricted to what is inside his/her own skin. Thus, the GRE sets a platform from which these 'truths' may be challenged. Grinberg (2000), Lawrence (2000) and Shapiro and Carr (2012) all assert the same thing, namely that the self is better known through encounters with others.

There are two seemingly opposing forces, that of group and individuation. However, Grinberg (2000) points out that reconciling these two forces achieves an integrated selfhood, which may create conflict. Furthermore, seeing one's self in and through others, and discovering the other in and through one's self while recognising and respecting differences and similarities, is of importance (Hatcher, 1973; Lawrence, 2000). Shapiro and Carr (2012) explain that the individual's unconscious functioning is revealed in GREs through transference, counter-transference and projective identification (as discussed in Sections 2.3.1.1 and 2.7.3). These only become activated by the self when relating to others, since these authors explain that transference is how childhood experiences inform internalised images of others and drive the self to recreating familiar relationships. Counter-transference, on the other hand, is the unconscious "reactions to being seen as someone we do not feel we are", and projective identification is the manner by which individuals "unconsciously attempt to coerce others through covert actions to become the people we need them to be" (Shapiro & Carr, 2012, p.72). Thus, becoming aware of one's unconscious functioning helps the self to know the self. However, Shapiro and Carr (2012, p.77) assert that the group is the focus, since GREs are not "a means to assist the individual to develop greater self-awareness and understanding. The group itself, and the group alone, is the focus of study". This makes the individuals' growth

incidental rather than intentional, and for this reason, it renders personal learning lost in this dichotomy.

It was Bion's (1961) contention that the group does not exist in reality, but rather that the group is an aggregation of individuals. He furthermore states that the work group is as essential to the development of the individual as he/she is to it. However, this is obscured because the individual distinctiveness is lost in groups (Bion, 1961). Therefore, understanding the individual by optimally using the space that a group encounter affords, unearths individual distinctiveness and brings about growth (Lawrence, 2000). Freud (1930, in Bion, 1961) posited that individual and group psychology cannot be separated, because the psychology of the individual is a function of the relationships between him/her and others (that is, group psychology); therefore, understanding the individual within the context of group encounters is essential.

Bion (1970) asserts that the psychoanalytical problem is the problem of growth, and the harmonious resolution in the relationship between contained and container, which is represented in the individual and groups or pairing. As noted by Gould (2006, p.3), "it is perhaps not surprising that learning from experience should be of fundamental concern for those working in the systems psychodynamic tradition, with its focus on development, insight, understanding, and 'deep' change. Despite this, except in the therapeutic realm itself, such learning has neither been extensively or systematically explored in the literature".

### **3.4 PRINCIPLES THAT INFORM MEANING-MAKING**

The following section will describe the various systems psychodynamic principles and thinking that inform how meaning is constructed. This includes Bion's (1970) work on attention and interpretation, Schafer's (2003) formulation of interpretation, Kets de Vries and Miller's (1987) work relating to 'reading the text', and Listening Posts (Hyyppä, 2014).

### **3.4.1 Bion's contributions: Learning and interpretation**

Bion (1962) describes numerous aspects that are useful in the systems psychodynamic tradition. What follows are reflections on learning as an individual (Bion, 1961), and a discussion of concepts relating to learning from experience (Bion, 1970).

Bion (1961, p.132–133) notes that, “no individual, however isolated in time and space, can be regarded as outside a group or lacking in active manifestations of group psychology”. Even though humans are group animals, he purports that there are significant characteristics of the individual that can only be fully appreciated and understood if viewed within the context of an “intelligible field of study” (that is, the group of which he/she is a member). Furthermore, Bion (1961, p.134) suggests that the group “adds nothing to the individual...it merely reveals something that is not otherwise visible”. Similarly, Flood (1999) describes Zen philosophy that depicts each person as a flash of consciousness, positing that an individual is what everything else is, and therefore, he/she observing the world is in fact the world looking at itself. He goes on to explain that, “the world is therefore nothing more or less than a projection of one’s self. To understand the world we must understand one’s self” (Flood, 1999, p.82). Freud (1936) opined that group and individual psychology could not be differentiated because the psychology of the individual is in fact a function of the relationships between individuals.

However, despite the intertwined nature of individual and group, Bion (1961) further determined that the individual’s ‘survival’ is secondary to that of the group, and that group survival eclipses the individual. He highlighted that, “in a group the welfare of the individual is a matter of secondary consideration – the group comes first, in flight the individual is abandoned” (Bion, 1961, p.64).

Bion (1961, p.118) states that the dilemma of the individual in the group is that “there is no way in which the individual can, in a group, ‘do nothing’ – not even by doing nothing”. Thus, he suggests that the behaviour of the group is because of all members of that group. This would suggest that the individual forms a critical element of group functioning. Moreover, Bion (1961, p.86) explains that a GRE

practitioner “must see the reverse as well as the obverse of every situation”... and goes on to note that “a change of perspective can bring out quite different phenomena” (p.87). One should take into consideration “what is the dual of any given emotional situation” that is observed, since as he stated, “my experience of groups, indeed, indicates that man is hopelessly committed to both states of affairs” (Bion, 1961, p.87, 90).

Bion (1970, p.72) has furthermore claimed that, “psychoanalysis cannot ‘contain’ the mental domain because it is not a ‘container,’ it is a ‘probe’”. Bion (1961, p.174–175) refers to Freud’s (1921) perspective that an individual’s emotions become extremely intensified in a group, while his/her intellectual ability becomes noticeably diminished. Bion (1961, p.175) purports, however, that “intellectual activity of a high order is possible in a group together with an awareness of the emotions of the basic-assumption groups”. Furthermore, he highlights that the “group brings into prominence phenomena that appear alien” (Bion, 1961, p.169), which supports the notion of this study that a GRE may well be an opportunity for an individual to explore, learn and gain personal insights that contribute to his maturation.

The attribution of comprehension to consciousness means that conscious learning comprehends external realities, in that, “a special function was instituted which had periodically to search the other world in order that its data might be already familiar if an urgent need should arise; this function was *attention*” (Bion, 1962, p.5). A system of notation implies a depositing of the results of attention (which is a part of consciousness), which then becomes a part of one’s memory. Bion (1962) suggests that any experience can be used as a model for future experience, thus learning by experience. He related this to Freud’s (1911) definition of attention. However, Bion (1962) explains that the emotional experience first needs to be transformed into alpha elements and be available for abstraction, before being used as such.

It is useful to consider Bion’s (1962) explanation of the ego and the alpha function. He describes the ‘ego function’ as a structure that has the function of establishing contact between psychic and external reality. To learn from experience, Bion (1962) highlights that the alpha-function needs to function on the awareness of one’s emotional experience and is comprised of alpha-elements and beta-elements. As

noted by Bion (1962, p.8), “alpha function is needed for conscious thinking and reasoning and for the relegation of thinking to the unconscious when it is necessary to disencumber consciousness of the burden of thought by learning a skill”. Alpha function converts an emotional experience into alpha-elements, affording the individual a sense of reality, which is as critical to survival as food and drink is to sustaining life (Bion, 1962).

For this reason, Bion (1962, p.42) asserts that “failure to use the emotional experience produces a comparable disaster in the development of personality”. He goes on to explain that an emotional experience cannot be created in isolation, since relationship is central to the experience. Bion (1962, p.6) highlights that beta-elements are suitable for projective identification, and are influential in acting out as a defence. They are stored as undigested facts, while alpha elements have been digested by alpha-function and therefore are available for thought. If there are only beta-elements that cannot be made unconscious, then learning, repression and suppression are not possible (Bion, 1962).

A further aspect that Bion (1962) describes is the contact barrier, which indicates the point of contact and separation between the conscious and unconscious; designates the distinction between these; and serves as a permeable membrane between the two mental phenomena. The nature of the contact barrier is determined by the interchange of elements between conscious and unconscious, which affects memory and its characteristics (Bion, 1962). This author explains that the theory of functions (including alpha-function) make interpretation possible, revealing how an individual feels about having a feeling, but is not able to learn from it. Bion (1962, p.18) describes that, “sense-impressions can be seen to have some meaning but the patient feels incapable of knowing what the meaning is”. On the other hand, beta elements may also form a coherent and purposive screen (which Bion, 1962 calls the ‘beta screen’). This can in some cases replace the contact barrier.

Bion (1962) explains that “thinking” requires unloading the psyche of a build up of stimuli through projective identification. Bion (1962, p.47) states that the **K**-link (knowing or getting to know) “is germane to learning from experience” and that in knowing-activity, one has to have confidence and be conscious of the emotional



experience, “concomitant of knowing that there is correlation between the senses”. Furthermore, Poncairé (1952, in Bion, 1962, p.72) states that, “if a new result is to have any value, it must unite elements long since known, but till then scattered and seemingly foreign to each other, and suddenly introduce order where the appearance of disorder reigned”. He goes on to note that it is possible to see things within the context of the whole, making the new fact valuable as well as granting value to the old fact. He adds that, “the only facts worthy of our attention are those which introduce order into this complexity and so make it accessible to us” (Bion, 1962, p.72). Bion (1962) thus declared that valuable insight is delivered when fragmented elements are integrated to create order from complexity.

In Bion (1970, p.26), he describes **O** as the ultimate reality and absolute truth, “the thing-in-itself”. He goes on to posit that O “can ‘become’ but it cannot be ‘known’.....it enters the domain **K** when it has evolved to a point where it can be known, through knowledge gained by experience...its existence is conjectured phenomenologically” (Bion, 1970, p.26). Bion (1970, p.26) moreover notes that an experience “**O** does not fall in the domain of knowledge or learning save incidentally...it is darkness and formlessness and formulated in terms derived from sensuous experience”. Thus, for a GRE to become ‘known’ and meaningful, an individual has to make meaning of it, which would require a means or method by which to make inferences relevant for his/her maturation. In so doing, he/she finds the truth of the event, as it relates to him/her. This begins the process of seeing and refining attention in terms of apprehending internal and external worlds. Bion (1970, p.28) highlights that it is necessary “for an evolution to take place so that **O** becomes manifest in **K** through the emergence of actual events”. The GRE may be representative of such an event.

Bion (1970, p.34) goes on to explain that **O** (thing-in-itself) and a scientific act of faith becomes apprehensible when it is represented in and by thought. It must therefore evolve before it is apprehended, and it is apprehended when it is a thought, in the same way that an artist’s **O** is apprehensible when it has been transformed into a work of art.

The present study will attempt to assist an individual (who has been through a GRE) in transforming his/her **O** into a **K**, thus making this knowledge apprehensible to

him/her and integrating it into the self to effect maturation and growth. Bion (1970, p.28) notes that, “there can be no genuine outcome that is based on falsity. Therefore the outcome depends on the closeness with which the interpretative appraisal approximates to truth”. **O** is absolute truth, but it is not knowable, though it can be known about and its presence acknowledged. Although **O** is unknowable, it may evolve to a point where it can be known through performance of the primary task. As explained by Bion (1970, p.30), “**K** depends on the evolution of **O** -> **K**”, which in turn depend on ridding **K** of memory because these distort **K**”.

Bion (1970) highlights that one is able to derive a perspective from an interchange between intuition and abstraction (or reason) that enables movement from what is unknown, to that which may become known (that is, transformation in **O**). Charles (2002) suggests that Bion’s (1970) grid provides a tool to transform facts of experience into insights. Charles (2002, p.431) states that, “how we unconsciously process new ideas, correlate them with already established ones, and confront the ‘catastrophic change’ that emerges on the frontier between the new and the old” is how insights are processed. The relationship between the elements that Bion (1970) refers to is that of *contained to container*, and of *fragmentation and integration*, represented by the recursive relationship between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions (Charles, 2002). The paranoid-schizoid defence mechanism hampers a realistic understanding of the severity of a problem, and thus inhibits true insight (Henning, 2009). Both these relationships are dynamic and mutually define each other.

Intuition is the means by which the analyst realises the product of non-sensuous experience (Bion, 1970). In order to achieve this, the analyst has to free his/her mind of memory and desire during the GRE (making him/herself artificially blind, according to Bion, 1970) and enable a mental state (akin to what this author refers to as ‘faith’). Only then is he/she able to get close to the psychic reality that cannot be known but can be been. Grinberg (2000) points out that interpreting transference is necessary, because expecting an individual to make the connection with his/her current context and his/her past experiences requires a capacity that the individual may not possess as yet.

### **3.4.2 Interpretation: Reading the text**

Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) state that when a task is to make sense of things, it requires getting beneath the surface and disclosing its underlying significance. Furthermore, when finding this significance, one is able to transform aspects such as critical events, entities or stories into 'texts', which once transformed may be read by those who are described as 'literate'. This process requires special attention being paid to how the story unfolds, to piece fragments together into a coherent whole (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1987). In the process of 'reading the text', these authors suggest an alertness to underlying themes and metaphors. Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) mention that the root and modes of analysis of text are to be found in anthropology, psychoanalysis and hermeneutics. These will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

#### *3.4.2.1 Anthropological roots*

Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) highlight the loss of intrinsic depth and richness in attempts to study an entity, approaches that fail to explain behaviour within a system. These authors offer the distinction provided by Geertz (1973) that is, "thin descriptions" and "thick descriptions"; the former referring to narrow and simple observable facts, while the latter refers to interpretation that involves an iteration that teases out the significance of the event, thereby discerning a theme that explains multiple facts. In decoding the text, significance is derived from factual, cognitive and affective elements, thus establishing the observer as a translator or cryptographer (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1987). The "function of myths is to exhibit publicly, through a disguise, ordinary paradoxes" (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1987, p.5).

Levi-Strauss (1955, in Kets de Vries & Miller, 1987) explains that a myth is a common structural message composed of mythemes, the unit of myths. Mythemes are the phrases or minimal sentences that depict significant relationships between different aspects of a story. Mythemes are determined by the principles, "economy of explanation, unity of solution and the possibility of restructuring the whole from only a fragment" (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1987, p.6).

### 3.4.2.2 *Psychoanalytical and hermeneutic contributions*

While the former contributions from anthropology are important, they at times do not give sufficient attention to the affective dimensions of text, which hermeneutics and psychoanalysis are able to address. Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) write that Freud's (1900) meaning of desire formed the basis for understanding a text. In essence, Freud's (1900, in Kets de Vries & Miller, 1987) theory aimed to reveal the hidden messages and desires implied in manifest statements, and furthermore strived to understand the resistance to expressing these, as it would uncover the basic fears and needs of individuals.

Additionally, Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) describe the aspects of condensation and displacement. The former, condensation, involves compression of many ideas into a word or thought, while displacement involves transferring emotions from an original idea to another idea. Signifiers are themes or symbols that emerge from subjective experience, and thus through condensation and displacement, certain signifiers become preferred and recurrent over time, and thus are evident as text and are open to interpretation (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1987). The interpreter becomes what they call a code-breaker, listening with the 'third ear' (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1987, p.7).

Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek verb 'Hermeneuein', which means 'to interpret'. This explained by Kets de Vries and Miller (1987, p.8), who highlight that the Greek god Hermes was a messenger of Zeus, who was said to transmit "what is beyond human understanding into a form that human intelligence can grasp". Thus, hermeneutics is focused on human understanding and interpreting texts. According to Kets de Vries and Miller (1987), this requires a recreation and re-experiencing of the thoughts of the creator of the text, which entails understanding the individual's past and personal history to provide clues to current behaviour. For this, they suggest interpretation of transference, which they define in brief as a process wherein present attitudes are repeated that were formed in earlier life. They highlight that, "instead of remembering the past we often misunderstand the present in terms of the past and relive it through our actions" (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1987,

p.9). Schafer (2003) adds that the content of influential interpretations are derived through analysis of transference, defence and even counter-transference.

### 3.4.2.3 *Rules for interpretation*

Overall, Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) suggest the following guidelines for interpretation:

- Develop a central theme of recurrent patterns or sentiments that explain many consequences, to serve to organise surface phenomena;
- Beyond the logical centrality, search for deep unconscious and emotional significance for decoding the text; since the affective aspects behind the text are crucial to understanding and require a historical context and key relationships; and
- Emphasise the importance of a process of discovery, rather than a singular attempt, such as through using an iterative, dynamic and interactive process that brings forth insights that are conjectured tentatively for testing in future contexts.

The rules that Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) offer for interpretation are set forth below.

- **First rule:** Establish thematic unity, meaning shaping the texts into a cohesive and interconnected unit, and seeking communality amidst the various emerging themes. This can be understood as an umbrella theme, encompassing a number of themes.
- **Second rule:** Engage in pattern matching, meaning searching for structural parallels, and attempting to find a match between present events and earlier historical incidents of the individual. This can be understood as the search for revealing repetition, with a tendency specifically for time-based displacements whereby an individual misunderstands the present in terms of the past, repeats it, and reacts to important people or situations 'as if' they were from the past.
- **Third rule:** Engage in interpretation, meaning being guided by the rule of psychological urgency. This can be understood as finding the most pressing problem or issue that is likely to echo throughout the text, by being alert to the persistence, frequency and pervasiveness of the theme.

- **Fourth rule:** Seek meaning at multiple levels, meaning that part of the text may have more than one meaning and can be viewed from different points of view.

These rules and guidelines form the basis to find continuity and connection in the texts, and assist in finding the patterning that weaves together into a gestalt of interconnected themes that explain the individual to him/herself.

### **3.4.3 Insights works and Listening Posts**

As previously mentioned, LP was originally developed in the late 1970's by Miller and Khaleelee and established as a methodology by OPUS in 1990 (Khaleelee & Miller, 1985) - to explore the experiences of an individual alongside those of society in the form of a group. It is a short event that serves as a platform to examine experiences of individuals as members of a collective (Hyypä, 2014). LP's therefore create a context to listen and speak, becoming a platform for meaningful, exploratory verbal articulation (Hyypä, 2014).

Hyypä (2014) advises that the LP event takes place without the psychodynamic interpretations of the consultants, who are supportive, cooperative and co-creative in the process. This approach involves multiple methods aimed at filling the 'empty space' through construction and free-floating discussions, thereby gaining insight (Hyypä, 2014). The 'empty space' suggests what Bion (1970, p.41) speaks of as "without memory and desire", and what Chapman (2010) refers to as 'epoche' (that is, the space of no-position and reserved judgement). All of this allows one to open his/her mind, and appraise the situation with an innocence and without presumption; that is, seeing things as they are (Castaneda, 1972; Keeney, 1983). According to Hyypä (2014, p.10), "free from knowing leads to the fact that one must try to see everything, new things included, with new eyes". However, this author asserts that the empty space will not exist without being held, and it is in holding this space that it has value.

Hyypä (2014) explains that individuals have a large capacity to carry their environment and their immediate circumstances within themselves, and that as the individual grows in his/her social context, this capacity evolves. This capacity

matures into a capacity for empathy, appreciation and love. Hyypä (2014, p.6) thus posits that this “ability to carry things within us is a sign that we, human beings, know more than we know.”

He goes on to describe that, “insight work aims to create free space and meaningful moments both for the growth and development of an individual and an organisation and to help to clarify the ‘ecology of the mind’” (Hyypä, 2014, p.7-8). He explains that insight works (IW) focus on the individuality of the members and what they carry and share, in order to make meaningful connections. The individual becomes an observer of his/her own experience, existence and verbal expression, and in so doing begins to ‘look at looking’, ‘think about thinking’, and ‘listen to listening’. Insights emerge through a sequence of experience, seeing, observing, understanding, thinking and saying, thus forming a unit (Hyypä, 2014). This is accompanied with the ethical dimension of seeing, in that “all seeing comes with responsibility and obligation.... At the end of the day, seeing is an ethical activity” (Hyypä, 2014, p.15).

#### **3.4.4 Schafer on interpretation**

Schafer (2003) defines insight as an analysand integrating interpretations that are formulated and proposed into their functioning. The formulation of these interpretations over time becomes a collaborative process between analyst and analysand, as the analysand becomes more able and willing to work with the analyst to formulate analytically informed and sound interpretations. To facilitate this, the analyst needs to enhance the analysand’s readiness and his/her sense of mastery of personal characteristics, which may have been unrecognised because these have been repudiated and thus repressed, projected or otherwise defended. Schafer (2003) points out that the analysands may be ambivalent about being understood, because it makes them conscious of what they may have repudiated, and since acting on these insights may effect change. However, Schafer (2003) notes that without insight, the analysand is left to repeat his/her painful past.

This author goes on to explain that influential interpretations are arrived at through the analyses of defence, transference and counter-transference. He highlights that

sharing these in an intellectualised way enables development and integration. Freud (1917, in Schafer, 2003, p.5) noted that, “analytical insight has been understood to refer to the analysand’s rational, conscious and preconscious grasp and modification of the unconscious issues that. Pre-analytically have been lived out in blind repetitions”. Thus, an adaptive grasp and mastery of split-off aspects will enable the analysand to handle difficulties in a more realistic and creative manner (Schafer, 2003). However, this author adds that Freud (1937) described analysis as interminable, meaning that developing insights is not once off, and is not ever concluded. The analyst is a vehicle for understanding, but their interpretations undergo transformations. Schafer (2003) adds that the analyst engages with the analysand in a respectful, consequential and multidimensional conversation that is geared to enabling mutual understanding, and the awareness and freedom to change from this understanding.

Schafer (2003) goes on to suggest that the analyst remains open, since not expecting anything will open the analyst to anything that may occur. The analyst thus maintains “conscious alertness in a directional manner” (Schafer, 2003, p.18). The aim is to provide a space for collaborative, co-authoring of understanding, the benefit of which is not insight, but adaptive change. When making interpretations, the analyst is not re-telling, but rather telling in a way that formulates meaning.

Schafer (2003, p.28) notes that perception is a construction process, influenced by perspective, and rooted in culture that ultimately is “mediated by beliefs about the world and the expectations they generate”. He further explains that rationale dialogue helps with remembering and organising, and will enable perspective owing to the fact that remembering is crucial for determining contexts of meaning.

Schafer (2003) describes the importance of the analyst maintaining neutrality, revealed by his/her lack of desire to change the analysand’s point of view but used to understand and interpret. He notes that the neutral analyst is “skilled, well-intentioned, self-correcting enablers searching for understanding and striving for constructive mastery” (Schafer, 2003, p.67). He moreover adds that “words teach us what to think, how to think and how not to think, what to shun and persecute and how to get along in society” (Schafer, 2003, p.107).



Finally, he explains that interpretation is constructed, in the sense that, “naming expresses understanding and intention” (Schafer, 2003, p.140), and the process of narrative construction and interpretations formulate a systematically coherent and consistent account while leaving room for revision and supplementation.

### **3.4.5 Summary of the principles that inform meaning-making**

Bion (1961; 1962; 1970) provides some perspectives on learning from experience and interpretation that gives form to the mechanics of how this can be effected. Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) provide their views of how to transform events and stories into ‘texts’ that can be read/interpreted, and offer guidelines and rules. When applied, these rules can facilitate the finding of patterns that weave aspects into a gestalt, helping the individual to understand him/herself. Hyppä (2014) describe LP and IW, which focus on the individuality of the members and represent a free space in which the individual becomes an observer of his/her own experience. Schafer (2003) suggests that insight formation is a process, supported by a neutral and open, yet consciously alert, analyst. He suggests that analysis of defences, transference and counter-transference provide powerful interpretations, which is supported by the contributions of Kets de Vries and Miller (1987). Furthermore, Schafer (2003) notes that the aim of analysis is to provide a space for collaboration and co-authoring of understanding to facilitate adaptive change. He states that the analyst does not tell, but re-tells the story to make meaning not yet assembled. All these principles are considered useful to inform the manner by which the planned post-GRE interviews are to be conducted in the present study.

## **3.5 COACHING METHODS AND MODELS TO ENABLE MEANING-MAKING**

In this section, contributions from various authors are reviewed, including Brunning (2006a), Chapman (2010), Cilliers (2011; 2012), Kilburg (2002; 2004), Long (2006) and Western (2012). Their work gives perspective to the array of approaches and models used to coach that can be utilised to enable growth for an individual through insight.

Chapman and Cilliers (2008) offer an integrated definition of coaching as a long-standing formal relationship between an individual and a coach. Cilliers (2005) defines executive coaching specifically as a facilitative process that provides the opportunity for learning in order to enhance self-awareness, self-esteem and improved communication with others in the system. Included in the coaching process is providing direct behavioural feedback and interpretations on the individual's impact on others to facilitate behaviour change and possibly enhance performance. Kilburg (2004) defines coaching as being a helpful relationship between an individual in a role with a coach who possesses certain skills, aimed at assisting the individual to achieve set goals to enhance his/her performance and achieve personal satisfaction. This should also have positive benefits for the organisation within which the individual operates.

Further definitions emphasise the importance of the relationship between individual and coach, and that their disciplined interactions focus on goal attainment (Kilburg, 2002). All descriptions of coaching, however, point to the outcome of improved professional performance and organisational benefit (Kampa & White, 2002). From the literature, there appears to be assumptions of the link between coaching and its effects (such as self-efficacy, improved performance and so forth), but limited empirical research to validate these (Chapman & Cilliers, 2008; Kampa & White, 2002).

At the end of this section, an integration of coaching perspectives will be formulated to offer an approach that could be helpful for meaning-making post a GRE.

### **3.5.1 Integrated experiential coaching**

The Integrated Experiential Coaching Model was synthesised by Chapman (2010). It integrates the work of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model, Schumacher's (1978) writings on self-growth, Smuts' (1973, in Chapman, 2010) holistic thinking approach, as well as Wilber's (2000) integral model of development. It also combines Jacques and Clement's (1997, in Chapman & Cilliers, 2008) work on complexity, which they explain is operationalised through learning conversations,

derived from Harri-Augstein and Thomas (1991, in Chapman & Cilliers, 2008). Figure 3.1 depicts the model.

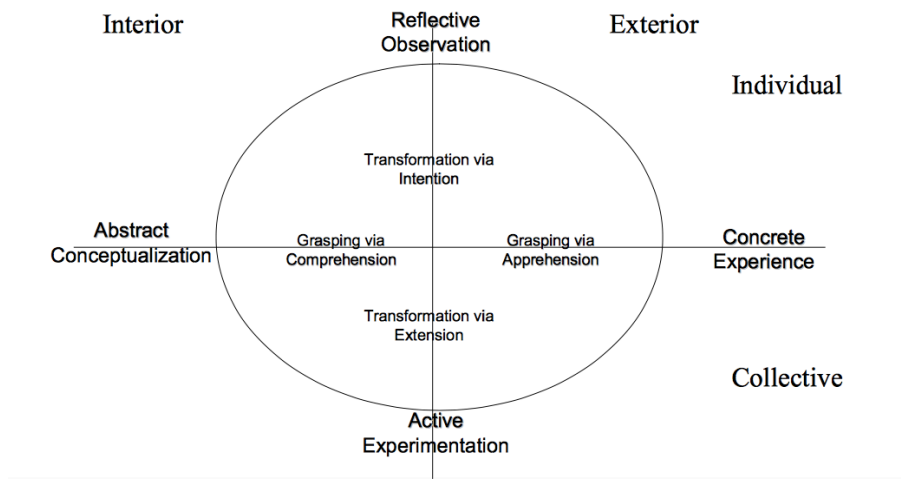


Figure 3.1: Integrative Experiential Coaching Model (adapted from Chapman & Cilliers, 2008)

Given the definitions and aims of coaching, it can be concluded that the outcome of such a process is enhanced self-awareness and learning. The evolution of self is about the self. Chapman's (2010) Integrated Experiential Coaching Model enables the evolution of the self, which requires a deeper understanding of personality. Thus, it incorporates Smuts' (1986, p.290) work, who described the personality as "an organ of self-realisation; the object of a whole is more wholeness". Smuts (1986) furthermore explains that the will is the principal component of personality, and intelligence is subordinate and instrumental; furthermore, he notes that feelings are subordinate, positing that their function is "to give strength and impetus to the will" (Smuts, 1986, p.290).

Central to Chapman's (2010) Integrated Experiential Coaching Model is Schumacher's (1978) four fields of knowledge, a key assumption being that all things exist within a context. This understands that the collective consciousness out of which an individual emerges is axiomatic to the approach. Chapman (2010) notes that, "it is difficult to work with an individual if there is absolutely no understanding of the collective consciousness out of which the individual arises, because nothing

can be understood independently of that context” (Chapman, 2010, p.21). These four quadrants are distinguished by the manner by which truth is sought, as follows:

- The *upper-left quadrant* deals with the inner space of the individual, and seeks truth through establishing the accuracy of the individual’s perception of his/her inner state;
- The *upper-right quadrant* seeks truth through empirically established facts;
- The *lower-left quadrant’s* measure of truth is the “justness of the mutual understanding among individuals”; and
- The *lower-right quadrant’s* measure of truth is how the individual fits into the bigger system; that is, his/her functional fit (Chapman, 2010, p.23).

Tying into these four fields are the evolutionary levels of consciousness derived from Schumacher (1978) and Smuts (1986). Wilber (1995) proposes that an evolution exists for each across a continuum from matter to life, to mind to soul, and ultimately, to spirit.

Another building block to Wilber’s (1995) model of development and growth is the concept of holons, namely whole/parts, by which he means that “reality is composed of wholes that are simultaneously parts of other wholes” (Chapman, 2010, p.24). Chapman (2010) has drawn on Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model, which includes on the one hand, two modes of grasping experience, and on the other, two modes of transformation by which to form meaning and enhanced consciousness. According to Kolb (1984), the modes of grasping experience are via comprehension (that is, abstract conceptualisation) or apprehension (that is, direct experience). The modes of transformation are achieved either through inner reflection (known as ‘intension’) or by extension (which involves actively experimenting with the external world).

Chapman’s (2010, p.67) review of Kolb’s (1984) model highlights that he acknowledged the tension between the inner and outer realities (that is, transformation via intension and/or extension), noting that “both are required for learning and growth to take place within the individual”. Thus, he posited that transformation is an integrated whole. Kolb (1984) has stated that grasping knowledge does not affect learning, since for learning to happen, knowledge must

be acted upon. Furthermore, he adds that knowledge (that is, theories and constructs) endure for as long as they remain useful and meaningful. The integration of Wilber's (1995) extensive work on human development and Kolb's (1984) work on experiential learning to influence an operationalised "how to do it" component, has produced Chapman's (2010) Integrated Experiential Coaching Model.

The Integrated Experiential Coaching Model includes phenomenology within its methodological framework, since the latter attempts to find meaning and the essence of experience through reflection. This aspect of phenomenology, which explores the subjective experience of individuals, was investigated by Spinelli (1998). This author sought to understand how consciousness imposes itself upon, and obscures, 'pure' reality. Core to phenomenology is the notion of imposing meaning on the external world, therefore suggesting that "things exist in the way they exist because of the meaning that each individual assigns to them" (Chapman, 2010, p.82). This further supports the contention (as previously mentioned) of Keeney (1983) that our reality is constructed. Therefore, "our reality is a phenomenological reality that is open to a multiplicity of interpretations" (Chapman, 2010, p.82).

Moustakas (1994) highlights that through conversations and dialogues with others, an individual may correct and validate his/her interpretations of reality, much like a GRE may afford an individual. Therefore, phenomenology adds an important dimension to the coaching process to influence learning and growth. Further aspects of the model include modes of engaging, referred to by Chapman (2010) as 'epoche', which is a way to see the experience without judgement or interpretation, remaining open to the experience as an experience, with no finite position being taken. This assumes an ego maturity, and is referred to as silencing the inner dialogue (Castaneda, 1973; Keeney, 1983). This enables a way of seeing, or 'seeing things as they are' (Castaneda, 1973), and requires sustained attention. Chapman (2010) describes that with practice, the individual becomes aware of his/her predispositions and how these influence his/her reality. The use of phenomenological reduction to gain an appreciation of the essence of experience eventually leads to being able to synthesis meaning. Chapman (2010) explains that experiential learning matures into transcendental phenomenology, thus suggesting

that this model expands through stages of the individual's maturation, and that applied, it facilitates growth and development all the way through to the transpersonal bands of development. Almaas (2002, in Chapman, 2010, p.94) stated that, "to experience the richness of our Being, the potential of our soul, we must allow our experience to become more and more open, and increasingly question who we assume we are....But the identity is actually a distortion of what we really are...a human being is a universe of experience".

The Integrated Experiential Coaching Model is facilitated and operationalised through learning conversations, as derived from the work of Harri-Augstein and Thomas (1991, in Chapman, 2010). This is a conversation that Chapman (2010) explains is bound by an explicit contract evolving and dynamically moving between three levels. Level one deals with a specific task issue, and level two understands it within the context of larger life-relevance. Level three enables the building of reflexive competency (that is, learning to learn). This approach mirrors work within the ecosystemic psychology and cybernetics fields (Keeney, 1983).

### **3.5.2 Organisational Role Analysis**

According to Krantz and Maltz (1997), roles are derived from how work is authorised (that is, whether it is given or taken), and secondly from the way work is determined (that is, whether from the task or sentient system). Organisational role consultation (ORC) therefore focuses on roles by enabling the individual to take up his/her role and authority effectively, furthermore aiding the differentiation between the person's 'in-role' and the person 'as self' (Krantz & Maltz, 1997, p.12). These authors go on to note that ORC aims to align the role as taken by the individual, and the role as given to him/her within the task and sentient system. They developed a process constructed upon group relations, open systems theory and psychoanalysis (Krantz & Maltz, 1997).

ORA emerged as a result of multiple consultants integrating and utilising the methods and approaches that they had garnered from their exposure to group dynamics (Newton, Long & Sievers, 2006). These approaches include Lawrence's (1979) cogent argument for individuals to take more responsibility in managing their

roles. He introduced what he called Systemic Role Analysis to allow individuals to explore their learning experience in relation to their reality (Lawrence, 2006). This author first introduced the idea of role analysis into GREs of the Tavistock Institute. 'Review and Application' groups focused on how the individual exercised authority and were connected to the Tavistock Institute's group relations work. In this, a form of role analysis was conducted to enable members to understand how their authority is exercised and to interpret their experiences and apply their learnings (Lawrence, 2006). Tavistock Institute's group relations work proved to be brutal and punitive though, leaving individuals with both positive and negative experiences.

A contribution by Borwick (2006) was that of the Group Study and Action Programme (GSAP), which includes ORA as a systemic programme to bring about change within individuals. Borwick (2006, p.3) developed GSAP (and ORA as a part of this programme), noting that this was inspired by the desire to bridge the gap between idea, learning and action. He highlighted that, "individuals walk away from...programmes...emotionally committed to a...concept that they have learned. Yet they do not change their behaviour one iota". Borwick (2006) noted that group dynamics demonstrated the ability to effect an epiphany; however, they assume that insight leads to action and change. Borwick (2006, p.4) reflected that he attempted to combine the "anaemic blindness of Group Dynamics with the rough reality of the Tavistock Group Relations approach", in order to offer a process that would have the impact of GREs without the pain associated with such.

Borwick (2006) was exposed to Milan Family Therapy Centre (MFTC), which made use of stories, tapes and anecdotes to cause significant changes in a short period without as much conflict. He found these less effective in organisations due to the 'role of roles'. Their techniques were effective with permanent roles, but less so with organisational roles that were temporary. Borwick (2006, p.9) highlighted that, "the weight of your experience in your role and the power of others' expectations can act as cement in maintaining the status quo".

ORA was most significantly influenced by systems thinking (Borwick, 2006). He qualifies this by explaining that a system is a frame that contains behaviour. While psychology examines behaviour, systems thinking examines the containing frame

and how this container influences the contained; that is, the role is the frame and personality is contained within this frame (Borwick, 2006). ORA redefines the individual's role in the system, altering the internal map and aiding him/her in understanding a different view with the help of others (Borwick, 2006).

ORA is intended to work through the Pirandello effect, or five levels of meaning. The first is the symptom; the second is the root that makes connections between parts of the system; the third is area meaning that unites into a pattern of the pieces; and the fourth and fifth are macro-system and unisystem respectively (Borwick, 2006). This author provides the specification of the ORA, which includes that ORA is a small group process; is voluntary; and provides a platform for problem presentation, systemic analysis, system reflection and individual reflection. According to Borwick (2006, p.20), "as a systemic tool, the ORA is not one-on-one, but a small system process".

Sievers and Beumer (2006, p.66) explained that, "ORA can be regarded as a psychoanalytically oriented concept for individual consultancy". The role cannot be seen; only behaviour can be seen. The role as internalised by the individual is the psychological role, while the sociological role is the role seen from the perspectives of those who experience the behaviours of the one in the role (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006). According to these authors, the role is an idea in the mind.

The psychological and sociological tasks and roles may be likened to Obholzer and Roberts' (2003) descriptors, namely normative, existential and phenomenal. ORA has a dual focus, including analysing individual transferences as well as the unconscious dynamics in the organisation as a whole (Sievers & Beumer, 2006). These authors further add that ORA was designed to help individuals understand the genesis, development and realisation of their roles in an organisation, and their internalised images based off the individual's fantasy and imagination.

Being individually focused, ORA has been distinguished from coaching. Sievers and Beumer (2006) describe coaching as a method that aims to resolve conflicts by addressing and/or eradicating personal deficiencies or character deficits, by effecting personality changes through instruction and guidance. ORA, however,



works with the unknown and unthought, and thus counters separation of the individual. That is, ORA pursues the goal of reintegration, focusing on the whole system and its relatedness (Sievers & Beumer, 2006). According to these authors, role consultation is an exploration of the subjective experiences of an individual in his/her respective roles, though it also encompasses the social system on which such experiences reflect, owing to the fact that the whole and its parts are interlinked. They describe 'role' as the interface (that is, the place or area) between a person and his/her organisation, as depicted in Figure 3.2. Based on this understanding, one's role is influenced by the organisation and filled by the individual; thus, role is the psychosocial dynamic that emerges from this interface. Roles enable one to see where he/she and the system meet (Krantz & Maltz, 1997).

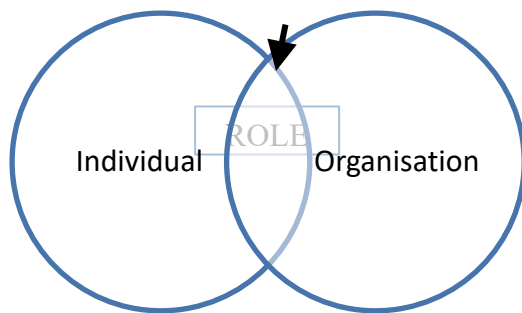


Figure 3.2: Role as the interface between the organisation and the individual (adapted from Long, 2006, p.128; Roberts & Jarret, 2006, p.20)

Role consultation was originally used as an individual consulting model that took place within a group (Sievers & Beumer, 2006). These authors explain that the focus is on both the conscious and unconscious assumptions that form the basis for how a role is formed and construed. Taking on a role gives rise to inner experiences, in which internalised object relations to significant persons from an earlier period are activated. These introject shape and influence the reality of the organisation (Sievers & Beumer, 2006). Furthermore, they highlight that ORA draws on transference, which is seen as neither regression nor a shift from the past, but rather a representation of a continued influence of principles that evolved from the manifestations of earlier experiences.

In ORA, the issue of an “unthought known” is highlighted by Bollas (1987, 1992; in Sievers & Beumer, 2006, p.79) as describing this as “psychic reality of the

organisation that are known at a certain level, but cannot be thought or put into words". Furthermore, Sievers and Beumer (2006) opine that the organisational phenomena may be transference triggers and reactivate childhood dramas. Thus, the 'organisation in the mind' is supplemented with the concept of 'inner controlling object', the task of which is to support the individual to act purposefully. This inner controlling object may stem from primary family and/or group constellations. Sievers and Beumer (2006) suggest investigating the emergent role experience through hypothesis building, free association and discussion.

### **3.5.3 Systems psychodynamic models of coaching**

Brunning (2006a, p.xxvi) highlights that, "all coaching is primarily a psychological endeavour", aimed at enhancing well-being and performance. Systems psychodynamic coaching contains two aspects, namely systems and psychodynamics. Thus, this mode of coaching first positions the issue within a systemic context providing an ecological survey of human relationships, and then the psychodynamic aspect of the model that examines the emotional weighting of the spoken and unspoken parts (Brunning, 2006a). Furthermore, in the foreword of Brunning's (2006a) text, Obholzer writes that a systemic psycho-social approach fosters growth of the individual by enabling a more realistic and insightful grasp of his/her inner and external worlds. The goal of psychodynamic coaching is thus to afford an individual the opportunity to understand his/her feelings and create a thinking space to develop his/her capacity to respond thoughtfully (Brunning, 2006a).

Roberts and Jarrett (2006) provide a comparative review of psychodynamic and non-psychodynamic approaches to coaching. They explain that approaches may be categorised based on aims and ways to achieve them (also described as the focus of attention). Such approaches that focus on insight and self-reflective learning are therapeutically informed, or are based on systems psychodynamics, which includes role consultancy.

Roberts and Jarrett (2006) explain that therapeutically informed coaching approaches include psychodynamic psychotherapy, Gestalt therapy, person-

centred therapy, family systems therapy, and cognitive therapy. Psychodynamic psychotherapy focuses on making connections between the past and the present, in order to identify and understand unhealthy repetitive patterns that manifest as unconscious defences (Roberts & Jarrett, 2006). Cilliers and Terblanche (2010) define the purpose of a systems psychodynamic leadership coaching model as enabling an individual to become aware of, and gain insight into, the influences of conscious and unconscious behaviours on performance, in so doing serving to develop and psycho-educate an individual. Cilliers (2012, citing numerous authors such as Armstrong, 2005; Campbell, 2007; Campbell & Groenbaek, 2006; Campbell & Huffington, 2008; Hirschhorn, 1997; Klein, 2005; and Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008), emphasises that systems psychodynamic coaching experientially explores how certain constructs are acted out by a leader. The constructs within a systems psychodynamic coaching model therefore investigate the following construct manifestations (Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010):

- *Anxiety* is defined as fear of the future, and serves as the driving force of relationship and relatedness;
- *Task* is the basic component of work, and a primary task serves to contain anxiety or highlights off-task and anti-task behaviours;
- *Role* is the boundary encompassing the work and position between the individual and others in the system, and includes managing boundaries between what is inside and that which is outside the role;
- *Boundaries* include, for example, task, time and territory, and acts as insulation between parts of the system;
- *Role dynamics* differentiate between normative, experiential and phenomenological roles;
- *Authority* is the formal right assigned to perform a task, conferred from above, below, the side and within (such as in the case of self-authorisation); and
- *Identity* is the nature of the individual's role.

Accordingly, Cilliers (2012) proposes that coaching should initiate with role analysis, the focus of which is on an individual in his/her role inside the organisation (which could involve some form of a triad). In agreement with Brunning (2006a) and Obholzer and Roberts (2003), he explains that this evolves to the descriptions of:

- His/her *normative role* (which is objective, rational and conscious);
- His/her *existential role* (which includes unconscious introjections, such as how he/she believes that he/she is performing); and
- His/her *phenomenological role* (which includes unconscious projections into and onto the individual, such as how he/she believes that he/she performs as experienced by others).

The coaching process explores anxiety that may be provoked by incongruence between these three aspects of the role, in order to facilitate insight and behavioural change (Cilliers, 2012).

Huffington (2006) describes what the Tavistock Consultancy Services (TCS) has termed 'process coaching', which emphasises three elements, namely extending insights, managing emotions and developing behavioural strategies. To accomplish this, a continuum of consultancy (or coaching) styles may be applied, ranging from listening and reflection, to probing, recommending and planning implementation. Thus, the coach in this context consults and may be directive or non-directive, which requires a blend of skills (including organisational consultancy, psychotherapy and counselling).

Brunning (2006b) describes her six-domain model of executive coaching, grounded on the interconnectedness of person, role and the system. This includes the individual's personality, life story, competencies and talents, career aspirations, business context (set out in his/her current workplace), and organisational dynamics (within his/her current role). She suggests that these domains are interlinked and in a constant dynamic motion. This systems-psychodynamic model focuses on the whole person and incorporates systems thinking, psychology as well as organisational and group dynamics. It encourages integration of new emerging meaning into the person, role and organisation.

#### **3.5.4 Depth analysis**

Western (2012) offers a contribution to psychodynamic coaching, one aspect of which he calls 'depth analysis'. He explains that, "depth analysis draws upon a psychoanalytic ontology, working on the premise that much of human relations

happens ‘beneath the surface’” (Western, 2012, p.31). He adds that although coaching has eclipsed a focus on the ‘wounded self’, much of what happens in coaching continues to resonate with the wounded self. Citing Habermas (1972), who purported that psychoanalysis involves ‘depth-hermeneutics’, Western (2012) reported that manifested distortion becomes intelligible to the individual through self-reflection. Through revelation, the unconscious (which includes suppressed and latent determinants of behaviour) loses its exercised power, thereby allowing a liberation/emancipation (Western, 2012). In addition to psychoanalysis, this author reports that other forms of depth analysis include discourse analysis and communication studies, as efforts to reveal and interpret underlying patterns and power relations from various perspectives. Western (2012) moreover cites Foucault (1980), who suggests that power is exerted through normative control. Depth analysis aims to reveal what is hidden, and what an individual strives to discover within him/herself, thus involving listening to undercurrents in terms of what is not being said as well as emotional flows in discussions (Western, 2012).

### 3.5.5 17-factor model of psychodynamics and organisational systems

A further psychodynamic model of coaching was introduced by Kilburg (2004), which integrates factors that depict their interaction with organisational behavioural elements, subsystems and groups, with an individual at the centre. These factors resulted in the representation displayed in Figure 3.3 (see Kilburg, 2008a).

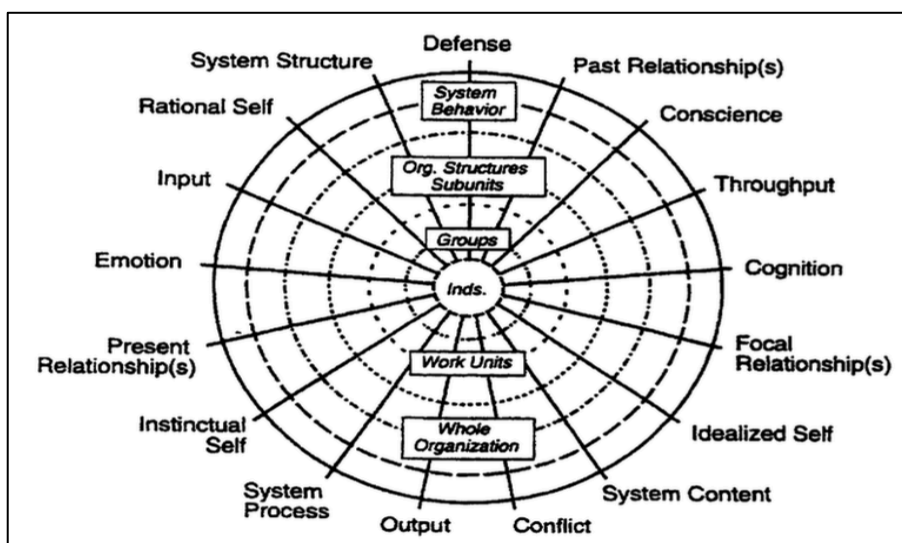


Figure 3.3: A 17-factor model of psychodynamics and organisational systems (Kilburg, 2008a, p.24)

For the purposes of coaching, Kilburg (2004) adapted the 17-factor model shown in Figure 3.2 in order to amplify the complexities of coaching. He thus organised the 17 factors into three areas of attention and activity for the individual, namely the individual (focus), the organisation and/or group (system focus), and relationships and behavioural factors that mediate interactions and actions between the individual and the organisation and/or group. Coaching therefore supports an individual's focus and assists when crossing the boundaries between the three focus areas (known as foci; Kilburg, 2008a). In this updated model, shown in Figure 3.3, the following are included:

- *Six system factors* (namely input, throughput, output, structure, process and content);
- *Four psychological structures* (namely conscience, idealised self, instinctual self and rational self);
- *Four internal components of individual function* (namely emotion, cognition, defence and conflict); and
- *Three types of relationships* (namely past, present and focal).

These are shown to interact with the various behavioural elements of an organisation, from individuals through to groups, subsystems and the entire organisation as a whole. Using this model, it becomes possible to navigate through the complex world that confronts individuals who do executive coaching, as shown in Figure 3.4.

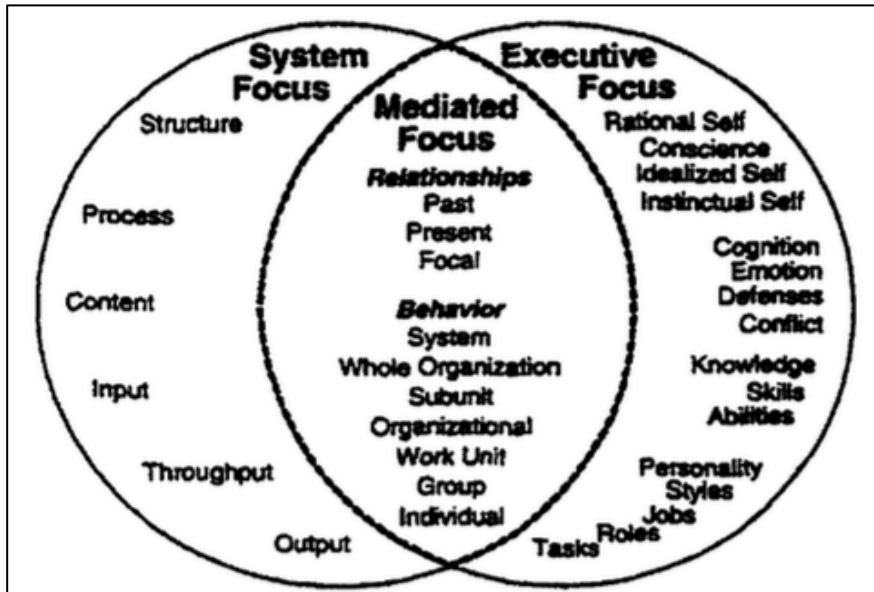


Figure 3.4: The foci for executive coaching (Kilburg, 2008a, p.24)

These five components include establishing an intervention agreement; building a coaching relationship; creating and maintaining expectations of success; providing experiences of mastery and cognitive control; and evaluating and attributing coaching successes and failures, which all provide a road map of the process and content of executive coaching relationships.

As further enhancement to the 17-factor model, Kilburg (2002) describes the formulation of the structure and process of psychodynamic conflict and adaption (that is, the unconscious system behaviour) as per Figure 3.5.

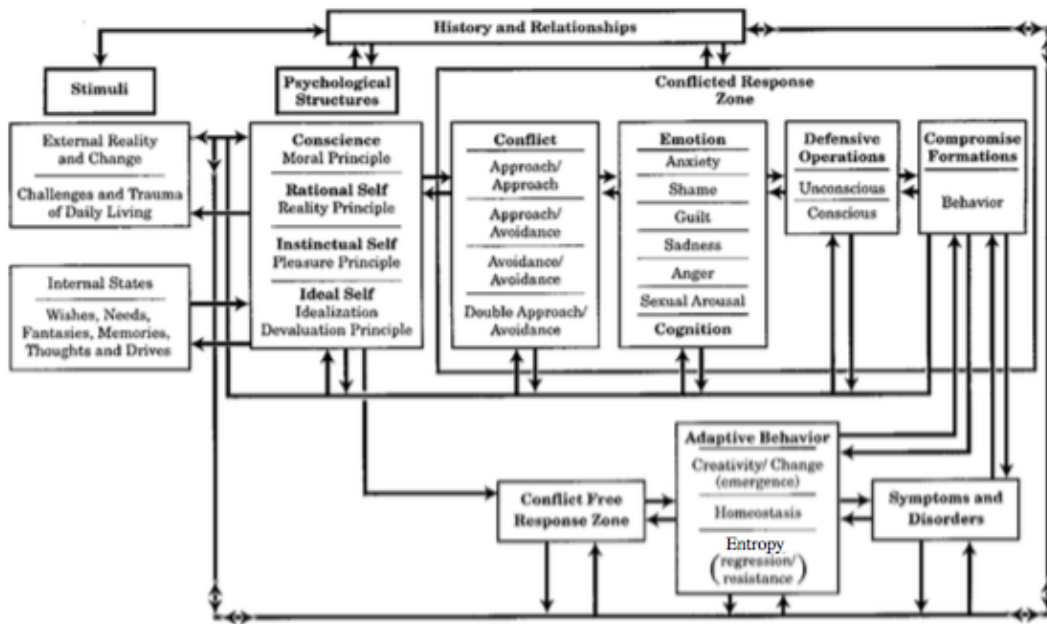


Figure 3.5: The structure and process of psychodynamic conflict and adaption (Kilburg, 2002, p.79)

This flowchart describes the approaches and methods used when dealing with unconscious and psychodynamic aspects of behaviour, which can lead to disorders or conflict-free behaviours that further result in creativity, homeostasis or regression/entropy (Kilburg, 2002). This author goes on to express the frames of attention to be applied during coaching, namely moving attention sequentially and simultaneously across all frames of meaning to contribute to success, as shown in Figure 3.6.

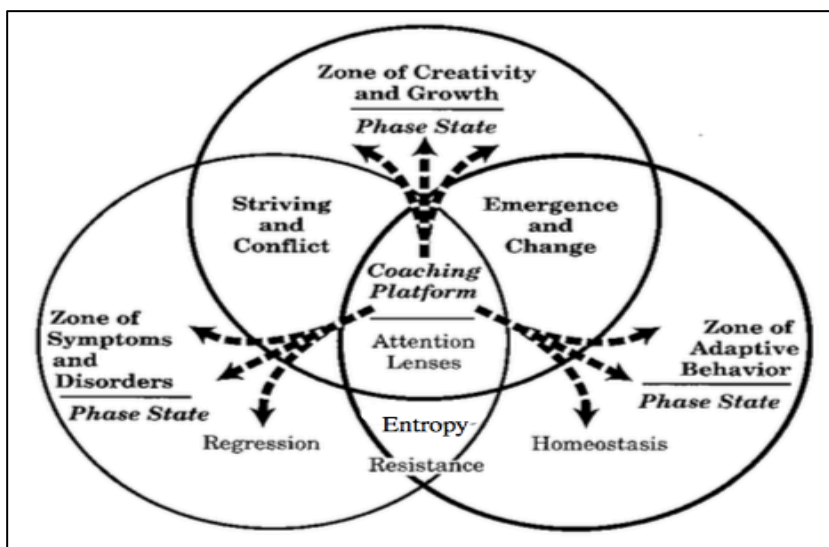


Figure 3.6: Frames of consulting attention (Kilburg, 2002, p.80)



Kilburg (2004, p.249) offers a description of psychodynamics as, “the study of mental processes in action”. Expanding this, he includes the unconscious patterns of behaviour, emotions, conflicts, defences and relationships that affect how an individual (or groups) adapt to circumstances, dilemmas and situations of their lives. Westin (1998, in Kilburg, 2004) postulates on psychodynamic theory in terms of five areas, namely:

- 1) Much of an individual’s mental life (including thoughts, motives and emotions) are unconscious and form behaviour that is inexplicable to the individual;
- 2) Conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions operate simultaneously and in conflict with one another;
- 3) Stable patterns of personality and social behaviour are moulded in childhood, impacting social engagement in adulthood;
- 4) Internal mental representations of the self emerge and form in childhood through to adolescence and inform the psychology of the self; and
- 5) Personality development entails learning how to regulate feelings, thoughts and social interactions to enable maturity.

In other words, Kilburg (2004) considers the integration of psychodynamics into the process that aims to enhance human self-understanding. He provides a list of 19 methods (or tools) to elicit and work with psychodynamic material. Amongst others, these include storytelling, empathic resonance, pattern recognition, rational analysis, hypotheses, clarifications, confrontations, interpretations, reframing and reconstruction. These tools align well with the FANI approach advocated by Hollway and Jefferson (2008; 2013).

### **3.5.6 Meaning bridge**

A model offered by Rice and Sapiera (1984) is called the ‘meaning bridge’. Elliott et al. (1994) describe this model, since all the events that they analyse in their study involved Rice and Sapiera’s (1984) meaning bridge. This bridge connects an individual’s reaction to his/her context (related to prior familial or significant experiences), in order for the reaction to make sense. The process is summarised into five stages, as follows:

- a) *Contextual priming*, which entails the therapist establishing themes from prior sessions and listening to the narration of a recent painful life event;
- b) *Novel information*, which involves the individual being presented with new information that relates both to the recent event and the theme/s established, and which includes interpretation by the therapist;
- c) *Initial distantiated processing*, which entails the individual considering this information while concurring with the general accuracy of interpretation;
- d) *Insight*, which is when the individual makes a connection by seeing a pattern, and communicates this to the therapist with a sense of new awareness in terms of realising something that was not previously known; and
- e) *Elaboration*, which is when the insight incites further exploration to move beyond an intellectualised insight.

This model emphasises the critical role of the therapist's interpretation as impetus for an individual's insight (Elliott et al., 1994).

### **3.6 CONCEPTUALISED MEANING-MAKING MODEL**

This section serves as an integration of the literature review conducted for the present study. Thus, it aims to provide a preliminary meaning-making model or approach that will be applied in the empirical component of this study. The focus of the following paragraphs is the individual emerging from the group.

An individual does not exist without a social context, but rather manifests with unique predispositions or psychological structures (Kilburg, 2002). This is supported by Hollway and Jefferson (2008), who highlight the importance of gestalt within the process of understanding individuals. This is further supported by Hyypä (2014), who explains that individuals have the capacity to carry their environment within themselves, and that as an individual grows in his/her social context, this capacity evolves. Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) note that individuals carry their history with them. Bion (1961) highlighted that individuals cannot be seen as outside a group, since they are group animals; though unique in their characteristics, these can only be appreciated if viewed within the context of the group to which they belong.

Suffice to say, an individual and his/her group/s are inextricably linked. To represent this, Figure 3.7 demonstrates this interplay. As open systems, each circle informs and influences the other. As individuals, one's psychological make-up is informed by one's relationships and history.

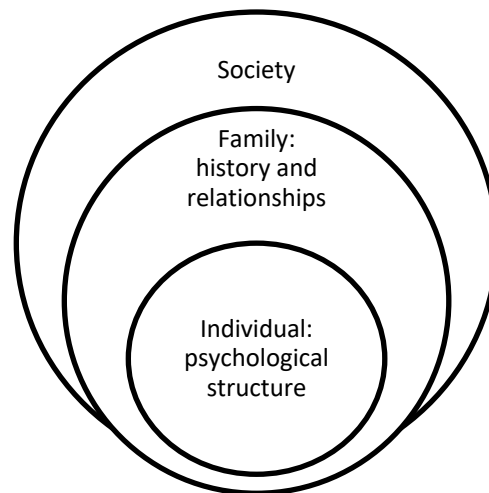


Figure 3.7: Interplay between society, family and an individual (adapted from Long, 2006, p.130).

However, this interplay is not static, but rather, it is infused and impacted by life events and changes (Kilburg, 2002; 2004). This experience is informed by the individual's psychological structure (Fraher, 2004; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). This can be represented by an adaptation from Kilburg's (2002) structure and process of psychodynamic conflict and adaptation model, as shown in Figure 3.8.

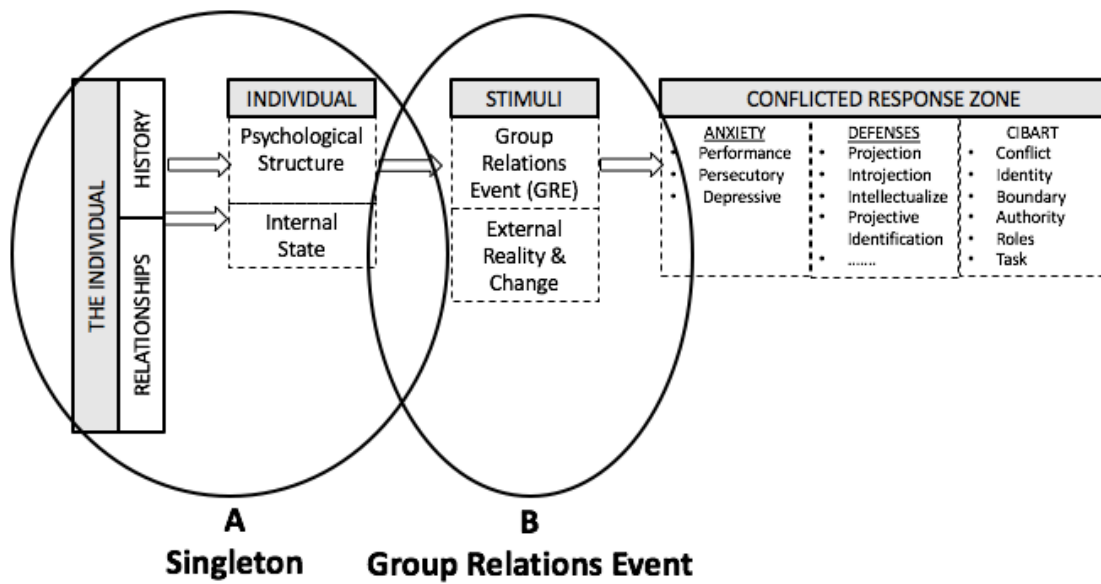


Figure 3.8: Adapted version of the structure and process of psychodynamics conflict and adaption model

The first circle, 'A', represents the singleton before entry into a GRE, and integrates the contributions of Freud (1921, in Fraher, 2004), Bion (1961), Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) and Hyypä (2014). 'B' represents the GRE (or alternatively, a real-life group event). The effects that this has at an unconscious level is significant, but while it remains unconscious, it leaves the individual repeating patterns without understanding. Anxiety triggers defences (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008; 2013), which manifest in the CIBART patterning that was described in Section 2.5. Hollway and Jefferson (2008) note that a dynamic unconscious defends against the anxiety that influences a person's actions, and influences their recall of a memory and its meaning. A structured GRE aims at unearthing these unconscious dynamics (Fraher, 2004) and creating a level of awareness for the members of a GRE.

Fraher (2004) highlights that after having undergone a GRE, it remains an individual's responsibility to determine what learning is valuable. Miller (1993) notes that what an individual learns is unique to him/her. It cannot be prescribed, as it is informed both by what is happening around him/her and what is happening inside of him/her. Lawrence (2006) notes that the Tavistock methodology leaves the burden of learning on an individual and minimal help or support is given to him/her. Placing the onus on an individual to garner learning from a GRE may leave too much

to chance. As Kilburg (2004) points out, much of an individual's mental life is unconscious and can produce behaviour that they themselves cannot explain. Therefore, enabling explicit understanding of conscious dynamics requires further attention. In this research and the literature reviewed, the aspects of reflection and review in Figure 3.9 have been amplified.

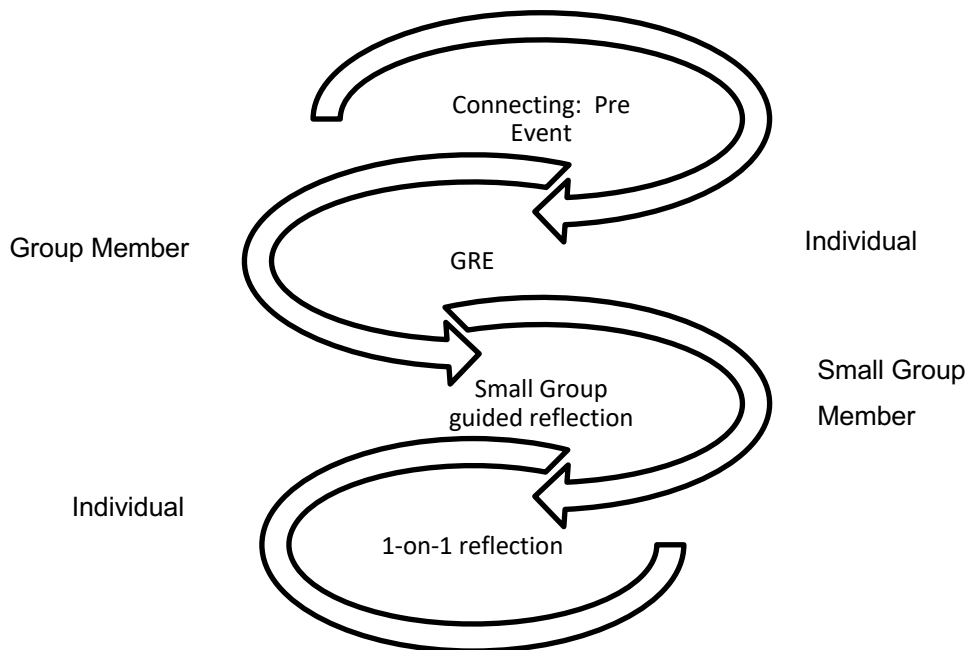


Figure 3.9: Process of reflection and review pre- and post-GRE

As Figure 3.9 indicates, an iterative process of connecting and reflecting allows for a safe process of 'gentle' debriefing to cascade. This takes each participant from being an individual (that is, a singleton) who becomes a member of a GRE, to being members of a smaller group, and then back to being an individual (that is, a singleton), post the GRE. It seems intuitively necessary to slowly (that is, iteratively) bring each participant back to his/her individual status. This pre- and post-approach addresses Hills (2018) and Wallach's (2014; 2019) recommendations, to provide further support pre- and post-GRE in the form of information and debriefing. Kilburg (2002) describes a similar concept in coaching, in that Lenses of Consulting Attention indicate that a variety of angles are required to create a coaching platform. To drive the small group process, ORA (as a small system process according to Borwick, 2006) may be the mechanism to provide such structure.

Within one-on-one reflection interviews, FANI (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013) can be utilised. As Garfield, Reavey and Kotecha (2010) point out, FANI involves careful listening to the anxieties that participants bring to their narratives, which is a reflective space enhanced when the parties are safely contained within the interview. Hollway and Jefferson (2000; 2008) prefer an unstructured interview as the most useful means of creating this safe space, and thus being able to unlock the unconscious motivations and/or vulnerabilities of each participant. Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) emphasis the usefulness of using transference to unearth significant patterns, and Schafer (2003) notes that analysis of defences, transference and counter-transference produce powerful interpretations.

From the work of Kilburg (2004), various approaches and techniques are highlighted that facilitate interpretation and enable adaption. He reports that methods to elicit psychodynamic material include storytelling, pattern recognition (also acknowledged by Kets De Vries & Miller, 1987), rational analysis, confrontation, interpretations, reframing and reconstruction. Kilburg (2004) further clarifies the scope of interpretation to include re-stating the content communicated; highlighting the focus that the individual is unaware of (for example, emotions, defences or the like); connecting aspects that the person has not connected; reformulating behaviour in a manner that is new; commenting on nonverbal cues; and speculating on inferences that reviews connections or reviews something that the individual is unaware of. These interpretative mechanisms occur in stages. When incorporated into a FANI, they may facilitate meaning-making by participants, post a GRE.

While Hollway and Jefferson (2000) are explicit about not applying interpretation within FANI, Nicholls (2009) mention that 'thinking aloud' and stating what an individual has thought, allows for understanding to evolve. Popper (1966, in Nicholls, 2009, p.169) noted that, "a point of view is inevitable, and the naïve attempt to avoid it can only lead to a self-deception, and to the uncritical application of an unconscious point of view". Nicholls (2009) notes that the response of the interviewer to the participant is critical in forming insights, and adds that interpretations, projections and projective identification help to clarify how meaning emerges in FANI. Chapman (2010) speaks of epochs and spaces of no-judgement, and Schafer (2003) emphasises neutrality, while Bion (1961) highlights 'free of

memory and desire', which are all aspects that would render the space optimal for individual learning. Further aspects found meaningful from systems theory include the drawing of distinction, punctuation and reframing points of reference (Becvar & Becvar, 2009; Keeney, 1983). These are included in the one-on-one interview process with FANI. Figure 3.10 is an integration of the approach to be adopted by the present researcher in the post-GRE process.

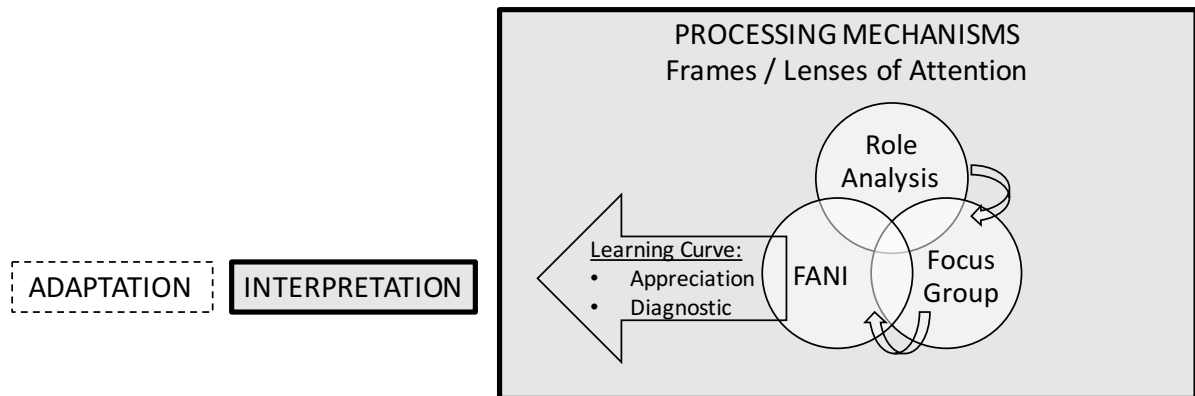


Figure 3.10: Reflective debriefing processing mechanisms post-GRE

### 3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter described meaning, insights and learning. It also offered the work of multiple authors in describing how meaning is forged, together with varied approaches or methods used to facilitate meaning-making in contexts other than GREs. The chapter concludes with an integrated conceptualised model for meaning-making post a GRE.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH DESIGN

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This chapter details the research design used for the study. It provides an explanation of the qualitative approach, strategy and method employed. The sampling method and the role of the researcher are described. The data collection and transcription process are furthermore explained, as is the method of data analysis and interpretation. The quality assurance strategies are defined and the ethics of qualitative research and reporting are described. The chapter summary concludes this chapter.

#### 4.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

The chosen theoretical paradigm for this research study is *systems psychodynamics* (Huffington, Armstrong, Halton, Hoyle & Pooley, 2004). A qualitative approach was adopted to record and describe the lived experiences of the participants (Leavy, 2014). Hermeneutic phenomenology was selected as the empirical paradigm, as it most aptly allows for the interpretation of the rich data collected. Each of these concepts will be discussed to follow.

The research approach aimed to enable an exploratory qualitative study (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2002) in order to construct an intervention methodology to facilitate individual insights through meaning-making post a GRE. The design of the study therefore allowed for a qualitative exploration of the application of methods and their effects on the learning of individuals. This research approach is a more open and generalised method of data collection. As a qualitative study, there are no dependant/independent variables, since these will emerge as outcomes of the study. The unit of analysis is the individual's experiences.

Kafle (2011) cites Greenbank (2003) who writes that researchers, when deciding on research methods will inevitably be influenced by their fundamental ontological and epistemological position. Hermeneutical phenomenological research perceives



reality as an individual construct which is dependent on different situations, and furthermore that there are multiple realities (Kafle, 2011). It is the belief of the researcher, that individuals undergoing a GRE may have the same exposure but form a different reality of this experience, as “produced by individual consciousness” (Kafle, 2011, p.193). The epistemology is based on the belief that knowledge making is likely through subjective experience and insights (Kafle, 2011). The underlying belief system of the researcher supports the philosophy that individuals have different experiences, based on their differing realities. Hollway and Jefferson (2013, p.4) assert that an individual’s “inner world cannot be understood without knowledge of their experience in the world, and whose experiences of the world cannot be understood without knowledge of the way in which their inner worlds allow them to experience the outer world”. The study explores the singleton’s process of personal meaning making post a GRE, (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009).

Since the epistemology of the participants is co-created (with the researcher, within the debriefing spaces), the researcher becomes an integral part of the process and inevitably a co-creator of the interpretations (Krauss, 2005). The researcher, as instrument, engaged the participants to share their GRE experiences and to relate these to formative life events. Using her experience, presence and expertise, the researcher aimed to enable them to extract meaning or make connections and associations (Jervis, 2009; Nicholls, 2009; Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006).

Hermeneutic phenomenology was selected as the empirical paradigm. Hermeneutics is a research paradigm to interpret participants’ experiences (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). According to van Manen (1977, p.215), it is the purpose of hermeneutics to “make visible the meaning structures embedded in the life worlds which belong to the human expressions under study”. For this task to be completed, “interpretive devices are needed to tease out the hidden meanings from culturally or historically alien ‘documents’”, which could be social events, texts, symbolic structures, art forms or actions. In doing so, hermeneutics makes available “interpretive procedures in a phenomenological rather than in a technological sense” (van Manen, 1977, p.215). Grbich (2007) offered a simplified explanation of phenomenology, stating that it is an approach to understand the hidden meanings

together with the essences of an experience. Dowling (2007), in her review of phenomenological approaches, identifies a study that used hermeneutic phenomenological method sought to transform personal meanings from interview texts into understanding. This is further supported by Moustakas (1994, p.59), who notes that, “phenomenology is rooted in questions that give direction and focus to meaning, and in themes that sustain inquiry, awaken further interest and concern, and account for our passionate involvement with whatever is being experienced”. From a hermeneutic phenomenological paradigm, this study seeks to understand and interpret the experience of the participants and to describe the emerging phenomena, namely the meaning which each participant made, and the respective processing methods which occurred during the reflective interviews.

The researcher applied the hermeneutic skill of reflective analysis of the rich text which emerged from the different interactions with the participants. Double hermeneutics was used to interpret the data through a systems psychodynamic lens.

## **4.2 RESEARCH STRATEGY**

Mouton (2001) explains that a research design gives a plan of how a researcher intends to conduct the research. This is also referred to as a research strategy (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Multiple qualitative case studies were adopted as the research strategy, using unstructured interviews (FANI; see Hollway & Jefferson, 2008) as well as a focus group as the research method. These methods will be elaborated upon in Section 4.3.4. Babbie and Mouton (2001) suggest that the multiple case study approach offers the benefit of increasing the transferability of the study, while maximising the information that can be yielded on the object of the study.

Creswell (2003) describes the use of multiple case studies as a qualitative strategy, amongst others, in which an event or process is explored with one or more individuals. He notes that the cases are bounded in time, and the data is collected using a range of data collection methods over a period of time. Multiple case studies allow for a collective perspective to be gained (Rowley, 2002; Stake, 1995), and increase the possibility of being able to generalise findings and reduce interviewer

bias (Madurai, 2017). Rowley (2002, p.20) states that the “greater the number of case studies that show replication the greater the rigour with which a theory has been established”. Lester (1995) highlights that multiple methods may be employed, including interviews and focus groups amongst others, and suggests that the general principle to apply is that of minimum structure and maximum depth, with empathy and rapport being demonstrated.

### **4.3 RESEARCH METHOD**

The method is presented with reference to the research setting, entrée and researcher roles, sampling, data collection methods, data analysis method as well as strategies employed to ensure the quality of the data.

#### **4.3.1 Research setting**

The research was conducted in a large South African university, and specifically within the boundaries of a Doctoral degree in Consulting Psychology. This degree was designed for all South African registration categories of psychologists, namely clinical, counselling, educational, industrial and research. The degree consists of a first year of coursework, followed by a full doctoral thesis that focuses on an approved consulting psychology topic. The coursework consists of eleven modules that cover various themes, namely consultation as a process and research; developing assessment technologies; individual assessment; individual wellness and work adjustment; counselling; career and executive coaching; group dynamics and assessment; diversity; organisational performance and assessment of interventions; organisational development and facilitation of change; and consulting psychology conference (UNISA, 2011). In the module focusing on group dynamics and assessment, a practical group experience was presented, constructed as a GRE.

The GRE was constructed to achieve the learning outcomes for this module; however, this learning is swamped in the collective, as explained in Chapter 2. The GRE requires the singleton in a group to participate in the group to facilitate integration of his/her insights, but the singleton leaves as an individual, not as a

group member. Based on this understanding, this study utilises a group relations methodology but focuses on the individual after this group experience.

The GRE's design was based on the Group Relations Training Model ('the Tavistock approach') and the systems psychodynamic consultancy stance (UNISA, 2012). The GRE was entitled, "South African Organisations Today" (SAOT), a four-day experiential organisational dynamic learning conference. It was conducted at the South African university under study between the 21<sup>st</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2012. The context provided for this conference is the increasing complexity and uncertainty that face organisations, in which managers are required to facilitate a system's capacity to grow, learn and become sustainable (UNISA, 2012). South Africa's history of Apartheid amplifies aspects of diversity and initiatives which strive to redress historical imbalanced intensifies complexities and uncertainties for all parties. To facilitate this learning, an understanding of individual, group and organisational dynamics is a prerequisite. To this end, a temporary learning and transformational organisation is structured to study the dynamic behaviours in an experiential platform. The aim of the experiential conference was to enable participants to increase their competence from a systems psychodynamic consultancy stance and be able to work with the self as an instrument of change.

The method involved small and large group configurations and merged theory, practice, feedback and review to facilitate competence (UNISA, 2012). The primary task of the conference was to "provide learning opportunities to study how organisational dynamics unfold in the here-and-now, how members (individually and collectively) take up their organisational roles, to process the learning and to start strategising about the application of the learning in consultation, coaching and research" (UNISA, 2012, p.1).

The GRE included learning events relating to consultations, coaching and research, to provide an opportunity to learn about the organisational systems dynamics theory and constructs. The sub-events of the GRE included seven staff meetings; two organisational plenary events; six organisational sessions; seven 'lekgotla' events; five learning events; one strategy session; and three review sessions over the four days of the GRE, as follows (UNISA, 2012):

- The task of the *staff meetings* was to discuss the planning, maintenance and containment of the organisation;
- *Organisational plenary sessions* were tasked to share information about the conference and the learning;
- The task of the *organisational sessions* was to provide opportunities for specific departments within the organisational structure to study their own intra-group and inter-group relations and dynamics as they manifested. In these sessions, members took up leadership learning roles, interacting with consultants and sharing hypotheses;
- '*Lekgotlas*' (known as 'here-and-now' events) had the task of providing opportunities for the organisation-as-a-whole to study its psychodynamic behaviour. During this, observing and/or recording consultants shared their observations and hypotheses with the group;
- The *learning events* had the task of providing the opportunity for members to learn about the role of consultants, coach and researcher from an organisational systems dynamics theoretical perspective;
- The task of the *strategy session* was to provide an opportunity for members to strategise towards learning in the future, in which individual reflections were followed by small group discussions; and
- The task of the *review sessions* was to provide an opportunity for members to review their learning with individual reflection and small group discussions.

Members were required to process learning at three levels during this time, namely focusing on one's self in role and the use of self as instrument; focusing on one's self in one's day-to-day role (outside of workshop), including the introjections and projections onto and into one's self; and focusing on one's self in role and the transference and counter-transferences. This GRE was the nexus for this study, as its outcome was the starting point for this research study. Various staff were involved in the SAOT, and they took up different roles during the GRE. These are set forth in Table 4.1 (UNISA, 2012). The researcher took part in the GRE as a consultant-in-training, as per Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: SAOT staff roles in the GRE

<b>Role in the GRE</b>	<b>Task related to this role</b>
<b>Directorship</b>	To direct the organisation as well as its planning, maintenance and containment
<b>Human resources</b>	To facilitate staff and organisational meetings
<b>Operations</b>	To direct the content, dynamics and flow of the learning according to the primary task
<b>Consultants</b>	To be actively involved in the learning, and to offer sensitivity, awareness and reflection of their experiences by way of hypotheses
<b>Research</b>	To direct the observations and recording of the manifesting behaviours and processing thereof
<b>Consultant-in-training</b>	To record manifesting behaviour

The group (with its boundaries of time, space and task) served as a container for the duration of the experiential learning conference. This is different to the group's 'regular social' group (with its own boundaries of time, space and task). The latter may contain the lived experience of the individuals outside of the GRE in their day-to-day lives. These two groups intersect like a Venn diagram with the individual placed in the intersecting portion, as shown in Figure 4.1.

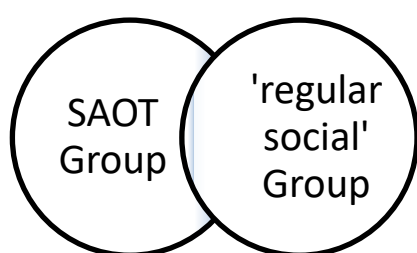


Figure 4.1: Intersection of SAOT group and the 'regular social' group

To summarise, therefore, the GRE was the pivotal and common experience for all participants, and was seen to be the catalyst for the conversations intended to distil meaning and insights both for and by the singleton.

### 4.3.2 Entrée and establishing researcher roles

The researcher took up various roles during this study, as follows:

- **Psychologist (category: Industry):** Having been in private practice for over a decade, the researcher had been exposed to various encounters within organisations, thus experiencing the impact of groups on individuals, and vice versa. This has developed her expertise in engaging in meaningful and substantive conversations with participants of the present study, which was foundational in handling the study's requirements and challenges.
- **Systems psychodynamically-informed consultant and executive coach:** The researcher completed her Masters' degree in Industrial and Organisational Psychology with a thesis on leadership during times of change, interpreted from a systems psychodynamic perspective. She was imprinted with the effects of GREs and the degree to which their benefits may atrophy when not consciously integrated through understanding. The researcher was acutely aware of how she engaged with participants during such events, taking note of the nuances that occurred amongst them, and remaining cognisant of her own reactions to the conscious and unconscious stories that were shared. The researcher's role as participant observer was influenced by the writings of Keeney (1983, p.78), who stated that objectivity is erroneous since it assumes a separation of the observer and observed. This experience has resulted in the researcher gaining the necessary self-confidence, in-depth knowledge as well as competency in consulting and research to be able to administer systems psychodynamic-related interventions.
- **Doctoral student:** The researcher had been exposed to systems psychodynamics, as well as broader organisational behaviour theories impacting groups and individuals within organisations, during the course of her Doctoral studies. The insight gained into systems psychodynamics as a consultant and executive coach prior to registering for a Doctorate has extended into a deeper form of exploration during the course of her Doctoral studies.
- **Consultant-in-training:** The researcher was part of the staff composition for the GRE, recording manifesting behaviour as per Table 4.1.

- **Interviewer, facilitator and observer:** The researcher assumed the role of interviewer (during pre-GRE and post-GRE interviews), facilitator of the post-GRE focus group discussions, as well as observer during the data collection process and the GRE itself.
- **Researcher:** In planning this research, not only was a research proposal developed and ethics approval granted, but the literature review and empirical research was also conceptualised; the research plan was operationalised; and the data was gathered, analysed and integrated into the findings.
- **Defended researcher:** Clarke and Hoggett (2009, p. 107) describe the 'defended researcher' as one who avoids emotional engagement with data that may cause anxiety for the researcher and/or remove his/her opportunities for expression. It should be noted that the researcher is a 45 year old, coloured female South African, the only girl and youngest of four children, born in the period of Apartheid. The participants in this study were all white South Africans from the same era. The unconscious aspects that may bleed into the dynamic in the focus group and subsequent FANI are reflected on in chapter five. Nicholls (2009, p.177) highlighted three aspects of the defended researcher that are significant to the present study in terms of interpreting the data from interventions such as FANI, namely that what is heard is not always what has been said; that researcher responses are crucial in developing interviews; and that what a researcher thinks he/she has heard is potentially comprised of misunderstandings and/or unintentional exposures. These latter aspects are relevant for the present study. The researcher highlighted her own responses in the post-GRE interviews, and analysed these to identify the methods or techniques applied by the participants to make meaning, and the degree to which these triggered the participants in their meaning-making process.

### 4.3.3 Sampling

The population for this research was comprised of the 24 individuals who were registered to attend the GRE that was organised by the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the South African university under study, as part of the Doctoral programme. Within this population were 24 Doctoral students who attended the GRE as part of their coursework.



From the population, a non-probability sample was chosen owing to its benefits, namely convenience and economy (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). A convenient sample was drawn consisting of those individuals who were willing to participate as well as those that were easiest for the researcher to access (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Etikan et al., 2016). The population from which a sample could be drawn was limited to those who were enrolled in the GRE scheduled by the South African university under study. This ensured that the convenience (non-probability) sample met the practical criteria, and were accessible, willing to participate, and available within a specified time and geographic location (as set by the GRE organisers) (Etikan et al., 2016). Since this is a qualitative study, the sample size was small (Payze, 2004). The small sample enabled in-depth study into each participant with the aim of yielding rich data from each. It was equally important that the participants in the research had some experience and/or interest in the systems psychodynamic stance, which would predispose a degree of engagement in the process and an interest in the research topic.

According to Evans (2007), the sample may be drawn from a specific predefined group. Groenewald (2004) emphasises that the phenomenon dictates the method, and thus such purposive sampling enables the search for participants who have experience relating to the phenomenon being researched. In this regard, the sample in this study were all registered on the Doctoral programme described earlier, who attended the GRE. The participants were all registered psychologists with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).

From the original group of Doctoral students who were invited to participate in the study via e-mail (see Annexure A), five elected to participate prior to the GRE. The original sample was therefore five participants who took part in the pre-GRE interviews. A sixth participant requested to join the study after the GRE, as he was interested in gaining more from the event and wanted to garner insights by exploring his experiences. He therefore did not participate in the pre-GRE interview, but participated in the post-GRE interviews and focus group. Adding this additional participant without the pre-GRE interview taking place was not considered a

hindrance for either the participant or the researcher. The final sample was thus six participants and their characteristics are set forth as follows.

Four females and two males took part, all of whom were white. All participants joined the research voluntarily, with no connectedness to the outcome of their Doctoral programme. As the participation in this study was voluntary, the demographic profile could not be managed or controlled.

Each of the participants in the study were in their first year of Doctoral studies, but were at different stages in their careers and life. They were all between the ages of 30 – 45 years old. The roles listed in Table 4.2 indicate the participants' first unprompted responses when asked during the pre-GRE interview to describe the roles they filled in their personal and professional lives. Four of the participants were self-employed and worked in independent practice as psychologists, although only two of these participants indicated the professional role of 'psychologist' in the pre-GRE interview. Since Sam did not partake in the pre-GRE interview as mentioned in the previous paragraph, his role/s are not indicated. It is important to note that anonymous identifiers were allocated to each participant, to ensure anonymity, as shown in the first column of Table 4.2. Both female and male participants have been allocated pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

Table 4.2: Demographic distribution of sample

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Personal Role</b>	<b>Professional Role</b>
<b>1 – Christine</b>	White	Female	Partner	Coach
<b>2 – Gretha</b>	White	Female	Daughter	Consultant
<b>3 – Lisa</b>	White	Female	Mother	Psychologist
<b>4 – Magda</b>	White	Female	Fiancé	Psychologist
<b>5 – Gavin</b>	White	Male	Husband	Manager of practice
<b>6 – Sam</b>	White	Male	n/a	n/a

In addition a biographical summary for each participant is provided below:

- a. Christine is a white Afrikaans South African female. She has a son, is a consultant and is in a committed relationship. She is starting out as consultant-coach and beginning to establish a customer base.
- b. Gretha is a white English speaking South African. She is in private practice, running a small coaching consultancy. She is single.
- c. Lisa is a white Afrikaans South African female. She is starting her private psychology practice in a new town. She is married with a child. She grew up in Gauteng on the East Rand and now lives in a big city in a different province.
- d. Magda is a white South African female. She is a practicing psychologist, employed in the mining sector and in a committed relationship.
- e. Gavin is a white English speaking South African male. He is a consultant and runs multiple businesses. He is married and has four children.
- f. Sam is a white English speaking South African, who lived in a coastal city for most of his life and has recently relocated to Gauteng. He worked independently for many years and relocated to take up a full time role in a big corporate. He is not married.

#### **4.3.4 Data collection methods**

A combination of semi-structured interviews (pre-GRE), unstructured interviews (post-GRE) and a focus group (post-GRE) were used as the data collection instruments (Creswell, 2003; Kafle, 2011). A multi-modal approach to data collection therefore enables an open sharing of participants' views and experiences. In this regard, the reason for selecting a combination of data collection instruments was to achieve the research aims and objectives most effectively, while enhancing validity of the study. The GRE was the pivotal and common experience from which the focus group discussion and both pre-and post-GRE interviews were launched.

Each individual instrument will be explained in detail in the discussion that follows. Each of these three data collection instruments will be described across a number

of sub-sections, namely rationale, purpose, structure, administration, role of researcher using instrument, reliability and validity, and justification for using the instrument. The instruments are presented in the order that they were utilised in the study.

#### *4.3.4.1 The pre-GRE semi-structured interviews*

Prior to the GRE, the population (N=24) of individuals who were enrolled in the Doctoral programme and had registered for the GRE at that point in time were formally invited via email to participate in the researcher's study (see Annexure A). The overall aim of the study was highlighted in this email. Those who agreed to participate indicated this via an email response, and were contacted to arrange an interview. These interviews were held telephonically prior to the GRE taking place. Each interview was between 15 to 20 minutes in length and was held at a time and date convenient to each participant.

##### *a) Definition and rationale of the instrument*

The pre-GRE instrument was defined by a semi-structured interview template (Midgley, 2006) that set the boundary of questions to be asked, namely what participant's expectations were of the GRE; what roles they undertook in their personal and professional lives; and how they and significant others perceived themselves in these roles. Midgley (2006) suggests that the semi-structured interview is the most commonly used method of data collection in qualitative research studies.

##### *b) Purpose of the instrument*

The instrument served to introduce participants to the researcher and the study, as well as to obtain initial reference information relating to how the participants perceived themselves in their different roles.

##### *c) Structure of the instrument*

The pre-GRE instrument made use of a semi-structured interview template (see Annexure B), which reduced the influence of the researcher and assisted in maintaining consistency across responses. The interview template covered three

areas, namely learning expectations of the GRE; significant roles played in the participant's personal and professional lives; and the participants' perceptions of themselves in these roles compared to how significant others perceive them in such roles. This allowed for a cursory role analysis of both participants' existential and normative roles. While it did create a reference from which post-GRE debriefing would occur in the form of in-depth interviews, it did not obtain rich data for interpretation. Rather, the structure of the instrument facilitated a simple conversation amidst some probing where necessary.

*d) Administration of the instrument*

The instrument was administered via telephone, after pre-arranging a date and time with each research participant.

*e) Role of the researcher using the instrument*

The role of the researcher comprised of listening; note taking (particularly nuances in responses); and establishing rapport. Since the pre-GRE interviews set the context for the following phases of data collection, it was particularly important for the researcher to pay close attention to the participants' responses, to support them in their reflective processes during the post-GRE focus group and interviews.

*f) Reliability and validity of the instrument*

In creating a standardised and semi-structured interview format, the researcher aimed to enhance the validity of data collection and enable replicability for subsequent researchers (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The reliability of the instrument may be impacted by what Hofisi, Hofisi and Mago (2014) refer to as 'facial anonymity', which they state influences the participants' contributions in an unexpected manner. This aspect was mitigated by keeping the structure simple, the interview short, and the questions standardised and semi-structured. The purpose of this was also to provide a more stable and consistent response from each participant.

The pre-GRE interview was formatted according to a semi-structured interview template to ensure dependability (Shenton, 2004). To enhance credibility (which Shenton, 2004 prefers to internal validity), this pre-GRE interview established a

rapport and connection with participants before the GRE took place, and prior to the main data collection dialogues occurring post-the GRE. Shenton (2004) highlights that this extended engagement between researcher and participants helps to enhance understanding and build a relationship of trust. However, keeping the pre-GRE interview short avoided familiarity that would distort professionalism and neutrality (Shenton, 2004).

The trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stenbacka, 2001; both in Golafshani, 2003) of qualitative research as relevant to hermeneutic phenomenology is guided by orientation, strength, richness and depth (van Manen, 1997, in Kafle, 2011). Orientation refers to involvement in the participants' stories; strength refers to the "convincing capacity" of the text; richness denotes that the text conveys the meaning perceived by the participants, and depth refers to the text delving deep into the participants' intentions (Kafle, 2011, p.196).

*g) Justification for the inclusion of the instrument*

This instrument was necessary in order to determine a reference of responses amongst participants prior to being influenced by the nature of the GRE. These responses were needed so that they could be used as a starting point of discussion in the subsequent post-GRE focus group and interview sessions. This step in the process of data collection also served as a means of formal introduction to the researcher and the concept of roles and role analysis.

*h) Nature of the data gathered*

The data gathered was captured onto the semi-structure interview template for each participant, with the time and duration of the call. The data included the roles the participant elected to name, their own perceptions of themselves in the roles, as well as their perceptions of how others see them in the role. Their learning expectations, were captured verbatim.

*4.3.4.2 The post-GRE focus group*

The post-GRE focus group took place immediately after the GRE was concluded. It was held on the university campus in the same room in which the GRE was held,

since this venue was convenient, available and familiar to the participants. The venue was therefore easy to locate, and was secure and safe. Smit and Cilliers (2006) suggest that the typical size of a focus group is between four and twelve participants, and since the size of this study's focus group was six participants, it was deemed to be manageable. While each participant had the opportunity to share his/her responses, the focus group had a time boundary of one hour.

*a) Definition and rationale of the instrument*

A focus group is defined by Brewerton and Millward (2004) as a planned discussion in a safe environment that is intended to obtain the perceptions on a topic by a group, through the process of sharing and responding to the views, emotions and experiences of others in the group. Boateng (2012) describes focus group discussions as a qualitative method of group interviewing. He cites Babbie (2011), who highlighted that it allows researchers to interview several participants systematically and simultaneously.

Boateng (2012) contends that focus groups are useful for eliciting qualitative data, while being convenient and economic. A focus group was deemed a safe transitioning method by the researcher, since participants had just completed an intensive GRE. The researcher therefore believed that shifting towards individual interviews without a small group debriefing opportunity might be experienced as anxiety-provoking. Thus, the post-GRE focus group also served the purpose of being a container for participants between the event itself and the post-GRE individual interviews to follow.

*b) Purpose of the instrument*

Hofisi et al. (2014) suggest that focus groups offer a context for participants to engage each other in the expression of aspects of importance or interest. Similarly, Smit and Cilliers (2006) state that the aim of a focus group is to obtain perspectives by providing a socially-oriented interaction that allows participants to influence and build on each other's responses freely, thus collectively crafting synergised perspectives and thoughts.

The rationale of this focus group was therefore to provide a social interface that allowed participants to influence each other openly, build on one another's responses, and generate synergistic thoughts and insights (Cilliers, 2005). Since this study relates to how the singleton integrates his/her own learning after being swamped by the group's experience, the post-GRE focus group aimed to allow for the transition between these two states: 'GRE participant' and 'singleton'. It provided a group platform for expression, thereby scaffolding the effect of the shift from group member to singleton. Scaffolding is a term that describes a temporary structure used to construct something new; it goes beyond simply helping, to a special kind of help that enables those learning to move to new skills and levels of understanding (Gibbons, 2015). The sharing and discussion in the focus group therefore allowed for some degree of in-group feedback and punctuated the participants' experiences to enable them to return to "themselves" (singleton) prior to the post-GRE interviews.

*c) Structure of the instrument*

The focus group began with each participant being given an open-ended Role Analysis template to structure his/her thoughts towards the discussion that would follow (see Annexure C). This template was used to set the scene and provide a context for the focus group itself that followed. It served as a debriefing tool post the GRE, to allow participants to reflect on their normative, existential and phenomenological roles experienced within the GRE. The template therefore (1) sets boundaries for the focus group discussion; (2) kept the discussion on topic; and (3) enabled participants to reflect on their personal insights prior to sharing their views on the GRE in a group context. In so doing, the template helped to channel the discussion of the participants within the focus group session, in line with the research topic.

*d) Administration of the instrument*

The focus group began by the researcher requesting participants to complete the Role Analysis template described above. The researcher then read the purpose of the study to the group, and initiated the focus group session by asking the individuals to share the reflections that they had written down on the template. Once the first participant freely shared his/her views, it facilitated the other participants sharing their own, too. Soon, the conversation became organic and included reassuring



feedback to participants who had been left somewhat troubled by the GRE. After each participant had had a chance to share his/her views, the focus group was concluded. The focus group discussion was recorded, and the template was submitted to the researcher upon completion of the session.

*e) Role of the researcher using the instrument*

The researcher was required to be an active listener; to take notes; to audio-record the focus group discussion; to establish rapport with the participants; and to probe the participants as the conversations evolved. The researcher also needed to demonstrate honesty to build trust with the participants, and to withhold from any judgement.

*f) Reliability and validity of the instrument*

Shenton (2004) describes validity in the context of qualitative research as being concerned with credibility and transferability, while reliability is concerned with dependability and confirmability. To assure the internal validity of the focus group findings, triangulation was applied (Boateng, 2012; Shenton, 2004) to prevent participant bias or groupthink from distorting the accounts of GRE experiences. The reliability of the focus group was ensured by providing a reflection template (that is, the Role Analysis template), thereby offering a standardised format for participants to reflect and from which to share their GRE experiences. As noted by Shenton (2004), using multiple methods compensates for the limitations within one instrument.

Boateng (2012) warns against the influence of groupthink in the use of focus groups. His study revealed that participants exercised reserve because they were unsure about entrusting their personal experiences in the focus group, which allowed dominant voices to become the prevailing voices. The Role Analysis template used in the present study thus aimed to ensure that all voices had an opportunity to be heard, as each participant was given an equitable platform to share his/her personal reflections.

*g) Justification for the inclusion of the instrument*

Since this study aimed to uncover the experiences and insights of the singleton post a GRE, the focus group served as a transitioning mechanism to process GRE experiences and perceptions on a group level, prior to the individual post-GRE interviews.

*h) Nature of the data gathered*

The nature of the data from the focus group verbatim, as it was recorded and transcribed. Additionally the Role Analysis template which had been completed by each participant was collected and retained for record keeping.

*4.3.4.3 The post-GRE unstructured interviews*

Immediately after the focus group, in-depth one-on-one interviews were conducted in the same venue as the post-GRE focus group, on the same day. They had a time boundary of 60 to 90 minutes. One of the participants requested a follow-on contact session because the time boundary had been reached before the conversation had been concluded. The researcher agreed to this, and the follow-on interview was held at a location close to where the individual worked, at a time suitable to both parties, one week after the initial interview. Therefore, this participant had two interviews, one which lasted 90 minutes and the second that lasted 60 minutes.

*a) Definition and rationale of the instrument*

As the experiences discussed in this interview were obtained from a GRE, the distillation of the participants' experiences needed to be drawn from a 'non-group' (individual) reflective method. For this reason, the Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI) method was chosen (see Clarke & Hogget, 2009; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; 2013; Nicholls, 2009). This method assumes the 'defended subjects' and free association (both drawn from psychoanalytical theory) as the building blocks for the methodology (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; 2008; 2013).

Psychoanalytical theory suggests that anxiety is inherent to the human condition, and that which may threaten the individual will create anxiety (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008; 2013; Smit & Cilliers, 2006). They suggest that this anxiety is mobilised at an

unconscious level and this “dynamic unconscious which defends against anxiety is seen as a significant influence on people’s actions, lives and reactions” (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008, p.299). To contain these anxieties, individuals employ a range of defence mechanisms (Czander, 1993; Hirschhorn, 1993; Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002; Krantz & Gillmore, 1989), largely at an unconscious level (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008). Hirschhorn (1993) purports that the social defences employed to reduce anxiety could narrow their range of experience and understanding, which would impact the individual’s recall and narration of the events and cause a ‘defended subject’ (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008; 2013). The implication of this is that anxiety-provoking memories are modified or forgotten, and defences may influence the meaning of an event, including how it is conveyed to a listener (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008).

The method developed by Hollway and Jefferson (2013) to take the psychoanalytical principles of the defended subject into account is to pay attention to free association and gestalt (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008). Gestalt has been defined in Section 2.2.4, and can be summarised as ‘the whole is greater than the sum of its parts’. This suggests that one first needs to understand the total if one hopes to gain insight into the component parts placed into a context (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008). They further assert that preserving the whole account (the form or gestalt) reveals unconscious dynamics that structure memory and thus the individual’s subjective invested-ness in his/her past experiences.

FANI assumes that defended subjects are not necessarily able to ‘tell it as it is’, owing to their ability to recall events being compromised by their defences against anxiety. For this reason, this method employs free association (as a psychoanalytical principle; see Hollway & Jefferson, 2008). Free association posits that unconscious connections are revealed through the connections that individuals make when they are free to formulate their own narratives (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008; 2000). Hollway and Jefferson (2013, p.4) wrote that “research subjects whose inner worlds cannot be understood without knowledge of their experiences in the world, and whose experiences of the world cannot be understood without knowledge of the way in which their inner worlds allow them to experience the outer world”, may only be known through another subject, namely the researcher.

What frames this event (FANI) is the unconscious associations that emerge and become conscious to the individual. The aspect used to initiate the FANI would be drawn from the issue of transference or projection to which the participant had been susceptible, and the FANI interview would evolve into what Rubin and Rubin (2005) refer to as a conversational partnership. The FANI approach, having adapted parts of the biographical interpretative analysis mode, posits the use of questions that are open and unconnected to any predetermined construct, thereby tracking meaning as it evolves through the meaning frames of the interviewee to uncover real meaning and its relevance to the individual (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008).

FANI aims to elicit stories as they are revealed, implying that as a story is told, detail is incorporated, certain aspects are emphasised, and lessons are learnt, which reveal choices that the interviewee has made without realising or intending this (Boydell, 2009). According to Hollway and Jefferson (2008, p.308), “this characteristic of storytelling, to contain significances beyond the teller’s intentions, is what it shares with the psychoanalytical method of free associations”.

FANI avoids asking ‘why’ questions as this elicits intellectualisations (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008), which is a defence to anxiety in the systems psychodynamic stance (Cilliers, 2005). Such would not serve to enlighten the researcher or the participant. FANI also requires the researcher to follow up using the interviewee’s ordering and phrasing, which demands attentive listening so as to enable following up on themes in the order of narration and in the interviewee’s own words or phrases. This will help to ensure that the meaning frames of the interviewee are retained and respected (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008).

For this study, interpretation was integrated into the FANI as an intersubjective creation of knowledge, described as ‘thinking aloud’ (Nicholls, 2009). The researcher offered participants a different vantage point at appropriate times, such as a possibility of seeing the same thing differently. This is in line with Berger and Luckmann (1991, p.35-36) who suggest in their seminal work that there are “multiple realities”, and that the reality of everyday life is presented as the ‘here and now’ and as an intersubjective world (one which is shared with others).

*b) Purpose of the instrument*

The purpose of FANI was to gain an understanding into the individual experiences and emotions triggered within the GRE, and to provide participants with a reflective space to discover the meaning that they could assemble from the GRE in order to enable integration into their consciousness before stepping back into their life post-GRE.

Hofisi et al. (2014) offer several advantages of an in-depth interview such as FANI, including that they are flexible, yield rich data with 'new insights', and enable the probing of underlying experiences relating to emotionally intense experiences. This in-depth qualitative interview also aimed to explore and make explicit the underlying systemic processes that affect experiences (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; 2013).

Since an unstructured interview was chosen for this purpose, this allowed participants to disclose their experiences, perceptions and emotions while the researcher probed and guided their reflection, so that participants could gain the greatest level of insight into themselves (Mouton, 2001; Patton, 2002).

*c) Structure of the instrument*

The questions asked and statements made to prompt the participants were guided by what Hollway and Jefferson (2008; 2013) offer as guidance. They highlight that the interview is best placed to avoid generalisations and defence rationalisations, by inviting specific events and accounts. Having adapted the biographical-interpretative method, they suggest four principles, namely to ask open questions; elicit stories; avoid asking why; and follow up using the participants' ordering and phrasing.

The post-GRE interview was initiated by the researcher, who explained the purpose of the interview in the context of the GRE. She asked the participants whether they were able to connect their experiences in the GRE to their previous experiences and whether there were any patterns or transferences that were evident. The interview then unfolded organically with the respective participants. The researcher was guided in her questioning by the responses of the participants. Questions and paraphrasing naturally emerged as the researcher elicited the stories and reflections

of the participants. The researcher remained authentic to each interview, guided by what emerged in the interview, and was consumed only by the narrative revealed by the participants.

*d) Administration of the instrument*

The post-GRE interviews commenced after the post-GRE focus group, with a set time schedule so that each participant knew when he/she would be required to attend the interview. The interviews were recorded with an audio-recorder. The researcher began by providing an overview of the purpose of the post-GRE interviews and the intended benefit it hoped to offer, namely a conversation to uncover patterns of occurrence by exploring transference and counter-transference, as well as experiences of the participants' pasts that they brought in to the GRE. The opening statement was phrased as follows:

*This will take the form of a conversation – to find patterns of occurrences by understanding transferences ('what experiences of my past am I bringing in and what about these experience are hooking me?' and 'am I counter-transferring due to the transference of others in group?'), with a view to unearthing a personal insight which may be anchoring to the individual's re-integration into his real post-GRE world.*

The researcher then followed the participants in their exploration and reflections as naturally and spontaneously as possible, prompting as necessary to allow for deeper exploration to the point of insight for the participants. The researcher focused on the issues of transference and the identification of patterns, which might have been evident for the participant, in order to create understanding of how the unconscious can be remembered.

*e) Role of the researcher using the instrument*

Hofisi et al. (2014, p.62) state that it is important for an interviewer to "become part of the interviewing picture by asking questions and responding to the respondent and sometimes even sharing their experiences with the interviewees". Kafle (2011) notes that in hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher must strive to create rich accounts through intuition, focused on uncovering and amplification. He goes on to highlight that hermeneutic phenomenology does not follow method for method's

sake, but rather recommends maintenance of the interplay between “commitment to an abiding concern, oriented stance towards the question, investigating the experience as it is lived, describing the phenomenon through writing, rewriting and consideration of the parts and whole” (Kafle, 2011, p.191).

Nicholls (2009) reports that a researcher must rely on his/her own internal experiences (projective identification) to understand the unconscious communication taking place during an approach such as FANI. As supported by Nicholls (2009), sharing by the researcher of her thoughts did allow participants’ understanding to evolve. Hoggett (2006, in Nicholls, 2009, p.172) describes this as “thinking aloud”.

*f) Reliability and validity of the instrument*

According to Hollway and Jefferson (2008), the efficacy of the narrative method has been subject to the same problems of other hermeneutic approaches. This is namely the degree to which the narrated story relates to the reality of the event, or the degree to which the truth is compromised by the narrator’s motives and memory, which both bring into question its reliability and validity. However, Bauer (1996, in Hollway & Jefferson, 2008, p. 304) asserted that the issue was not the narration or the events being narrated, but rather the people who are telling the story; even though the story remains close to the actual events and provides indexical statements that reference concrete events in place and time.

The participants’ stories became the means through which to better understand the interviewees, which in essence is the aim of this study. As noted by Golafshani (2003), the purpose of a qualitative study is to generate understanding. In this study, it was not the narratives that matter, but rather the insights that the participants were able to assemble from having told the narrative to make sense of the experiences that emerged from the GRE. This supports the reliability and validity of this interview method.

Golafshani (2003) cites Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) contribution to the reliability and validity of a qualitative study, which emphasises credibility, neutrality and dependability. Hofisi et al. (2014) highlight that in-depth interviews minimise the risk

of misrepresentations and misinterpretations owing to rephrasing and repetitions as layers of complexity are revealed. The triangulation used in the present study that was enabled by data collected in the pre-GRE interviews and post-GRE focus group enhanced the quality of the data collected in the post-GRE interviews, as well as contributed to the honesty of the participants (Shenton, 2004).

Finally, in qualitative research, Hofisi et al. (2014, p.64) notes that the interviewer has to “work diligently to ensure the validity and reliability of the interview data”. Trustworthiness in this study was ensured through detailed planning, open communication by the researcher throughout the data collection process, ethical conduct (see Smit & Cilliers, 2006), and care for participants.

*g) Justification for the inclusion of the instrument*

To enhance the validity of this qualitative study further, triangulation using multiple methods was used (Patton, 2001, in Golafshani, 2003). Hollway and Jefferson (1997) found that survey methods, even standard qualitative approaches, were inadequate. They thus sought an approach that would enable meaning through an interpretative method that allowed for probing the narrative (both what is said and avoided) in order to find significance. They posited the defended subject, activated by the anxiety provoked by the event, that influences the experience and account thereof (Hollway & Jefferson, 1997; 2013). Since the pivotal GRE is founded in the systems psychodynamic tradition, it is fitting that the debriefing methodologies (of which this post-GRE interview is a part) would also be grounded within the same paradigm.

The chosen FANI method is guided by the psychoanalytic principle of free association, and further informed by psychoanalytic ontology that emphasises the unconscious (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Jervis (2009) sought a method that would address unconscious dynamics and achieve a deeper level of understanding. For this reason, they identified FANI as ideal, since it is a reflexive psychoanalytical research methodology that enables understanding of what underlies manifest data. Indeed, Clark and Hoggett (2009, p. 9) state that FANI is “designed to facilitate the production of the interviewee’s ‘meaning frame’”.



The post-GRE interview conducted in this study was administered after a GRE, which is known to evoke anxiety (Armstrong, 2005; Menzies, 1993), thus giving rise to a defended subject (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). This study's participants, who partook in the GRE and volunteered for the study as they sought deeper understanding of their experience and systems psychodynamics, needed a reflexive opportunity. The unconscious defences against anxiety would affect their post-GRE interview and thus needed to be taken cognisance of.

For these reasons, FANI was deemed to be an appropriate methodology. FANI takes both the unconscious defences and desires of participants into account, which is a product of both their biography and their social experiences, and cannot be reduced to simple explanations (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). The FANI method is an agenda-free space within which an interview occurs, which can assist in the formation of trust within the research relationship (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). The post-GRE interviews aimed to uncover, through free association, unconscious connections that are made and revealed through links that individuals make when they are free to structure their own narratives (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008).

#### *h) Nature of the data gathered*

The data from the post-GRE interviews was a verbatim transcript of the entire conversation. It was complemented with the notes taken by the researcher during the interview.

#### *4.3.4.4 Data collection procedure*

In this study, data was collected by way of the following procedure:

- Securing permission for attaching this study to the SAOT
- Obtaining the email addresses of the participants from the organisers
- Sending out the letter of invitation which contained the aims of the research
- Waiting for the response until a cut-off date (which was prior to the scheduled date of SAOT)
- Responding to those who indicated interest with an email to provide further information together with the informed consent form

- Upon receipt of confirmation from those who shown interest and confirmed consent, the availability of each individual was confirmed and the first (telephonic) interview was scheduled
- The pre-event telephonic interview was conducted, recorded on the pre-event interview template.
- The GRE took place
- Immediately after the GRE, a venue that had been secured prior to the GRE with the organisers of SAOT, the participants were called into the room and the focus group was started (as explained above in section 4.3.4.2).
- At the end of the focus group, the participants were asked to select a time slot for the post-event unstructured interview, which they self elected and agreed amongst themselves.
- The post-event unstructured interviews were conducted in this sequence.

#### **4.3.5 Recording of data**

The telephonic pre-GRE interview was recorded by way of the researcher's own note taking. The researcher completed the pre-GRE interview guide for each participant while he/she was speaking, and kept the hand-written forms in hard copy on file.

The post-GRE focus group and interviews were recorded using a digital audio-recorder, after obtaining the permission of the participants, to ensure that their behaviour or responses would not be inhibited (Groenewald, 2004). The recordings were transcribed by an independent party and thereafter, the transcripts were checked against the voice recording by the researcher to confirm the accuracy of the transcript. The notes taken by the researcher were also captured in electronic format.

The transcripts and the recordings were used as a point of reference when interpretations were being made by the researcher, to re-read or re-listen to the statements and to appreciate the nuances or inflections in the voices of the participants. The recordings contributed to reducing observer bias because all

participants' narratives were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The recordings, notes and transcripts were saved in a folder on the researcher's computer and on a back-up drive stored in a locked safe.

#### 4.3.6 Data analyses

Data was analysed by applying the hermeneutic cycle – which consists of reading, reflective writing and interpretation in a meticulous manner (Kafle, 2011), depicted in Figure 4.2. The unit of analysis was the individual case (the singleton).

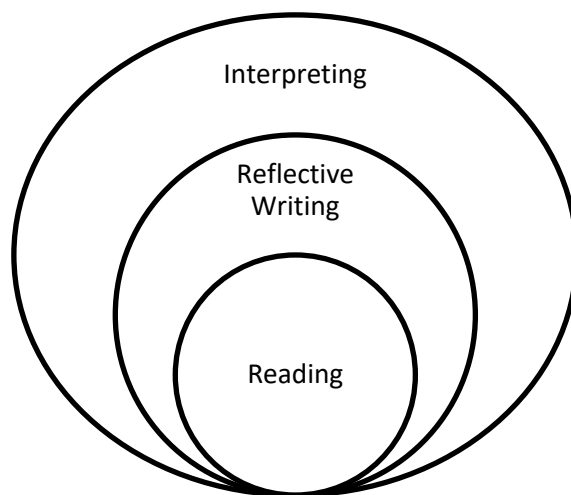


Figure 4.2: Hermeneutic cycle (Kafle, 2011, p.195)

Double hermeneutics was used to interpret the data through a systems psychodynamic lens.

To enable interpretation of the participants' responses, Hollway and Jefferson (2013) highlight the importance of understanding the defended subject. Furthermore, they highlight the importance of understanding the role of the researcher in the production and analysis of data. Therefore, the researcher will also discuss the nature of participants as defended subjects, and the researcher as a defended researcher. According to Clarke and Hoggett (2009), a precondition to good interpretation is a holistic frame of reference that includes the social, cultural and psychological dimensions of the human condition. Data interpretation therefore took the hermeneutic cycle into account, and each participant's experience was interpreted in the context of his/her GRE-exposure and his/her individual life. In

other words, the interpretations were done holistically. According to Clarke and Hoggett (2009, p.6), “the interpretive is mediated by the minds of both researcher and researched”. Data interpretation was aimed, therefore, at offering participants co-authorship of the perspectives and insights that emerged, and at distilling the process insights that may aid their future learning and re-integration opportunities (post a GRE).

The results from this study’s pre- and post-GRE interviews as well as post-GRE focus group were transcribed verbatim, and together with the researcher’s notes recorded during the sessions, the content was analysed as described below (Cilliers et al., 2004).

#### *4.3.6.1 First level hermeneutics*

In this study, the individual and his/her narrative and lived experiences within the GRE was considered as the unit of analysis. For this reason, each case study was analysed by way of the three encounters held with the sample (namely the pre-GRE interview, post-GRE focus group, and post-GRE interview). The researcher read the data multiple times in an attempt to understand the unique text provided by the interviewees. The transcripts were read to discover themes, patterns, trends, narratives and/or critical incidents (Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010; Crist & Tanner, 2003) in order to make sense of the participants’ views.

Each of the encounters were read separately and reflected on, themes emerged for each participant based on the full transcript for that encounter – what Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) refers to as a central theme of recurrent patterns. The words, phrases and sentences used by each participant was explored rigorously – finding the root for these words or the antonyms – to find themes and alignment or misalignment. Furthermore, exploring the images which participants used and finding connections across the transcripts assisted in distilling the predominant themes. The researcher gauged crosscutting themes and inconsistencies to across each of the three encounters for the identification of prominent themes. These results are presented in Chapter 5. The rules and guidelines offered by Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) in sub-section 3.4.2.3 above on ‘reading the text’ were

applied: finding thematic unity, engaging in pattern-matching, and seeking meaning at multiple levels and presented by way of periodic summations per participant, after each encounter. Midgley (2006) notes that in-depth hermeneutics are drawn from Freud's distinction between the obvious and latent meaning of communication, in order to analyse the unconscious aspects of communication. Hein and Austin (2001, p.12) say that interpretation goes beyond articulation of the data – it is, they say it is “defining what is still uncertain and co-creating meaning”.

#### 4.3.6.2 *Second level hermeneutics*

After re-reading the transcripts multiple times, the initial identification of themes had been determined – these themes were then interpreted using systems psychodynamic concepts to reveal how participants make meaning following a GRE event. This procedure involved double hermeneutics, namely the researcher's interpretation of the interpretations participants arrived at from the re-view of their GRE experiences (Cilliers, 2005; Huffington et al., 2004). The emergent systems psychodynamic themes that manifested across the six cases were identified. For each theme, the researcher formulated a working hypothesis, integrated into the research hypothesis (see Schafer, 2003).

Transcripts were read through with reference to Schafer's (1970, in Cilliers et al., 2004) interpretative stance with regard to transference and counter-transference (Midgley, 2006). Transference tendencies were identified at this level of data analysis, in order to highlight patterns such as what triggered the transferences (namely, critical incidents). These were taken verbatim from the data and distilled for meaning (Kvale, 1996; Midgley, 2006).

In interpreting the data, the researcher applied the systems psychodynamic theoretical constructs (presented in Chapter 2) to what the participants shared, together with their subjective capacity to make sense of their post-GRE reflections, in order to arrive at themes. Through arranging the systems psychodynamic themes to describe the effects and after-effects of the GRE, the researcher aimed to synthesise the working hypotheses for each theme and determine a general

hypothesis that connects the experiences of individual participants in their meaning-making endeavours.

It is at this level that the ORA data was further explored to enable understanding from a systems psychodynamic perspective. ORA is a systems psychodynamic method (described in Section 3.5.2) used to understand how participants in the study perceived themselves as a tool for enriching their insights and post-event learning as a singleton. According to Newton et al. (2006), ORA is a process for helping individuals clarify and effect performance in their role. The objective is to assist individuals to explore their internal perspectives and to test these against the expectations of others (Newton et al., 2006). Included in this level, the researcher sought to identify the repeated roles (namely normative, existential and/or phenomenological) to highlight patterns amongst participants' data.

In this second level of hermeneutic inspection, the researcher sought to interpret the phenomenal and existential roles of the participants within the normative roles they had highlighted, in order to identify further connections and patterns. How they experienced themselves and how they believed others experienced them were revealing of unconscious associations that they had formulated through their lives, and therefore the researcher amplified these experiences to find replication and patterns. More so, the transferences and counter-transference that participants experienced helped uncover the patterns that allowed for insight formation.

It is important that a holistic analysis of the participants took place to enable the individual's gestalt to surface, which in turn revealed participants' predicaments, conflicts, fixations, turning points and so forth (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). The researcher focused within the post-GRE interview on discovering the moments of insights that occurred for the participants, and whether these had formative connections to their life's narrative and/or were triggered by particular questions or processes.

A number of stages evolved in understanding the role analysis that the participants applied in the Role Analysis template completed prior to the post-GRE focus group discussion. These stages are as follows:

- **Stage 1:** The pre-GRE interview responses were read to determine the congruence between their expressed normative roles and the corresponding existential and reported phenomenological roles. Congruence within ORA would indicate that there was a lower level of anxiety present within the individual, and incongruence would indicate a level of latent anxiety (Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010). For the pre-event interview, the researcher highlighted words and phrases that were repeated brought certain themes to light for each participant. This was an initial perspective adopted, without prejudice. The researcher then analysed the transcribed post-GRE focus group discussion. The information was reviewed according to the three role levels (namely normative, existential and phenomenological) and the key insights that the participants highlighted were distilled for each participant. The researcher assessed congruence between the themes from the pre-event interview and the themes / insights distilled from the focus group to draw alignment before analysing the next encounter (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1987) The post-GRE interview transcripts were also analysed and the connections to the focus group references were further understood.
- **Stage 2:** The data was used to formulate role identity themes per participant, which would be applied as a filter for re-analysing the post-GRE interviews. These transcripts were re-read with these filters (posed as questions that the researcher held in mind). Examples of how anxiety and defence mechanisms manifested (Cilliers, 2005) were extracted.
- **Stage 3:** Any unique or common tendencies during the post-GRE focus group session were noted. The identification of patterns and connections to the roles (namely normative, existential or phenomenological) were also sought in the re-reading of the transcripts. The themes and / or images that emerged from within the individual became apparent in the post-GRE interviews. The researcher looked for images the participants used to describe their lives and their experiences of GRE and the most prominent or recurring images were used to trace back through the transcripts to find related concepts (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1987). These were identified in the re-reading of the post-GRE interview transcripts. Examples of how anxiety and defences manifested were clustered to identify prominent themes (Cilliers, 2005). Common tendencies, role analysis and key triggers assisted the researcher to highlight these prominent systems psychodynamic themes.

- **Stage 4:** The data and interpretations were integrated to formulate the integrated singleton and highlight the insights and resolutions with which each participant concluded the post-GRE interview.

#### **4.3.7 Strategies employed to ensure quality data**

In this section, issues relating to trustworthiness and ethics of the study are addressed.

##### *4.3.7.1 Trustworthiness of qualitative research*

As discussed earlier in this chapter, validity and reliability of qualitative studies differs to that of quantitative studies. The most crucial consideration is the trustworthiness of the study, is judged by four standards, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, according to Kafle (2011) and Shenton (2004), both referencing Lincoln and Guba (1985; 1999). However, Kafle (2011) suggests that these standards may not be most appropriate for hermeneutic phenomenology and thus offers the contributions of van Manen (1997, in Kafle, 2011) who asserts that quality concerns be guided by orientation, strength, richness and depth. All eight dimensions, as well as authenticity, will be discussed below.

##### *a) Credibility*

Credibility is akin to internal validity, which confirms the degree to which the study measures what it intended to measure. Shenton (2004) offers multiple provisions that may enhance credibility of a study, including adopting well-established research methods; utilising triangulation (such as using both interviews and focus groups); and ensuring the researcher's credibility (including background, qualifications and experience, which were discussed earlier in this chapter). Credibility was further assured by the competency of the researcher in the paradigm of systems psychodynamic, while data collection and interpretations were verified against the relevant literature. The final containment mechanism for credibility was a close review of comments received from the researcher's supervisor.



*b) Transferability*

Shenton (2004) describes that the nature of transferability of qualitative research is likened to external validity, which is the degree to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. This author suggests that while qualitative research is specific to individuals and contexts, it is conceivable that if situations are similar, the findings may be relatable to other contexts. To facilitate the efficacy of transferability, the researcher should provide sufficient contextual information (Shenton, 2004).

Thus, to assure a measure of transferability in this study, the researcher has provided context of the study (relating to the GRE) as well as salient features of the participants, including race and gender. Multiple cases (six), with a varied range of interviews (including semi-structured interviews, a focus group session and unstructured interviews) were conducted to increase the generalisability of the findings and thus improve external validity (Voss, Tsikriktsis & Frohlich, 2002).

*c) Dependability*

Reliability of the study refers to the stability of findings over time, should the study be repeated following the same protocol (Shenton, 2004). In qualitative research, this is referred to as dependability, implying the consistency of the study's processes (Golafshani, 2003).

In this study, as a phenomenological endeavour, it would be unlikely that participants undergoing the various phases of data collection for a second time would react in the same manner. Hollway and Jefferson (2013) suggest that reliability may therefore alternatively be verified when interpretations and analyses that are checked (that is, read) by others are recognised and perceived as meaningful. To this end, the findings and interpretations are presented in two separate chapters (namely Chapters 5 and 6), to enhance the verification of interpretations when it is read by others. This is further assured by the comments from the supervisor of this study. Furthermore, the researcher strived to enhance the dependability of this study by providing a detailed explanation of both the research design and the process of data collection.

#### *d) Confirmability*

Objectivity of a study relates to the confirmability of a qualitative research study. Shenton (2004) offers the suggestion that confirmability is assured when the researcher takes precautionary measures to ensure that his/her preferences or characteristics do not over-shadow the experiences of participants. The researcher's predispositions need to be made clear to ensure confirmability (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This emphasises the neutrality of the data to allow interpretations to be replicable (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). A further guideline offered by Shenton (2004) is that a detailed research methodology enables the reader to understand the trail of data, which allows for confirmability.

The experience of the researcher as a consultant in the systems psychodynamic perspective provided a measure of objectivity in this study. The guidance from her supervisor, an experienced systems psychodynamic consultant and academic, also contributed to the confirmability of the study.

#### *e) Authenticity*

According to Tobin and Begley (2004, in Madurai, 2017), authenticity is reflected when all participants are given an equal voice in terms of different realities taken into account, which results in them feeling empowered. The nature of the present research and the methodological structure employed set the platform for various aspects of the singleton to be explored, including different realities being shared. This also involved each participant being enabled in the post-GRE interview to discern and extract insights that were meaningful and enriching to him/her, and could be re-integrated as the singleton emerged from the collective experience of the GRE. The post-GRE interview further enhanced authenticity because the psychosocial ontology of the FANI avoids simplifying explanations and reductive analysis.

#### *f) Orientation*

Orientation refers to the researcher's involvement in the participants' stories (Kafle, 2011). Van Manen (1977) defines orientation as being akin to worldview, or the individual's way of looking at things. He goes on to explain that one's orientation has a definite epistemology, axiology and ontology; in other words, an individual's

orientation is configured of what he/she believes is true, valuable and real, and thus his/her orientation has the effect of encapsulating the one who has adopted it.

The researcher was involved as observer-consultant in the GRE, which was the platform and common event for all participants. Furthermore, the researcher had completed her Masters' dissertation in the systems psychodynamic perspective and undergone multiple GREs herself. In addition, she worked as a leadership consultant for twenty years, becoming comfortably aware of how lived realities are impacted by the associations that are unconsciously made and catalysed with the anxieties of change in the workplace.

*g) Strength*

Strength refers to the convincing capacity of the data to reflect the meanings intended by the participants (Kafle, 2011). The full transcripts have been maintained in this study to serve the integrity of the process. The findings of all data collection phases are reported separately to the interpretations that are made. This further improves the understanding of the interpretations made by the participants during the research, and by the researcher in formulating the research hypothesis.

*h) Richness*

Richness denotes the aesthetic quality of the text that conveys the meaning perceived by participants (Kafle, 2011). The pre-GRE interview, post-GRE focus group and post-GRE interviews each yielded transcripts together with researcher notes. The average length of time for each post-GRE interview was 60 to 90 minutes, which yielded an average of 20 transcribed pages per individual interview. This provided a richness of data of the participants' experiences together with their interpretations and meaning-making.

*i) Depth*

Depth refers to the text delving deeply into the participants' intentions (Kafle, 2011). The researcher's presence in each session was intuitive and singularly focused on the participants. The tone and pace of the post-GRE interviews were set by the participants, and the researcher probed using various techniques that responded to the participants' discussions.

#### 4.3.7.2 *Ethical considerations*

Hollway and Jefferson (2013, p.77) state that ethical considerations aim to safeguard the interests of the participants of the research, which include both their rights and welfare. Quoting from the British Psychological Society (BPS), they note that aspects to be included in ethical considerations include integrity, impartiality, reporting findings truthfully, and a responsibility to protect the interests of those involved in the research as well as those affected by the work. Hollway and Jefferson (2013) highlight specific aspects that have ethical implications, including the issue of power (gauged by way of structural disparities), and differentiated statuses of the researcher and participants.

In this study, ethics approval was gained from UNISA, and informed consent was obtained prior to the study commencing, as per Annexure D (Groenewald, 2004). An explanation of the research aims and process were thus provided to participants (Mouton, 2001). Kilburg (2004) furthermore emphasises the importance of starting such a process by seeking permission. In this study, beyond informed consent and voluntary participation, the researcher also sought permission before FANI by restating the aims of the study and the process aims. She also informed each of the participants of the underpinning systems psychodynamic references, such as transference, projections and introjections aimed at determining patterns of the unconscious.

Hollway and Jefferson (2013) point out that in terms of the post-GRE interviews, it was necessary to frame the research and its aims in a broad manner so as not to prejudice participants' responses, thereby serving the interests of the research, but not necessarily the participants. This is so because it would not be possible to inform participants in a meaningful manner of their experiences of FANI. They also describe that the nature of FANI unlocks discussions, memories and associations which cannot be predicted and which may involve psychological distress (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Midgley, 2006). These authors highlight that although the criterion of avoiding harm is a central ethical principle, experiencing emotional upset may not be harmful, since with FANI, participants actively co-create the data produced. According to Hollway and Jefferson (2013, p.82), "the decision to

consent, then, cannot be reduced to a conscious, cognitive process but is a continuing emotional awareness that characterises every interaction". In other words, should interviewees not feel inclined to consent during the interview, they will limit what they disclose of themselves.

In this study, informed consent was further facilitated by the opportunity of participants withdrawing from the data collection process at various intervals, such as after the pre-GRE interview; during the GRE itself (since the researcher was a consultant-in-training within the GRE); or during the post-GRE focus group or interviews. Since none of the participants exercised this option, this is an indication that the study's data collection process was deemed to be of value, and was not overwhelmingly uncomfortable.

A further aspect of ethics is confidentiality. In this study, the anonymity and privacy of participants were safeguarded by omitting their names and organisations from the thesis. Random names were assigned to the participants. The person assigned to transcribing the audio recording was based in a different city to the participants and had no prior interaction with them or the university. However, Groenewald (2004) suggests that respecting the privacy of participants is fundamentally invaded by the nature of research, as questions may enter into personal matters that the participants would typically not disclose in a public forum, and which may trigger feelings of anxiety. Additionally, the sharing of data may pose a confidentiality issue. Midgley (2006) differentiates between psychoanalysis, which has the individual as object, and the psychosocial, which has a wider social and research objective. While it promotes accountability to feed findings back into the community from which it was yielded, should analysis of individuals be recognisable, this would break the pledge of confidentiality.

The findings in this study are reported by case, and "rendering case material anonymous is, as we know, a fundamental guiding ethical principle" (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, p.89). Since the participants were also members of the Doctoral programme and its GRE at the South African university under study, they were not completely anonymous, and the supervisor of this study may well be familiar with them upon reviewing the thesis. To overcome this, Hollway and Jefferson (2013)

explain that it is not the material that is the focus of ethical consideration, but rather what is done with it by the researcher (that is, psychosocial interpretation). The researcher used systems psychodynamic terms (such as transference, role analysis and so forth) to make sense of the narrative provided by the participants in a co-crafting space, with the overriding intention being to facilitate learning and insights for the singleton post a GRE, and prior to reintegration into his/her routine of life.

As important as the conduct of the researcher was to the participants, what is moreover crucial is the manner by which the data was analysed and reported on (Groenewald, 2004; Huysamen, 2001). Falsification of data “subverts the truth” and is a serious infringement (Huysamen, 2001). The researcher has taken care to ensure that all analysis and findings reported on are substantiated in the transcripts and notes from the data collection process.

#### **4.3.8 Reporting**

The research findings will be presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Chapter 5 presents the findings reported by individual cases for each of the data collection stages (that is, the pre-GRE interview, post-GRE focus group, and post-GRE interview). This chapter begins by reporting on the findings of the pre-GRE interview for each participant, with the key aspects or questions that emerged for the researcher being set forth. Thereafter, the post-GRE focus group session findings are reported as per each individual case, and common themes or tendencies are highlighted. Finally, the post-GRE interview findings are reported, including the individual insights that emerged, the researcher’s experiences, and a summary of the narrative of each singleton. The reporting sequence was chosen to emphasis the process undertaken in the study, and thereby take the reader on a journey similar to that through which the participants underwent. The process sequence is therefore reflected in the reporting in Chapter 5. This chapter provides the summary and highlights of each participant’s reflections and verbatim narratives, which supports Kafle (2011, p.196) who said “hermeneutic phenomenology demands for a typical rhetoric that best elicit the true intention of the research participants”. Chapter 5 serves as a departure point for understanding Chapter 6, which reports the researcher’s interpretations of the findings.

Rowley (2002) highlights that with exploratory case studies, a descriptive framework for arranging the case study is useful. Furthermore, she highlights the difficulty with determining what parts of the rich case study data to include, suggesting that this be guided by the intended audience. Rowley (2002) explains that a thesis assessor may be more concerned with the methodology and the contribution of knowledge, while practitioners and the public may be more intrigued by the narrative itself. In order to appeal to a broader audience with this study, the descriptive narrative is presented in Chapter 5 as foundational to understanding the interpretations and the research hypothesis presented in Chapters 6 and 7, respectively.

In Chapter 6, the systems psychodynamic themes are interpreted from the findings, and the processes (mechanisms) that participants experienced as helpful to their discerning of insights are set forth. An alignment with the ORA and the systems psychodynamic constructs will aide interpretation. The systems psychodynamic themes are discussed to formulate a working hypothesis that relates to meaning-making. The interpretations and working hypotheses are synthesised to formulate the research hypothesis.

The conclusions are set forth in Chapter 7, with recommendations that have emerged from the study presented therein. The meaning-making model (approach) that emerged from the interpretations in Chapter 6 is presented in Chapter 7.

#### **4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the research design and methodology for the present study. The research approach and strategy were outlined and the research method was then described with specific reference to the research setting, sampling, data collection and data analysis. Finally, the chapter concluded with the strategies employed to ensure data quality, ethical considerations and reporting structure of the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### REPORTING OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

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#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study's research findings are presented in this chapter. A detailed discussion for each participant (known as the cases under study) will be presented for every stage of the data collection (namely, pre-GRE interviews, post-GRE focus group and post-GRE interviews). Each case will be discussed for every stage of data collection, with a specific focus on his/her personal insights gained through exposure to the GRE. The path that each individual followed to achieve his/her respective insights informs the structure of this chapter and allows the reader to follow the narratives upon which interpretations will be based, thus providing the background for the working hypothesis formulated in Chapter 6. The findings are presented in the sequence of each data collection step, both pre- and post-GRE, to enable the reader to follow the researcher's journey as it took place in reality. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary for each participant.

#### 5.2 DISCUSSION OF PRE-GRE INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The following section outlines the nature of the responses from each of the original five participants who were interviewed prior to the GRE taking place. The reporting of these interviews are presented in alphabetical sequence, first focusing on the female participants, followed by the male participants, to align with the demographic distribution of the sample in Table 4.2.

##### 5.2.1 Pre-GRE interview findings: Christine

Christine engaged openly with the interviewer and the conversation felt comfortable rather than contrived. Christine indicated that she wanted to stay open to the learning that the GRE would offer, and would not read too many expectations into it. She noted a personal desire to learn more about how she functions in, and is



perceived in, a group. When asked about her personal and professional roles, Christine offered affirming descriptors that she indicated as being congruent with feedback she had received from others. She moreover experienced congruence between the existential and phenomenological roles in her mind, which reflected as a sense of contentment in her interview.

Christine stated that she felt that life is to be lived, rather than controlled. Christine shared that her life had knocked her into relinquishing control, which had proven to be an enriching and enlightening process for her. She shared that she had experienced countless rejections in her professional context, and in desperation retreated to a mundane chore of painting her roof. It was at this point that, while sitting on the roof, an insight of acceptance and submission emerged for her. At the time of the interview, Christine felt that all parts of her life were unified, and used words such as “I am good, I am light, I am the best I can be”. Despite her assertion that she is connected, she noted that she still seeks connection to a group, which raised the question for the researcher regarding Christine’s need for acceptance and fitting in.

### **5.2.2 Pre-GRE interview findings: Gretha**

Gretha expressed a desire to deepen her learning of group processes and of herself through the GRE. She stated that this would be her third exposure to such an event. Gretha was succinct in her descriptions of how she saw herself, and how she believes that others see her. She appeared to have an integrative perspective of her roles, as well as how she sees herself and how she believes others see her. This may be the result of multiple experiences with GREs. The researcher’s sense of Gretha was that she seems committed to her own view, even though she says that others believe her to be curious with new perspectives. It was apparent through the interview that she does not see the stubbornness and fixated-ness in her perspectives. The researcher was left wondering whether Gretha would immerse herself with curiosity and emerge with new perspectives from the third exposure to a GRE.

### **5.2.3 Pre-GRE interview findings: Lisa**

Lisa expressed an expectation that after taking part in the GRE, she would be able to facilitate this approach competently. Lisa was self-critical, despite expressing positive views of how others see her in her roles. Her self-criticism was intertwined in the multiple, new roles she had stepped into. She noted that her new roles, including that of a student, had been “disastrous” thus far, but she hoped that this situation would be better six months after the interview. Lisa expressed a concern about the time pressures she experiences, specifically related to her new roles and the impact this has on her work and home lives, particularly since she is the bread winner. The researcher was left wondering whether this unexpressed pressure was creating unrealistic expectations for her (particularly, whether six months was a realistic timeframe for improvement) or whether the period she set was to contain her anxiety. Self-criticism and self-persecution appeared to be an apparent theme for Lisa. Her incongruence in role analysis may result in unconscious anxiety.

### **5.2.4 Pre-GRE interview findings: Magda**

Magda expected the GRE to be a team-building event and was looking forward not only to the GRE process itself, but also to finishing it. Her view of herself was positive and affirming in terms of the roles that she elected to highlight. Similarly, how she thought others experienced her was equally affirming. The one relationship that stood at odds with this was her mother, whom she perceived as being critical of her (for instance, perceiving her as complex and moody). Her perception of this parental critique was opposite to the feedback she received from her fiancé. A contradiction in this understanding is her perception that her mother never judges or fights with her. In her interview, the word ‘judge’ or ‘judgement’ arose multiple times. The researcher was left wondering what this judgement entailed and from whom it primarily arose.

### **5.2.5 Pre-GRE interview findings: Gavin**

Gavin shared that he hoped that the GRE would provide him with a toolset to engage more constructively with others, in a less threatening manner. He indicated that he worked to effect progress and movement, which he desired to apply in his workplace. In both his professional and personal roles, he made use of affirming descriptors, although he mentioned 'frustration' a number of times. However, when asked how others view him in these roles, the descriptors he used were less affirming, with words such as "pushy", "direct" and "not easily satisfied" being incorporated. He noted that at times, others experienced him as being impatient and frustrated. There was a distinct disconnect between his existential and phenomenological roles. This incongruence could result in unconscious anxiety that would likely manifest in the GRE. For Gavin, it appeared that the themes running through his interview included seeking harmony and contribution, while at the same time feeling stuck while desiring "progress and movement". This underpinned his stated frustrations, which stemmed from feeling unable to move. However, Gavin perceived himself as filling the role of a "barrier buster" (a term he used in the interview). The question that emerged for the researcher was what barrier/s he was not able to pass through.

### **5.2.6 Pre-GRE interview findings: Sam**

Sam requested to participate in the study at the time of the focus group, and therefore was not part of the pre-GRE interviews.

### **5.2.7 Researcher's emerging thoughts from the pre-GRE interviews**

The pre-GRE interview served to establish a measure of rapport between the participants and the researcher, and served the purpose of setting an introductory tone for the study. The role analysis applied to the interviews was not explicit from the questions, but rather lent itself to an exploration of normative, existential and phenomenological roles. Overall, there was some degree of congruence for some of the participants (notably, Christine), but largely the researcher discovered a degree of incongruence between the existential and phenomenological roles of the

participants. The normative roles were self-elected, and were highlighted based on the individuals' own determinations of their importance.

### **5.3 DISCUSSION OF POST-GRE FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS**

The post-GRE focus group obtained the perspectives from participants after the event had taken place, and acted as a conduit for transition from the GRE into the mode of individual reflection. The reflections offered during this focus group are discussed to follow, and arranged as per the alphabetical sequence of the participants presented in Chapter 4. It thus follows the same sequence as in Section 5.2 of the present chapter. Within the discussion, the researcher will make reference to participants' comments, to indicate when ideas emerged without prompting. The researcher considers this sequence of relevance to understand the gestalt of the group that formed post-GRE, since this may also have influenced the nature of the insight that unfolded for each participant.

#### **5.3.1 Post-GRE focus group findings: Christine**

Christine initiated the sharing in the focus group by saying that she experienced herself as speaking too much. This was sparked by her sense that others thought she spoke too much (her phenomenological role experience), which made her feel pressured into silence. Her learning insight was that when there is any change, she would tend to "sit aside" and feel isolated. Furthermore, she shared her irritation with structure, and that she felt anxiety when assigned a defined normative role. She highlighted that in normal circumstances, this would not be experienced. Christine stated that she is at her best "without the normative".

As she spoke, she came to realise that her 'triad' of normative roles, which typically informs the existential and phenomenological roles, was inverted. It was her existential role that informs or is informed by the phenomenological role, which then informs how she takes up the normative role. Her key insight gained in the focus group sharing was that her 'triangle' was inverted. She drew the normative at the bottom, stating that the phenomenological role (when she feels the projections) moves her to an existential role, followed by her attempting to get a birds' eye view

before entering the system again. This is significant for Christine, because she shared in the pre-GRE interview a defining moment in her newly embraced mode of existence, when she sat on her roof and was brought to personal discovery. It may be that Christine is continuing to seek this 'position' before engaging with the 'here-and-now'. The researcher noted that her breakthrough came to her while sitting on her roof after multiple rejections, and it is therefore possible that Christine sees projection as rejection.

### **5.3.2 Post-GRE focus group findings: Gretha**

Gretha stated her normative roles as being a student, learner, participant and authoriser. She experienced herself as being the one who comes in when something changes, also noting that she made the last comments in two of the lekgotlas, thus commenting, "I say the last word". For this reason, her existential roles were integrator, reflector and contextualiser, experiencing herself as "pulling through the threads... I see trends".

During the post-GRE focus group, participants shared feedback with one another. Christine fed back to Gretha that she seems distant and aloof, which is in stark contrast to Gretha's existential role definition of integrator. The participants continued a discussion along this line, with Sam noting that Christine takes on a consultant role, while Gretha said that she crosses "a lot of boundaries". This view of herself seems incongruent with the feedback she received from focus group members, yet she continues to hold her own views strongly.

In reflecting on her phenomenological role, Gretha stated that the boundary theme is constant boundary crossing: "Am I in or am I out?". The researcher's impression of this comment was that Gretha seems to hang in 'inter-space'<sup>1</sup>. Gretha noted that, "I tend to be an edge person / a boundary person – sometimes this backfires". Gavin offered feedback at this point, and said "I can see when you zone out. You go into a trance, like a heroin addict 'zooted out'". To this comment, Gretha stated, "I make

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<sup>1</sup> An Islamic term called 'Barzakh' is pertinent here. It means a hindrance or separation, something between two things that does not allow the two things to meet. Al-Barzakh refers to a period between someone's death and their resurrection (see Al-Islam, 2019).

links and associations and it takes me away”. To the researcher, this was an inadvertent admission that reveals a paradox in Gretha’s functioning: when she makes links, she separates herself from the others. Christine offered further feedback, stating that Gretha interrupts herself and that she is “in and out even when you speak”. To this, Gretha responded, “I have five thoughts at once”.

This prompted the question to Gretha by one of the participants, “What are your boundaries?” Gretha responded with “I don’t feel bounded by system/organisation, I feel like a wormhole”<sup>2</sup>. When Christine asked the question, “Do you like it in out-bounded space?”, she responded, “I get my ideas out there, something happens when I get out of my own clutter”.

Gretha’s written reflection from the Role Analysis template that was distributed prior to the focus group (which was written before unsolicited feedback was offered in the focus group) stated that she has to “step out of the fear of not knowing” and “understand/find/distil/define the value of (her) contribution”. There thus seems to be an incongruence in Gretha’s experience of herself and the manner by which she is experienced by others. Christine shared in the focus group that this has an effect on others, noting that “it’s terrifying to the listener – I can’t keep up. I feel stupid”. Hearing this caused Gretha to trivialise the very thing she was claiming is important, saying that she “talk(s) the biggest load of rubbish”. To appease an awkward moment, Christine stated that Gretha “adds value by bringing the unknown in”. Gretha immediately picked up the projection of ‘not knowing’ and disclosed the fear she has of “not knowing”. Christine, in closing to the group, noted that Gretha does not “see the bouncing ball of value she leaves us with”.

### **5.3.3 Post-GRE focus group findings: Lisa**

Lisa stated her normative roles as being a student, observer and learner, and took up these roles by quietly searching for meaning. She shared that being part of the well-being group during the Doctoral Programme GRE, as opposed to the

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<sup>2</sup> A wormhole is defined as a passage that creates shortcuts for long journeys across the universe and connects two different points (Redd, 2017).

leadership group that she would normally be pulled towards, was purposeful to her. Lisa made reference to her actual behaviour compared to what she kept stating as her 'normal' behaviour, stating that "normally I am more outspoken" or "normally I go first". This revealed a type of benchmark that she may be setting and imposing on herself, namely high expectations that create pressure for her, resembling the inferences in her pre-GRE interview. Lisa stated that she experienced herself in her 'well-being' role as "at peace, content", not having to contest for leadership roles since she "took a back seat in terms of leadership". Yet, the researcher was left questioning how comfortable it was for Lisa to take a back seat in this manner.

Gavin, who was critical of white females in the GRE, gave feedback to Lisa stating, "I find you in your own authority", which was a significantly affirming statement. Christine stated that Lisa served as an emotional container for the group, a role that she felt was fulfilled well by her. This raised the question for the researcher of whether Lisa sees this emotional container role as being defined as a leadership-orientated role, since this would connect with her pre-GRE interview reference of being the "bread-winner". The researcher noted a theme from this exchange, namely that one is responsible *to* others rather than *for* others, which could be explored in the post-GRE interviews to follow.

In response Christine's feedback, Lisa shared her surprise that the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (a form of personality measure) revealed her as a thinker rather than a feeling person, and shared that her intuition allowed her to "speak from a void in (her) head". Christine further commented to Lisa that the "rawness of emotions is blocking your emotions". The phenomenological role was that she was perceived as authentic, to which Gretha responded that she too experienced herself as real and congruent. Gavin supported the statement saying "I never think you talking crap – no bullshit", and Christine said that she "boldly go(es) where others fear to go". Magda, who had been quiet up to this point, agreed.

Lisa revealed her phenomenological role as being a 'slow starter' who is ignorant, authentic and able to grasp group dynamics on a deeper level. In her Role Analysis template, Lisa left the personal insights section blank.

#### **5.3.4 Post-GRE focus group findings: Magda**

Magda stated her normative roles as being an analyst, rational and cognitive, to which Gretha commented that this was similar to a “military commander” owing to the fact that Magda has a military background. Magda’s existential role was expressed as experimenting with herself and exploring her own anxieties, as well as becoming aware of her own defence mechanisms while also holding them back.

It appeared that Magda’s existential role was separated from the group dynamic, as if she withdrew into herself. Lisa stated that Magda seemed to have a “valence for change and thus shows a need for stability”. Magda admitted that she splits-off from groups, noting that she isolates herself “from those who have lots of emotional stuff”, working hard to keep “emotions at bay”. To this, Christine replied that, “it takes energy to keep emotions at bay, less to just have it”. In this regard, Gavin stated that when Magda shared emotions, it represented a turning point in the group. The researcher found it interesting that Magda worked so hard to hold emotions at bay, since this may be directed at keeping herself stuck and not reaching a turning point, as if to self-sabotage her progress. This thought was prompted by Magda, who demonstrated a valence for movement and progress in her life.

Magda stated that she projected the issue of authority into the system, and admitted to having issues with authority. She moreover admitted to being self-reprimanding, stating that, “I was angry with my unconscious (and) argued with it”. Magda also left her personal insights blank in her submitted Role Analysis template.

#### **5.3.5 Post-GRE focus group findings: Gavin**

Gavin was the second participant to volunteer his reflections, saying that initially he adopted the observer role (normative role) but then “to move things along” became a change agent (which he called a ‘Sherpa’, implying that he is a ‘mover’). This role correlated to Gavin’s pre-GRE interview, in which he also referred to his role as a change agent when he sought to create movement and progress. The researcher wondered whether his definition of progress was, in fact, progress, since Gavin appeared to value movement in itself rather than considering the value of ‘holding



still' as a means to effecting progress. That said, in adopting the 'Sherpa' role, he experienced himself as becoming a more present individual. Gavin related to the present-ness and now-ness of the GRE.

What further emerged for Gavin was realising that being still "creates agitation – so he becomes the agitator". In the phenomenological role, he experienced that some members found his attitude to be arrogant and snotty, while others found it to be enjoyable. Taking on the normative roles of court jester, joker and provocateur, he stated that he felt others saw this as dismissive, disrespectful and rebellious. He experienced himself in these roles as playful, but remembered that he is a lot more serious at home than at work and university. Gavin seeks play, perceiving playfulness as innocence that offers the promise of freedom and liberation. He perceives "work as play", and believes that he gets younger as he gets older. This seems to be indicative of Gavin's continued battle with feeling stuck and frustrated, as referred to in his pre-GRE interview.

Seeking to integrate the split-off part into the whole, Gavin shared that his father hated the job that he occupied, and as such, he resolved that he would not follow suit in this regard. It became evident that Gavin seeks whole-ness to be completed as if some part of himself is incomplete, which may explain the drive for movement and 'progress'. The researcher considers whether this relates to the latent and sometimes overt aggression that Gavin demonstrated in the GRE towards white females. An intolerance and impatience that he displayed with white females was not present with others in the GRE. The researcher wondered whether this could relate to what white females represented to Gavin, namely a mother figure or a figure of completeness and safety. Alternatively, Gavin might be re-living his father's sadness 'of doing what he hated to do' and as he shared, he would aim to prevent this at all costs. It was evident from Gavin's Role Analysis template that he trivialised work-as-play and had a valence to movement.

### 5.3.6 Post-GRE focus group findings: Sam

Sam denoted his initial normative roles as a participant and learner. He experienced himself in the existential role as being the provocateur. This is notable, since he assumed the role that Gavin stated as his normative role and which he may have projected. Sam stated that the provocateur role was projected onto him as a phenomenological role, and he wondered whether it was projected by Gavin, the adversary (white male) in the room. This shows Sam's inclination not to differentiate between the existential role and the phenomenological role, since his experience was subsumed by what he thinks others may be thinking of him.

The researcher wondered whether Sam displaces his own experience in favour of others' experiences. This correlates to Sam later stating that he wondered, "don't claim my space?". The normative roles that Sam assumed in the group eclipsed his own expectations. He noted that, "I was playing a bigger role and holding a bigger space than I experience myself as taking". Sam therefore saw himself as a catalyst, stating that, "I stopped when I was named and felt removed".

This personal sharing and emergence of deep insight in the form of introspective questions evoked immediate feedback from Christine and Gretha, as if they were responding to a very authentic moment that Sam was having in disclosing that he is not claiming his space. They both asserted to him that his provocation was done in a safe manner and was constructive yet playful. The latter reference included considerations of projections of Gavin. It was apparent that the participants tried to reassure him, saying that he simplifies complexity, and that his provocation is thoughtful and profound. The researcher wonders whether this considerate nature is the reason why Sam was chosen by Gavin onto whom to project.

In response to the unsolicited feedback in the focus group, Sam highlighted that others project a need to hear feedback onto him, "like I need to be given something and its being given to me". Christine tried to soften this by saying that Sam always says something interesting, and that there is a vulnerability about him, which is attractive "like a cuddly bear". This commentary might have served the purpose of

seducing him into accepting the projections. Sam responded with, “I am not an out-there giving person”.

Sam’ personal insight in his Role Analysis template noted that, “I have valence for shadow and provocation. I pull a bigger space than I experience as having. Leadership is a concept that carries unknown dynamic issues for me, some of which we repressed”.

### 5.3.7 Emerging themes from the post-GRE focus group

The atmosphere in the focus group appeared relaxed, with all the participants engaging comfortably with each other – almost as if the tension experienced in GRE was behind them – that they could let their guard down. To some degree letting the guard implied feeling safe and protected – as if in this group they were looking after each other. What that says about the participants and their need for safety and protection may become clear from the FANI in section 5.4 below. Table 5.1 serves to summarise the reflections of the participants, before the individual post-GRE interviews are discussed. This table strives to apply Kets de Vries and Miller’s (1987) guidelines for ‘reading the text’ – that of thematic unity (shaping the text into a cohesive unit) and pattern matching (finding parallels), and is thus part of the process of interpretation.

Table 5.1: Summary of findings from pre-GRE interviews and post-GRE focus group

Participant	Pre-GRE Interview	Post-GRE Focus Group
<b>Christine</b>	Seeks connection to group; wants to fit in; deep (unspoken) need for acceptance; relinquishing control was enriching and enlightening as per her experience on the roof.	Feels she is best without the normative and rules; feels projected onto, which affects her existential role; tries to get bird’s eye view, seeking to repeat ‘rooftop’ insight in other encounters.
<b>Gretha</b>	Believes she has an integrated perspective of roles (self and others); does not see her stubbornness or fixated-ness in	Hanging in an inter-space ( <i>‘barzakh’</i> ); claims to cross boundaries ( <i>‘wormhole’</i> ) as a bridge to connect two points; she separates

	her own perspective; claims to be curious about new perspectives; refers often to the term 'perspective'.	in finding links; has self-confessed fear of not knowing; has a need to define the value of her contribution.
<b>Lisa</b>	Unexpressed pressure of being the 'bread-winner'; new roles creating a sense of time crunch; noted that something must give; suggested that things would be better in six months, as if time frame would contain her anxiety.	Sets high standards and expectations for herself; serves as emotional container because takes responsibility for others; may see this as role of leadership; unclear whether she will embrace that she is responsible to others but not for them.
<b>Magda</b>	Perceives parental critique which is opposed to feedback from fiancé; often refers to the term 'judgement', such as stating that her mother does not judge her, yet she feels judged; could be her own greatest critic/judge.	Works hard to keep emotions at bay; holds herself back in doing so; emotions create a turning point for her, thus holding them back keeps her stuck; has issues with authority; is self-reprimanding; is waiting for or needing authorisation but unclear from whom.
<b>Gavin</b>	Seeking harmony and contribution; feeling stuck and frustrated; wants progress and movement; is not aware of what barrier he is not getting past.	Being still creates agitation, so he becomes an agitator; confuses progress with movement; takes on jester/ joker/provocateur roles; views play as work and work as play; actively seeks out play and lets go of the serious to bring freedom and liberation; seeks whole-ness and completion; unsure of what he needs to be liberated from.
<b>Sam</b>	No pre-GRE interview was conducted.	Makes announcements of what he is not and in doing so, denies what he is or does not know who he is; says

		he does not take position or reveal himself; has valence for shadow and provocation; has self-confessed issues with leadership.
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## 5.4 DISCUSSION OF POST-GRE INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The following section provides a detailed account of the narrative that unfolded in the post-GRE interviews (using the FANI technique), set forth for each case. The insights that emerged during the post-GRE interviews for the participants, together with the researcher’s process experience and the integration that may be applicable to the singleton, follows the detailed discussion of FANI.

These cases will again be presented according to alphabetical sequence as per the order of participants in Table 4.2. Individual cases are reported in detail to follow, in order to facilitate an understanding of themes that will be presented in Chapter 6.

### 5.4.1 Discussion of post-GRE interview: Christine

This section will begin by discussing the emerging insights from Christine’s post-GRE interview, the researcher’s process experience, and finally, Christine’s integration as singleton.

#### 5.4.1.1 *Emerging insights from Christine’s post-GRE interview*

The researcher initiated the conversation with a summary of the study, by stating that:

*I think the strange hypothesis is that we have one story either as an individual or as humanity and we are the central player, we just elect different actors to enact the same role and then we replay the story over and over. Until we see, we are tired of this movie and we change the movie all together. But unless we have insight that we are replaying the movie over and over we just rewind, get new actors and press play again.*

Christine responded by noting that she profoundly connected to this understanding. She stated that, “I do understand and I do agree 100%. And it is almost as if there should be a catalyst that will force the system to do something different”. The researcher agreed, highlighting that “the catalyst is very often a traumatic event like a systems psychodynamic event”.

After providing context and a summary of the research study aims, the researcher spoke of how our story defines us. Christine began the conversation with reference to her grandmother, who use to say “die lewe is kak” (‘life is crappy’). This became the story of her life, since she grew up believing that life would be a struggle and would be difficult. As a self-fulfilling prophecy, this became truth to her. This continued until Christine experienced a series of traumatic events that altered her perspective and changed her ‘belief’ that life is a struggle; a belief that had long before been embedded in her. She then realised that life is no longer a struggle for her, saying that, “life is not kak for me at all”. The researcher affirmed this by stating that this was the movie that her grandmother got her to play. To this, Christine responded in the affirmative, stating how difficult this has been for her.

Christine then asked permission to take over the conversation and continued the narrative, detailing that she was born out of wedlock and felt responsible for her parents’ difficult marriage. This reinforced what her grandmother had said, namely that ‘life is hard’, and thus she said she had lived the same story with different characters along the way. Somewhere along the line, this changed for Christine. She made a decision that life was not supposed to be hard, but rather that it could be simple and positive. The researcher confirmed her understanding by rephrasing her words as, “you completely flipped the paradigm from life is tough and difficult – to life is simple”.

The researcher then asked, “What made you perpetuate the story of life is ‘kak’?” Christine felt that since she was the firstborn, it was expected of her to be responsible. In her words, “taking on that responsibility, I need to be responsible, I need to be in my place. I shouldn’t cause any waves, I must behave”. This was the origin of a deeply held belief for Christine, which informed her behaviour and conduct (‘I need to be in my place’) and thus created internal conflict since other

parts of her life did not necessarily fit the mould of convention. Christine's conventions needed to be understood and re-viewed.

The researcher echoed with some association to emotion, namely "to make others happy, be responsible, not make waves", to which Christine confirmed that she took on that responsibility role. The researcher reminded Christine of her experience in the system and what she had said during the GRE, namely that she was frustrated and irritated at that point. She asked whether the frustration and irritation came from recognising the expectation placed on her, or whether it was because people in the system were not taking responsibility, which could have indicated that Christine's irritation in the system was around people not taking their own responsibility. Christine noted that she had not recognised the transference that had taken place in the system, but had recognised the irritation rather than from where this was stemming. She was able to note, though, that this was "exactly the issue".

The researcher at this point decided to deepen this insight by re-naming it, noting that Christine has, "an impatience with victim mentality". Christine was empowered to respond, "Absolutely, I am learning much more than I thought". As if to pause for a moment with a sense of appreciation, she then continued: "I think it is absolutely clear. You are in control, this is your story. You have been born; it is the authority that has been given to you. That is my idea. The mere fact that you were born gives you authority to be here. If you weren't given the authority, you weren't born in this film".

The researcher amplified the importance of the notion of truth from Christine's statement, including how this links to the issue of taking responsibility. Christine expanded her thoughts on simplicity, noting how issues tend to cloud people. If they let go of these issues, this would result in them finding the "holy grail of simplicity. That is my truth". She revealed that she feels the loss of others not finding this simplicity, which holds them back. As she put it, "It is almost as if I have these feelers, look into your soul kind of, and I know that you are missing out in that. And that is almost the irritation... they need to stop thinking".

Christine then revealed that she found this truth in loss. She said there were losses that she is happy for, as they forced her out of the movie she was playing, including the normative roles she had been assigned. She declared that she does not need the structure, and that, “I don’t need somebody to tell me we are going to do so and so”. This may evidence Christine’s tendency to evoke flight (from structure and imposed definition) as a defence to unconscious anxiety about responsibility. Furthermore, it revealed why in the post-GRE focus group, she rejected the imposition of a normative role.

Christine’s narrative reads in places like a monologue. She had long expansive explanations of how she experiences life, and in one explanation, described her experience with life as:

*It feels like I am coming from somewhere, from a different planet, from a different way of life. I see the things around me completely differently; I see the life within this table, life within the existence of everything and how it is the same as me. Because this thing is alive, the table is alive. This comes from cotton which is alive. The tree outside has got a life of its own. I see it completely differently as if everything vibrates energy. And if we put in the filter of everything is difficult or there is a filter of anything, it should be researched or, I am anxious about it, or controlling it, I have this kind of behaviour whatever, it is as if you lose the energy that has been given to you by the universe.*

This further highlights her sense of ‘not fitting in’ and possibly shows connection to her unspoken need for acceptance, as uncovered in the pre-GRE interview. This need may be driving the unconscious responses in her group interactions.

Christine shared that her change in perspective came to her in an instant (as she put it, “it was a flash of light”). She said that it happened after experiencing multiple (77) job application ‘rejections’. This is when she altered the vantage point that she had been adopting, and got up on her rooftop while painting it over the course of four weeks. It occurred to her while on the roof that she, too, had to deal with what is given to her in the moment, rather than lament that which was not given to her or that which is perceived to be lost. What Christine had come to call ‘simplicity’ is an acceptance of what is. She connected this back to responsibility, saying that people



create situations, without realising that they are responsible for the difficulty. She explained, “It is my responsibility to say I am the one responsible for the difficulty. It is me who create and set up and formalise and formulate my existence. But if I don’t get in the way, life becomes a situation, not life”.

In other words, what she described comes down to ‘people creat(ing) dramas and call(ing) that life’, which is a subtle accusation. Christine noted that she struggles with feeling irritable about this. This accusation could be revealing of a self-criticism, one she laments having wasted much of her life on. She shared that people see her as grounded and calm, amidst struggle and difficulty, yet she feels irritable. This lack of congruence between her existential and phenomenological views may also be part of her reason for rejecting the normative role (structure).

The researcher offered her an tentative explanation of her irritation by reframing it as impatience. Adopting this idea, Christine stated that despite her ‘impatience’, she does not try to control the change but accepts what will happen. The researcher used this point in the narrative to offer a framework principle, namely a shift from outcome to process. The researcher made reference to her 77 job application rejections as a case in point, to allow Christine to reach a point of submission to the process and detachment from such outcomes. To this end, Christine provided an elated “absolutely”, as if this described her experience and was validating to her. Throughout the narrative, there were many such pauses and expressions of gratitude at being understood and accurately appraised.

Christine expressed her detachment from outcomes that had ironically brought positive consequences for her. For example, she noted that, “the more I detach myself from that, my phone rings off the hook”. She shared that this had also enhanced her relationships with her partner and her parents, who highlighted that her “aliveness” attracts them more to her. This supports the notion that being in the moment and being grateful is a natural state of being.

She repeated the story of sitting on the roof, and added that as she sat surveying the beauty, she began singing ‘happy birthday to you’, repeatedly for the entire day. This chanting cleared her head, since she noted that, “I think I went into this zonked

out space". She reflected that her mind was cleared by the refrain for the first time in 37 years. Christine further shared that the voice that had been in her head up until that point had caused anxiety, since this voice had emphasised that she needed to perform and be somebody. Whenever that voice is present, it causes her to be sensitive to projections or imposed structures, and she therefore engages in flight from structures. In singing to herself about her rebirth ('happy birthday' song), she found joy; as she described it, "In-Joy-In myself". She was triggered in the GRE when the consultant said that silence is not a right, as it withholds from the group. To this, she was left with a sense of resonance.

The researcher asked Christine about her vision and purpose for her life, to which she replied that she is not attached to outcomes and thus tries only to stay in tune with what is presently happening. The researcher suggested that vision has outcome, but purpose is about meaning and intent. Thus, she asked Christine, "What is the meaning you make of your life? What is the intent that you hold and represent?" As an opening to her answer, Christine exclaimed that this was a good question. She went on to say that she relates her purpose as being to conclude the story of her life, in such a way that there is no need for replays. She moreover highlighted that:

*I have similar ideas of reincarnation. Did we come into this life in a different format, in a different movie, but we are playing the same role. My meaning is to play out the movie this time. Not to come back, in a sense, but to fully and thoroughly enjoy this journey and complete it for once. It always felt to me that I had past lives in a sense, that didn't complete. So I am coming back again. And I am struggling with the same crap again in a different country, a different skin and a different whatever. I just want to, am playing, not want to, I am playing it to the end where it says 'The End'. So just complete it and enjoy the journey to the end where it's not hanging. There is no hanging anymore, or I won't be coming back somewhere.*

The researcher provided another framework for anchoring this insight, namely to live 'aspris', an Afrikaans term that translates in English to living 'with purpose'. To this, Christine replied that she does act in accordance with purpose, and shared that

she aims to achieve purpose in her work, too, by living out meaning with clients. In so doing, she helps her clients to find their own meaning. To this end, the researcher challenged Christine by suggesting that the term 'find meaning' implies an outcome, whereas in reality, to 'make meaning' is a choice. With such choice, comes responsibility. This resonated with Christine, as if it gave her a manner of expressing and articulating her deeply held conviction. The framework for anchoring Christine's insights continued to be deepened by the researcher, who used other synonyms for the words 'meaning' and 'purpose', namely 'intent' or 'reason'.

The researcher asked Christine how she sustains the energy to keep choosing 'simplicity'. Christine responded by saying that being in the moment allows one to forget what came before or what will be coming after. She highlighted that she does not have a memory, so the researcher offered an anecdote to affirm this experience that Christine described. This anecdote was the story of an elderly woman with Alzheimer's, who was a sweet woman despite experiencing misery her entire life. This story released another of Christine's experiences, one in which she was called a beautiful child when she visited a relative in a frail-care facility. She described her lack of memory as there being no clutter in her mind. Christine spoke of sustaining the choice of simplicity as an internal flame, so the researcher told a Sufi<sup>3</sup> story to affirm this thought. Possibly because this story had religious/spiritual connotations, Christine responded by stating that, "I am God. I am not just created in his form, I am the form". For this reason, the researcher thought it useful to connect the previous themes to this new idea that Christine was offering. She noted that, "it is our will that is God in Action, that is His presence. God gave us free will. The part of Him that He split off and gave to us". Christine found this to be both affirming and clarifying. This further conversation also helped Christine find a connection between rebirth and cleansing, made possible after quietening her mind.

To summarise this discussion, it was apparent that Christine felt that her insights were reached before starting the four-day GRE. However, she discovered that her heightened irritation was revealing of anxiety resident in her unconscious during the

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<sup>3</sup> Sufi is a religious seeker. Muslims practice this in order to seek "the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God" (Schimmel, 2019).

post-GRE focus group and interview. She was so enamoured with her own story that she did not see emergent nuances occurring, including splitting, regret that turned into projections, and issues with authority and imposition of rules. The contention was that a traumatic event or situation creates a watershed and is therefore a blessing.

Christine expressed irritation with individuals who chose not to take responsibility for their actions or who behaved like victims. This was re-framed as impatience, which resonated with her. She recognised the sense of loss that she felt, as if the time she lost lamenting her past is what she regrets. The irritation she expressed may well have been unexpressed irritation with herself. She felt pressured to silence (phenomenological role), but this may be her own sense of withholding from the group, to which she wanted acceptance. Another aspect that emerged was that she possibly confused projection with rejection, in that a deeply held belief regarding not accepting who she *is* could be manifested by others projecting onto her what she is *not*. This may explain the deep resistance she holds to the normative structure being imposed, which she only feels comfortable with once it emerges from within her.

Christine has an impatience with people who do not take responsibility for their lives and who fail to see the flawed narrative of their story, since she feels that they lose their opportunity for growth. It is possible that this accusation could be revealing of a self-criticism, on which she laments having wasted much of her life. Making meaning is a co-creational ability and an individual choice, and responsibility lies in this choice. She shared that individuals see her as grounded and calm amidst struggle and difficulty, yet she feels irritable, and this lack of congruence between her existential and phenomenological roles may be part of her reason for rejecting the normative (structure).

#### *5.4.1.2 The researcher's process reflections and experience*

Christine's monologues about her life philosophy and time spent unpacking these during the post-GRE interview, with little time spent on connecting the GRE experiences to deepening insights, may indicate that she still has integration work

to do. She had not yet recognised her flight-flight response to the imposition of normative/structured roles and rules.

Christine sought affirmation of her story and discovery, and the researcher offered her tentative alternate ways of seeing her story to demonstrate understanding and/or appreciation of such, which when adopted by Christine added texture to her insights. Throughout the narrative, there were many pauses and expressions of gratitude at being understood and accurately appraised by the researcher.

Christine felt responsible for her parents' difficult marriage, feeling as though she had to fit in and behave rather than 'make waves'. Liberation from this imposed prison (incarceration) could be linked with her references to re-incarnation, since this is a reformatting of a similar word.

Frameworks, alternate words and storytelling were used to anchor insight, which were useful for Christine and helped her to reshape her thought of "I am God" to "my will is God in Action". Anecdotes were found to be useful to affirm her experiences. She added that "we think too much and remember too much. When we forget we become so....human".

There may have been an unconscious pairing with Christine and the researcher – Christine with her struggle to establish herself resonated with the researcher, as did Christine's 'aloneness' and her insight about life. All these elements may unconsciously have colluded to create a comfortable dynamic during the FANI.

#### *5.4.1.3 Christine's integration as singleton*

It may be important to Christine to understand the triggers to her defences, especially her flight from normative and structure. Her integration as singleton, stemming from immersion in the group, was to recognise that her frustration with members of the group or in the system who do not take responsibility for their lives, and who project this responsibility onto others, were dimensions of herself that she was not recognising. She was projecting into the system, and experiencing a fight-

flight response. She articulated her life's meaning as "no hanging", as if she had been suspended in a loop of replaying life's difficulties.

#### **5.4.2 Discussion of post-GRE interview: Gretha**

This section will elaborate on the emerging insights from Gretha's post-GRE interview, as well as the researcher's process experience, and Gretha's integration as singleton.

##### *5.4.2.1 Emerging insights from Gretha's post-GRE interview*

The narrative with Gretha began with her providing the context of 'the one who knows'. In this way, she assumed the role of researcher, which set the scene for an academic exchange and rendered her motivation for the conversation unclear to the researcher. The researcher questioned whether Gretha wanted to gain insight into herself, or to have an academic debate about GRE and Tavistock's approach to this methodology. The researcher attempted to provide context on the purpose of the post-GRE interview by noting that, "helping people explicitly make meaning from experiences, meaning which builds not breaks, may involve a process of patterning a series of experiences over time and organising and re-organising these with the benefit of a psychodynamic understanding to derive insights".

It was apparent that one of Gretha's mechanisms of defence against anxiety is intellectualisation by escaping into the intellectual schema, and the researcher understood that rapport would be established by allowing this to happen. She and Gretha spoke of chaos theory and the fractal, and then the researcher offered a hypothesis (unrelated to the conversation or research study) that the fractal in the human condition is choice.

After some back and forth in conversation, the researcher brought the discussion back on point by stating that in the interview, "we are going to try to understand how the roles played off but the key role with you was the... 'I'm an edge person. I'm the boundary person, I work on the fringe of...'" . Gretha asked to speak more on the theory and proceeded to criticise the Tavistock methodology relating to GRE as re-

traumatising without being used for healing. She then expressed her frustration that she deemed this a male-theory in need of female energy. She spoke of how projection is entrenched through the GRE method, as opposed to being integrated. She noted that the methodology “creates all this stuff and then it leaves it to come crashing down and splinter”. The researcher used this opportunity to contextualise the aim of the present study once again, in terms of potentially bridging the gap that might exist for post-GRE reflection. Gretha then disclosed that she and Christine did a daily debrief to avoid falling apart because of the Doctoral programme’s GRE experiences.

The researcher re-stated the opening question relating to exploring Gretha’s boundary key role (“I’m an edge person” as noted in the post-GRE focus group). She desired to know when that role began, in terms of “kind of working on the boundary of the peripheral, the edge because you use and I love the fact that you use the word edge”. At this point, Gretha spoke for 15 minutes about people’s fear of death, thereby delaying her own debrief. This may provide insight with regard to Gretha’s own fears, but it would be premature to make this deduction.

Gretha concluded her monologue by stating that people need to know how to approach death, since “its ridiculous thing; we all terrified (validly so), but this will not stop it. We are not immortal”. Using this issue of death, the researcher attempted to bring Gretha back to the question by making a link between her statement about death and being an edge person, and then asking her where this originates.

Gretha still resisted, and asked the researcher, “Let me try to understand – this process is about taking a role that I played and link that to any other?” She continued to debate, trying to establish relevance and applicability to herself, even suggesting that taking up certain roles may be useful if done consciously, as if to suggest that she was fully in tune with, and aware of, her unconscious. To encourage this exploration, the researcher used synonyms for the boundary position of ‘edge’, linked to an edginess, and to adventure and danger, to entice engagement. Gretha responded with, “Exploring is a big thing for me; adventure on the way. I don't think I've ever separated the role out as much as you are doing here. That's helpful”. This

allowed for further probing, and the researcher asked the same original question again but differently.

Yet again, Gretha deflected from the question by escaping into rationalisation with an extended monologue about death, death advisors and so forth, stating that death is the only thing that gives an honest answer. In the midst of this long explanation to herself, she declared that the Tavistock Institute is stuck; that she questioned her value add; and that she battled to articulate or be understood, concluding with the question: "So what's wrong with me?"

Since the positive angling of the issue of boundary and edge had not engaged Gretha sufficiently, the researcher altered the approach and provoked her by stating the downside of being on the boundary. The researcher offered the tentative explanation of being on the edge is akin to being a spectator

This seemed to jerk Gretha into engagement and she rejected the notion, stating that she was 'in it' and fully present. The researcher asked again, "Have you always been this kind of an edge person?" and this time Gretha answered directly, stating that, "I think so. I mean it's not very different from many other people, like not fitting in with a group. I had friends at school but I was never part of a group. They were friends that I was with every day".

Asking if she was ever one of a crowd, Gretha said, "No never. I don't think anyone is. So I think I become, my group is a group of people, that never become part of a group. This is my group, if you like." She defended her response, as if to normalise this out of need. Gretha ended the long explanation of her response with a disclosure on the need for someone to translate for her in work assignments: "So I suppose these are translators for me otherwise I would be completely cut off from the world. I've tried a lot of my life to connect with these people and it's just not...it doesn't work". When the researcher stated that this is interesting, she immediately deflected, stating that it is not unusual, since everyone connects with people through others, before admitting that it had always been a struggle for her. As Gretha described it, "This lack of compatibility. I mean I do think different. I do put things together in different ways. I do come up with crazy ideas. I do know how to take



something strange and abstract and make it work". She struggles with routine matters, and needs what she called a bridge to "helping build the trust relationship".

The researcher then tackled her deflection, reminding her that when asked about the edge tendencies, she spoke at length about death, to which Gretha asked the researcher to repeat the question. This implies a difficulty in listening. The researcher rephrased the question, adding a dimension to edge by using the synonym 'periphery', and asked when else in Gretha's life had this edge tendency been apparent to her. Gretha responded by stating that people could never understand her. When asked who did understand her, she noted that she was able to talk to her father. She added that they could speak intellectually yet not too abstractly, whereas her mother was overly emotional and only understood a part of her.

When the researcher probed this issue further by asking about the connection she had with individuals who understand her 'edginess' and how she thinks, she referred to individuals who were participating in the study and the GRE, explaining that she had been connected with some of them over the past six to eight years. This explanation brought Gretha to a further disclosure, namely that she believed she meets individuals, find books and so forth all ahead of time.

This raised the issue of timing, including that she has become accustomed to waiting for others to catch up with her. Gretha highlighted that she "sometimes feel(s) like I am out of step", and this was the only glimmer of personal accountability that she acknowledged in the interview. This was an interesting perspective to adopt, so the researcher explored this further and re-ordered her statement as, "And that's an interesting observation you make about yourself. There is a lot I'll do while I'm waiting". To this, Gretha responded, "Other things either come into place. Other people need to merge. You know Leicester Institute isn't ready yet but they will be and then we will be ready for them" (said with a chuckle). Gretha's responses were excessively off-point. The researcher probed further by asking her what she meant,

and she replied amidst a long explanation that the Leicester Institute methodology is incomplete because of its male-orientation<sup>4</sup>.

The researcher established a feedback moment, amplifying aspects that had emerged from the narrative to create a new base for questioning, by reminding Gretha that she mentioned being 'ahead of time'. This suggested something of importance about Gretha's time orientation, but more so highlighted that she uses others as a gauge. This is owing to the fact that, "you're not ahead of time in terms of your own time because you're thinking the thought now...its like you restrict yourself by hooking your orientation onto A N Other...it's not before the time, you said it in your time....but it's ahead of someone else's time". Gretha was intrigued by this, and commented that, "It's like I'm criticising myself. So I wonder why I do that?" Leaving her to hold the question, the researcher moved back into the parental relationships that Gretha had spoken of and re-phrased it for her to hear again. To this, Gretha re-emphasised that both her parents understood her in different ways. The researcher challenged this by highlighting that this was "in totality, but not in the space you fly. You were on their radar but you were also flying at a different altitude", which Gretha agreed with.

The researcher asked Gretha if she was an only child, and this opened the narrative to a different tangent. Gretha explained that although she is the second born, the number of years between her and her sibling causes her to behave as an only child. She then shared that:

*I've always felt like the only child. So I think I'm more like an only child than a younger child. So as the only child the tendency or the energy is I'll do it better, I'll do it my way, I'll fix it up, I'll sort them out, which is a different energy to the younger child which is more care free adventurous. More creative because they got the lesser energy of the picking up the authority of the oldest sibling.*

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<sup>4</sup> The researcher notes that Gretha incorrectly used the *Leicester Institute* synonymously with the *Tavistock Institute*, and did not seem to know the difference between the two. In reality, Leicester was an event presented by the Tavistock Institute (Hills, 2018). The researcher has retained Gretha's incorrect references, so as not to alter her viewpoints within this chapter.

Gretha's indirect responses did line up with her previous statements. For example, her feeling of isolation links to her feeling of being an only child. Possibly, her 'wanting to do it better/my way/fix it' mode was displayed by Gretha wanting to explain the research to the researcher and take the lead up front. Moreover, the researcher connecting the word 'edgy' to being adventurous resonated with Gretha, but she seemed to have split off this aspect, thereby rejecting it.

The researcher asked her directly about her mother, to which Gretha proceeded to discuss her father before describing her mother. She shared that her mother was incapable of understanding Gretha's work, and would regularly suggest she find a job. In other moments, her mother would make a statement that gave Gretha a sense that she had a deep and accurate understanding of her daughter; for example, "one sentence of pure clarity and absolute resonance and that would not happen for the next eight months". The researcher re-ordered these words to echo Gretha, and spoke of the potency of the truth (that which needs little thinking), which when spoken can have the effect of making the other feel seen and understood. Gretha re-stated this as a resonant truth, to which the researcher reminded her that she had previously mentioned the deep healing possible from resonant truth.

This mention of healing linked back to Gretha's commentary on the Leicester Institute and male energy, and therefore the researcher prompted with, "So you were saying this Leicester Institute has male energy that's analytical and intellectual...it has no female energy because it's the female energy that heals". Gretha responded by explaining that the male energy is not wrong, but needs the other to complete it. The researcher, recognising the transference, reiterated, "It needs the other" (suggesting that the female is needed, in reference to the original female for Gretha being her mother). This began to suggest a pattern, namely Gretha's avoidance and deflection when speaking of her mother, and her critique of the methodology applied by the Leicester Institute that may have the same common theme in a lack of female energy for healing.

The researcher made the comment that there appears to be a connection between the mother's presence and the mother's articulation that heals, meaning that this is perhaps what made Gretha aware of the healing energy of the female. Gretha

reflected that, “I think my dad makes me aware. My mom makes me feel seen, something like that, because with my dad, he is the head energy and with my mom it’s this kind of power, middle chakra, centre. Maybe it’s one of the things, it’s the traumatised group is not seen. I don’t know if that’s right”. Unsure of where the mention of traumatised group came from, the researcher intuitively connected with Gretha’s extended talk of death and re-ordered her words as, “Traumatised group is not seen – the dead are also not seen”.

Later in the narrative, Gretha became aware of this connection. However, the discussion extended with some reflection on what she had described about her mother. The researcher highlighted the words she used as, “Your mother makes you feel seen. It’s two senses combined: A feeling and a sight”. Gretha seemed unable to respond directly to this, and angled in at the point where she first spoke of the Tavistock work needing female energy. In this regard, her statement about being out-of-step may be important, but nonetheless, she stated that, “that’s why they so angry I think”. To this, the researcher challenged her by saying, “What matters is ‘are WE angry when we sit there’, but then I recognise that my anger in session reveals my valence. I pick up on dynamics in session which reveal me to me. And there is nothing good bad or ugly about it – it is just what it is”. Gretha then said, “Sorry I missed that”, as if not wanting to hear this opposing view.

The researcher put effort into helping Gretha see the link to boundary and protector, implying terms such as ‘containing’ and ‘guarding’. This resonated for Gretha and allowed the researcher to return her to her mother’s role. The researcher connected this to Gretha’s formation of own identity that has allowed her to take up the role of standing at the boundary and protecting the centre, where the traumatised group is not seen. This amplifies the role of seeing the unseen to empower and give identity to them. To this, Gretha responded that this was the nature of her work: “So it’s not seeing the group as a traumatised group but seeing the truth about that traumatised group. And I think that’s what I do at work. You know my work role is I help distil what that is and then that trauma has context”. Mid-sentence, Gretha lost her train of thought and could not find her pathway to complete the sentence.

The researcher then questioned, "What does it mean to feel seen?". After much prompting, Gretha responded with one word: "Welcomed". She then reverted to the conversation of the dead, stating that, "the dead role is an unused role in our society", after which she made an important disclosure, namely that "her mother almost died twice". Her mother had been at, and came back from, death's door by way of a decision to stay with her family. Gretha described this as a soul decision. She believes that there was a part of her mother that intuitively recognised Gretha, in the sense that "part of her recognises that part of me". Gretha started explaining research she had done on pregnancies and twins, and the death of the one foetus in-utero, including the effects that this has on the surviving baby long after birth. She revealed that she had a sense that she was a twin, and that she had some womb memory, which had retained that loss-energy. The researcher, without verifying the details, suggested that this memory of loss in-utero might explain why Gretha is drawn to supporting and standing up for traumatised groups. Gretha did not commit to this, but wanted to understand the next point. The researcher rather connected back to the issue of time and waiting, to which Gretha said, "I think you have to wait for the system to be ready. You've got to wait for the system to authorise itself to authorise you".

When Gretha was asked about her own death, she replied that death means transformation and that along the way, individuals have many deaths. When asked what parts of her had died, she described in detail a number of aspects, including her impatience; her tendency to self-recrimination ("what's wrong with me"); and the issue she had flagged for herself in the post-GRE focus group, namely the fear of not knowing and of being found out that she does not know. She experienced this projection in the GRE. She then presented an extended monologue (mostly theoretical and academic) relating to traumatised groups before she revealed a critical experience:

*The death thing has been with me my whole life. My mom died when she was pregnant with me so her heart must have stopped. Well it did stop. She died for about 2 minutes where she was clinically dead. She was about six months pregnant. So it does feel very close because I must have recognise it as a foetus, you must recognise; must be some awareness that there's something else happening or approaching. So I*

*think that's always been there, it's a very close feeling. It hasn't been a, I mean I work with it a lot, I think it was a vague unconscious feeling and maybe that's one of the contributors to being alive and dead. You know if that's an edge.*

The researcher affirmed the importance of this disclosure, also connecting the issue of death (as Gretha put it, the absolute advisor) to spiritual growth. She then used her words to normalise the experience: “It’s literally facing your death before you die, and you have a matter-of-fact curiosity about it and it must come from the moment where you were within in the middle of death literally. You were literally in the dead.” Then offering her a tentative explanation for her current task - that of “understanding the value of death to life”. Gretha corrected the researcher, stating that, “It’s the little deaths along the way as well – what are we dead to and what do you need should die in order to live fully...my purpose is to full embrace life”. The researcher then offered Gretha an inversion of her statement, noting that, “Our dying actually enables our living...It’s in dying we find our life or we have this experience”. She expanded by stating that it was dualism; in the way that understanding hunger makes one appreciate food.

The researcher challenged Gretha by providing a tentative hypothesis that connected ‘doing things halfway’, ‘embracing life fully’ and the role of female energy. Gretha defended against this challenge before opening up to two questions, namely, “So you saying I mustn’t forget about the female energy?” and “So does my analytical side stop the female energy whatever form I may take, from actually integrating more effectively?” To these questions, the researcher paraphrased and reminded her, “Yes, because the female energy literally, in the story that you told, died twice...and the female energy is what gives power or empowers. Because you said it’s a power centre, its identity centre. So you actually empower not by way of the grand ideas, you empower by making people feel seen”. Gretha’s response was “the role I forgot to mention that I held so strongly was an intention of care and holding for the group”, and that this role is the female. She furthermore states part of what she offers is a way of bringing the female into a male space.

After some lengthy debate (philosophical and abstract), the researcher returned to the focus of Gretha, wherein she asked a question to uncover or understand her role or value add. She amplified one word, namely 'versing', to introduce the concept of finding truth in the opposite. In Gretha's case, her fascination with death may reveal her fascination with birthing, stating that her in-utero experience may have "catapulted you beyond being stuck by fear into re-birthing and to continual re-birthing – so it actually was a gift", and "the truth of your exploration with regards death is actually understanding birth". She responded that she was trying to understand new life and that she did not have a death wish, to which the researcher affirmed that this linked with her purpose to embrace her life fully. The researcher then asked her about the sense of rush she displayed. Gretha stated that this was more a sense of urgency for her.

The researcher went on to probe the issue of being on the border or edge, using a synonym tentatively to evoke further insight, namely 'periphery'. Gretha did not like the word, stating that, "Periphery is not a good word. Being on the edge is for me centre point, it's not on the outside. Being on the edge is right where it's happening". When she was encouraged to explore this further, she said that the word 'periphery' takes her out of the action, which she did not like. Providing a further hypothesis, the researcher linked back to the themes of isolation that she inferred earlier in the conversation. Gretha said that 'periphery' is not in the middle of a crowd. The researcher reminded her that she had previously stated that she was not a crowd person, but rather that she was not mainstream. She furthermore recounted Gretha's experience of feeling welcomed when she felt seen. To create further context, Gretha was reminded of her reaction to the word 'spectator', which was also a rejection of the idea. The researcher offered her an alternate word, namely 'witness', and the potential power the witness has, linking this to the witness of truth who testifies. Gretha responded that this was accurate.

Leaving Gretha with these lingering thoughts about her own engagement with the world (since she is an abstract thinker, one who reflects and has to find herself amidst much thinking), this was considered a fitting end to the conversation.

To summarise this interview, it was apparent that Gretha feels guilty, and tends to rescue others who experience projections of knowing. Gretha fears not knowing, and holds a fear of being found out for not knowing. She came to disclose the potency of healing female energy, including what it represents. It appears that she silently acknowledges the transferences, especially to the “Leicester Institute”. Amidst much monologue, Gretha shared glimpses of herself, including wanting to embrace life fully (not halfway), and not having a death wish but wanting to understand re-birthing. She made notes throughout the conversation, as if this was soothing and enabled her thinking. She also asked for a copy of the researcher’s notes.

Her in-utero experience, which she found difficult to disclose, has formed a pattern of response to life. Gretha has embraced the notion of her fascination with death being representative of her needing to understand birth, linking to her in-utero experience of living inside a mother who had died (for a short while) and the memory of a lost twin. It appeared from Gretha’s reflections that she was caught up between her *libido* (that is, her life instinct) and a powerful experience that intensified her *morbido* (that is, her death instinct). Gretha shared that she continued to work with people who were dying, counselling them through what she referred to as their transition. This is further evidence of her pull towards *morbido*, in terms of being lived through what others are going through. Gretha also embraced the role of witness without accepting the role of being a spectator or at the periphery. She admitted that she needed a bridge to connect with others, in the form of a translator.

#### 5.4.2.2 *The researcher’s process reflections and experience*

When the motivation of the participant is not to seek insight, the impact is less useful for the participant. Gretha’s monologues and on-a-tangent discourses, as well as the recurrence of themes that emerged, were exhausting for the researcher. In session, the repetition felt as if the conversation was not going anywhere. Gretha escaped into theory, intellectualisation and rationalising. Much of the post-GRE interview felt like it was dragged into an academic debate. It took much energy to bring Gretha back to the point, namely herself. It often felt as if Gretha was having a parallel conversation, since the degree to which she diverted from the relevant



discussion made it very difficult to find patterns. These patterns eventually took shape as the narrative unfolded.

Gretha's discomfort with revealing herself became evident, and it took much time to arrive at the central themes that caused Gretha anxiety and evoked her defence mechanisms. Gretha's defence mechanisms are primarily transference, projection and intellectualisation. She has split off the 'only child', 'who lost her mother' and 'needs healing', and has projected this into traumatised groups before transferring this to "Tavistock methodology and its founders". When asked about her mother, she responded by explaining her father. Male versus female energy was a constant debate for Gretha. The researcher notes that Gretha desires female energy in order to heal. The researcher wonders whether Gretha would be able to come to terms with this need for female energy to heal, and whether she understands her own need for healing.

Gretha felt like an only child, noting her isolation; her lack of a carefree and adventurous nature; and her depiction of first-born tendencies through statements such as, 'I'll do it better'. This was mentioned with edginess and resonated with Gretha, but she split off from this topic of discussion and resisted it. Gretha kept going off track and used academic debate and theory to cushion her, as if to give a means to soften the landing or get ready for take-off. She did not, however, take off or land, but rather continued to hover over the life that she wants to embrace. Seeing the truth in the opposite, and using this to evoke insight or make the insight explicit, were helpful triggers for Gretha. In order to engage with the researcher, Gretha needed provocation or criticisms at numerous points during the interview.

The researcher experienced counter transference which may have impacted the flow of the interview. Gretha's fear of not-knowing connected with the researcher's own uncertainty in the empirical phase – and thus the researcher's reaction to experiencing Gretha's wanting to lead the discussion may well reveal her own insecurities. As Cilliers et al. (2004) point out counter transference is a defensive phenomenon which stems from her projective identification around being helpful (which Gretha admitted to), and this in turn activated the researcher's repressed feelings of angst with the research and being helpful.

#### 5.4.2.3 *Gretha's integration as singleton*

Gretha's request for a copy of the researcher's notes so that she could further process the conversation that was held, was indicative of her desire to continue unpacking the implications of the discussion and reach further conclusions. She may have been resistant to the systems psychodynamic paradigm in that it does not align with the paradigm that resonates with her belief system, to allow herself to embrace herself more fully. Her stubborn, fixated-ness to her own views makes learning new perspectives difficult for her. She may struggle with integration as a singleton, especially since she resisted being swamped by the collective.

Gretha believes that completeness requires both male and female energies to merge, and this is likely to be the pathway to her healing. Gretha's insights, once integrated, may enable deeper connections with her parents and may enhance her work with people who are dying. The counselling that she is involved in may bring deeper understanding to those whom she counsels, when they too understand the link between death and birth.

#### **5.4.3 Discussion of post-GRE interview: Lisa**

This section will expand on the emerging insights from Lisa's post-GRE interview, as well as the researcher's process experience and Lisa's integration as singleton.

##### 5.4.3.1 *Emerging insights from Lisa's post-GRE interview*

After a context to the interview had been set, the post-GRE interview with Lisa was initiated with a question regarding the highlights and/or key experiences that Lisa had perceived during the GRE. The key issue highlighted by her over the four days was the racial differences that she experienced, since she expressed frustration that 'people' had not moved on. The GRE helped her to acknowledge her own ignorance in this regard, including that despite progress, individuals have not reconciled themselves fully with the past. She noted that, "I need to acknowledge the fact that people are not where I thought I am". This speaks to her confusion with where she

was, or at least where she perceived herself to be. She admitted to being struck by the diversity and privilege in Pretoria (where the South African university under study is located), which is different to what she is familiar with elsewhere. The researcher used this to prompt her on her background and her exposure to diversity. To this, Lisa responded that she “was ensconced away”, having limited exposure to diversity apart from interactions with her family’s domestic worker. In this way, she was “so privileged, very protected”. The choice of word ‘ensconced’ is interesting, since it is a synonym for ‘entrenched’, ‘concealed’ and ‘shielded’. These are behaviours in line with those that she demonstrated in the GRE itself.

The researcher offered Lisa a tentative explanation by noting that the privilege that protected her had become a disadvantage, since “now you don’t know what you don’t know”. This was done in order to evaluate whether Lisa had considered how she grew up from a different perspective. Lisa revealed her conflicted-ness, feeling that her privilege was enabled through the hard work of her parents, and now she felt it was expected of her to feel bad about it. This introjected a sense of blame and shame around issues of Apartheid that conflicted with her sense of gratitude to her parents. Lisa then spent time speaking about her parents. Her father died a few years ago and her mother relocated to remain close to her grandchild, in so doing leaving behind a lifetime of memories from her childhood home.

Immediately after recounting her father’s illness and passing, she raised the issue of diversity again and her anger at older white males who, to her, represent the “stagnant, traditional ‘broeder-bond’ way of doing things”. She admitted that she has valence to this and noted some transference, as she sees the individuals who run business in the Cape as being these old white males. She had moved to a few different companies, and engaged in fight-flight in each of these work encounters. At each, she initially attempted to challenge the status quo and upon meeting resistance, she moved on to the next company. Lisa found that when the fight-flight response was not present, she was working in a more diverse company but felt that she did not fit into their ‘English’ cultures. The above aspects inspired her to move away from big business and start her own practice.

She admitted to ambivalence, in the sense of being conflicted that her anger is directed towards the Afrikaans group with whom she most identifies. The introjection of conflict is evident within her and is reflected by her words, “With whom am I siding when I have got all this conflicting feelings?”

Lisa spoke about her Doctoral studies, including that she plans to investigate why women are blocked from reaching the highest levels in organisations, suggesting that she is taking the side of women. This may be revealing of some of her projections. Therefore, the researcher used this to reference Lisa’s mother by stating, “As your mother is siding with you”, suggesting that her mother’s presence enabled her to be a defender for women. To this, Lisa responded, “Although I haven’t seen her like that, I am quite frustrated with my mother actually”. She went on to describe that her mother dedicated herself to looking after her father and when he passed, she slipped into a depressive state. For this reason, she feels as though she has lost her mother already. She described her mother as, “there but not there. Sometimes I feel like I am carrying her”, and then she stated that she is upset with her for that. This is the second time in the narrative that Lisa revealed anger. There appeared to be anger at ‘spectators’, in terms of those who are not taking ownership and are leaving her to do the work. Lisa introjected responsibility for others, and was angry at those whom she projects as having ‘left her to do this work’.

A breakthrough in the narrative came when the researcher offered a hypothesis which positioned Lisa’s mother’s role in stepping in to take care of her father as an impossible task. She used this as an analogy to show a possible pattern in that, “Maybe that’s what you are doing, stepping in and taking on an impossible task”, before becoming angry that she is powerful. This reminded Lisa that her mother was in fact the person who introduced her to the university where she was completing her Doctoral studies, and that her mother broke boundaries to “show me what the world can be, although she hadn’t been in that world. She made us aware of all possibilities”.

She realised that her frustration stemmed from experiencing the weight of her mother transferring her dependence on her father onto her. The weight of this projection onto her, and into her task of responsibility for the care of the caretaker,

seemed to be exhausting to Lisa. At this point, the researcher summarised what Lisa had been saying, and proposed that she was taking up the 'fight' to tackle the stuckness she saw.

Lisa affirmed that this was true, and the researcher tentatively proposed that this connected this to the frustration with her mother in saying, "And you can't understand why the person who led you into this arena...is weighing you down". Lisa then admitted that, "I thought of my mother as the strong woman who started it all". The researcher therefore introduced an analogy of the door attendant or the butler, who is often an unnoticed person that opens the door for individuals, reminding Lisa that her mother opened the door to a new world for her (such as by instructing her to speak to a professor). Lisa was reminded that her mother often fantasised about the university where Lisa completed her postgraduate studies.

Lisa described this time as "the flight from everything that was holding me back", namely that, "their older ways of viewing things was a conflicting thing for me". This related transference to the frustration that she was replicating in other relationships with older white males, who also represented such. Her conflict is thus a re-manifestation of this unresolved conflicted-ness.

As the narrative continued, the researcher asked Lisa whether realising her own ignorance around diversity was making her feel that she had judged her parents too harshly. She said that she has been asked about whether she could forgive them, and that she believed she could up until recently when she, too, became ill. Diagnosed with the same psychological condition as her mother, she wondered whether her anger was as a result of this, since her mother had genetically transferred this condition to her. Watching her mother is predictive of what her future may be, and what her relationship with her daughter may look like one day. The fear associated with this unknown has provoked much anxiety within her, which manifests as anger. She remarked that she was assigned to the well-being group in the GRE, which she considered an interesting coincidence.

The researcher shared two stories with Lisa, one to impart compassion and acceptance (in the sense of, "I get this"), and the other to offer an alternate

perspective on her mother's diagnosis. This prompted Lisa to share her physiological diagnosis, namely Crohn's Disease, which is known to manifest symptoms akin to the psychological condition. The fact that she was diagnosed still weighs heavily on her. The researcher used Lisa's Crohn's Disease as a metaphor to provide a tentative hypothesis which explored behaviour and unconscious tendencies, stating that "It is in your gut...how much access to your intuition are you stifling....how much you process or keep things festering?"

The researcher reminded Lisa of her experience in the GRE when she picked up on things in the system and could not move on, and also got impatient with people in the system who had not processed their emotions and moved on. For this reason, she went on to ask, "So I am wondering what emotions you left when you left (to study at your previous university)?" Lisa responded by answering, "Yes, because I couldn't actually express them to you. You are right".

The researcher asks about Crohn's Disease, and Lisa explained that it manifests as "little sores" caused by one's own immune system attacking one's body. Lisa picked up on a connection here and stated that, "I am punishing myself quite a lot and being harsh and critical, and there is a lot in my past, things I have done wrong, being bad. It is so many years ago but I still dream about it. I can't just let it go, can't forgive myself for being that. So I had to start over .... Away from all of that." Lisa did not specify to which wrongdoings she was referring, and the researcher did not press her to reveal such. Rather, the researcher responded to this by highlighting that, "But you took yourself with you and you are your own worst critic. Maybe it is that critical parent you are carrying with you?" Lisa then made a plea along the line of, "Yes, how do I get rid of him or her or both of them, I think it is both of them?" The researcher tentatively suggested that she may be deferring acknowledging her own emotions and beating herself up.

To which Lisa replied by saying, "I just need time", an interesting delay tactic that she also used in her pre-GRE interview. She went on to offer an insight of, "When I became ill, I only started to look at it in a psychiatric and physical level ignoring the fact that it may actually be my psychological self speaking to me".

Lisa recounted how she had always challenged authority, even as early as her high school years, when she “had a fight with the ‘oom’ (elder male)”. As this theme emerged, the researcher summarised a complementary theme identified earlier, namely ‘doing the impossible’ that linked with being an activist but also to the likelihood of not succeeding. The researcher then asked, “What is the battle worth winning?” Lisa responded by saying, “This is powerful. That will be the one that is purposeful and meaningful to me. I am thinking it will be my practice that I need to mould to be the practice for the purposeful work that I enjoy, that fits in with my family life, that provides me with opportunity for well-being (playing tennis on a Tuesday morning. Just getting my life back”.

The researcher offered a word for this, namely ‘freedom’, to which Lisa commented, “It is that”. Lisa realised that her battle is to get her life back. Thus, the researcher amplified this by noting, “It took a lot of words to get to that. It is important you claim this, it is the same as claiming your health back. This is the fight worth fighting, is my life. ‘I am the cause’”. Furthermore, she cautioned Lisa by highlighting that it was a cop-out to fight on behalf of others that she thinks she should be representing. This is because she could lose her voice if she believes that she is not a worthy cause. Lisa suggested that this sounds narcissistic, so the researcher presented an alternate term, namely ‘empowerment’. Lisa began to embrace this idea, noting that, “Yes it is empowering – it is taking up the authority”. This is significant, as previously she had only referred to authority in others with resentment, and had not referred to her own authority. Lisa showed a beginning to accept ownership, noting:

*If I can't do it, I can't do any of the other things that I want to do. If I don't take my life back and leave it at a state that it was in, I wouldn't have been a good mother or good wife or a co-bread winner. I wouldn't have that, so I'm thinking it is really not narcissistic because there are a lot of good things for others as well. I don't want anybody else to carry me anyhow. I don't want my daughter to carry me, ever. I don't want my husband to carry me so I need to take my life back. I have to start feeling comfortable in my own skin and people actually transfer that into me a lot but that is a lot of negative self-talk, criticism.*

In response to her statement of criticism, the researcher offered a reflection on how defined one becomes to the narrative we choose to tell ourselves – and asked her who she gave her life away to. In response, referring to her previous reference to something painful that happened in her past, Lisa said, “I gave it to my story...it is a story only two people on the earth know to some degree – the whole story is actually kept to myself”. She wondered to whom she should tell this story, as if seeking vindication or absolution because she was unable to forgive herself. She labelled this as her failure, but turned it into a success when her mother challenged the education system and won access to tertiary education for her daughter.

Despite this, Lisa still felt failure and disappointment that the title she held at school was not lived up to, implying her own high standards. High standards continued to be a theme in her life and came up in her pre-GRE interview as well. Lisa lamented her failures; firstly, not being valedictorian and now, not taking the lead. Yet both may link to what she shared about the label that her father assigned to her. She perpetuated punishment through subtle “suppose to” statements that she used, which are ‘nice’ ways of insinuating accusation against the self, or of imposing judgement and criticism.

Lisa commented at the end of the interview, “This has been really helpful”. To summarise, Lisa came to recognise her own ignorance about diversity and people’s readiness to move on. She acknowledged her anger at white males and her mother (although this was likely to be both her mother and father, in reality). She also began to understand that her fear of her genetic psychological disease had unseated her, and her mother’s state was giving her a future-perspective of what her life could become, which startled her.

Lisa realised that she was simplistically accepting the diagnosis assigned to her by another, without exploring the possibility that her psychological self was speaking to her. That is, she could consider that her Crohn’s Disease was a manifestation of her unresolved emotions and unconscious defences to anxiety that had been provoked. She related much of her ‘stuckness’ to re-living an old memory (through keeping a secret alive inside of her), one from which she had birthed successfully but for which she had not forgiven herself. She silently continued to bear the label her father



assigned to her in anger, but until she lets it go, she may continue to be burdened. She became aware that she 'gave her life away' to the secret in her story, since keeping a secret keeps it alive ('hold the secret or it holds you').

Lisa introjected responsibility for others as a way to deflect or delay, since responsibility to others was experienced as painful in her formative years. She recognised the importance of 'getting her life back', and that she displaced this yearning by 'fighting the cause for others'. She realised that she needed to take ownership of her life and take up authority of her own life, and that doing this would enable her to do all that she desires. She also realised that her frustration with 'stuckness' and authority in others was, in fact, her frustration with her own failure to take authority and agency in her own life. That which she disliked (authority), she had split off, projected and could resent; however, the resentment she felt was poisoning only herself.

#### *5.4.3.2 The researcher's process reflections and experience*

With Lisa, it became apparent that accusation was self-referential: that which she accused her mother of, or any other person, was in fact what she was inherently struggling with herself. Furthermore, the use of analogy, such as "it is like", to create a new definition/description and make explicit the implied choice, was useful to lifting out underpinning meanings. The use of summarising and paraphrasing, as well as similes and synonyms, were also helpful to uncover real meanings for Lisa. Using her words as guidance when asked for help, her own wisdom was metaphorically applied, which enabled the unfolding of the conversation.

Sharing personal stories (for example, 'my dad...'; 'my friend...'; and so forth) established a judgement-free space in which Lisa felt safe enough to further reveal herself. This was particularly helpful because Lisa's existence was arrested by a secret that she carried with shame. It was important for Lisa to take up her authority, even in defining her condition. She needed to shift towards self-empowerment and therefore 'naming to enabling claiming', because the psychiatrist who named her condition should not be allowed power to define the rest of her life. Lisa needed to claim back her life by starting to define her state for herself, and take agency in her

life, rather than only in other people's lives. She need not take on their 'fight', but rather take back her own life.

Lisa's reflections were intertwined with issues relating to South Africa's Apartheid history. The researcher felt a sense of her own liberation – a sense of elation and relief during this encounter with Lisa. This counter transference may relate to the researcher's own history with Apartheid – her own sense of being 'kept at bay' by a system and in this session being let in. This was gratifying and uplifting to the researcher. Receiving words of affirmation from Lisa made the researcher feel that the study was worthwhile – and in so doing affirmed her own worth.

#### *5.4.3.3 Lisa's integration as singleton*

Lisa defined that she would take her life back, since she was a cause worth fighting for. She articulated a purpose for her life, and affirmed that this was empowering rather than narcissistic. Her integration as singleton, stemming from immersion in the group, was to recognise that her frustration with 'stuck' members of the group or the system (that is, people who have not moved on), were dimensions of herself that she was not acknowledging. In this way, she was projecting into the system, transferring to her mother, and having a fight-flight response. She began to perceive that her own inability to move on from a teenage mistake, and her inability to forgive herself, was causing the splitting off of a part of herself and projections into the system. This refusal to forgive herself may have been manifesting in her physiological condition, wherein her body was literally 'attacking itself', akin to punishing herself. Through forgiveness, Lisa may come to a point of atonement (at-one-ment).

#### **5.4.4 Discussion of post-GRE interview: Magda**

This section will highlight the emerging insights from Magda's post-GRE interview, together with the researcher's process experience and reflections on Magda's integration as singleton.

#### 5.4.4.1 *Emerging insights from Magda's post-GRE interview*

After setting the context, the post-GRE interview with Magda was initiated with a question relating to the last comment she made in the post-GRE focus group, namely 'working hard to keep emotions at bay'. The researcher asked, "You say you work hard at keeping your emotions at bay and split off – is this something you typically do? And does this occur in your professional roles or does it replicate in other roles?" Magda's responses were extensive, which was interesting as she did not share as comprehensively as the other participants in the focus group.

Magda began by explaining her professional transitions. As a research psychologist, she began working in a military environment focused on industrial psychology, conducting training and organisational development. Following this was a 12-year period of working in a different town in private practice. At this point, she ventured into alternate healing fields, such as hypnotherapy, *reiki*, kinesiology and the like (which she described as 'other' stuff), which she thoroughly enjoyed. Magda referred to this psychodynamic 'stuff' as more emotional than intellectual, suggesting that her emotions are beneath the surface. She moved back to her original location to return her focus to academia, but continued to be drawn towards alternate healing fields that she considered to be more spiritual in nature.

At this point in the interview, she made a reflective comment, namely that, "I think there is definitely a pattern or split between working in the mind and then more of the other stuff. I don't know if one can link the emotional and the spiritual stuff". Magda deposited this in the middle of her responses and then continued to speak about her life. These alternate healing practices that she applied on herself (not so much on her clients) enabled her own healing. This is supported by her words, "I actually made some steps forward in terms of emotional growth and moving out of a toxic relationship which I was stuck in for about twelve years". Her geographical movement continued overseas and then back to a small mining town in South Africa. When she explained her moves, she used the term, "...so I left all that behind". In closing her response to the opening question, she stated that, "I suppose it is a pattern repeating itself, going backwards and forwards between the exploring of emotions and coming out if into the more intellectual stuff and back". Then she

added (as if she were surprised), “I actually don’t know how I got to all this stuff now, it’s probably my unconscious”. This utterance of surprise indicated the need and relevance for Magda to have a debriefing opportunity on her own.

Applying the FANI principle of using the participant’s phrasing and ordering, and becoming the “invisible, facilitating catalyst” to the unfolding story of Magda (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, p.34), the researcher followed with a questioning statement. This was namely, “So you say the pattern is exploring the emotions and then stepping back into some kind of structure and this phase, this structure is presented by the intellectual academic?” While this was less of a question and more of an opportunity to paraphrase what Magda had discussed up to that point, it prompted Magda into disclosing that she was sitting in the GRE sessions thinking that the next workshop she attended should be spiritual to “balance out all this”. This began to highlight for the researcher a tendency that was emerging in Magda’s narrative to sway back and forth, with a balancing effect to moderate the sway, in a similar way to how a baby is rocked to sleep. This prompted the researcher to wonder what comfort Magda was seeking.

The researcher’s follow-on question served to amplify an expression in Magda’s response, by asking, “You are saying (you didn’t say it in words, you said it in expression): ‘I could exhale’. So what are you holding your breathe for?” This brought hesitation, so the alternate pathway for Magda was offered, namely, “I’m also intrigued by the notion of either/or”. This triggered the response from her, “I was actually thinking about that when you were talking – it’s like I go into phases, then I do a lot of this and then I need something else and then I do that. So I go back and forth between the two”. Delving into from where this tendency originates, Magda introduced her first excuse as “I live too far”, which was an unconscious, self-imposed isolation. The researcher, combining the story thus far into a metaphor as follows: “You went from being immersed in a town to going to the desert, then you got home (South Africa) but now you are still away from home”. To this, Magda responded, “And if I had to say where home is, I don’t actually know”. This became an interesting point of reflection for Magda: “where is home?”, to which she observed that the home of her closest family is not home. She ended the response with an insight of, “I don’t know where home is”. This was an important revelation and

moment of insight for Magda, since the word 'home' was repeated three times in the paragraph.

The researcher chose at this point to flip the view that Magda gained, to change the angle from which she was viewing herself. She said, "So now you are back where you were born (Pretoria). You're in the same class with somebody that was born in the same hospital...", and before completing the sentence, Magda said, "So maybe I'm home now? And living where I am now is just a physical challenge, but it's a good space where I am now. I feel happy". This was the first emotion that Magda volunteered since the start of this narrative, and indicated that she was opening up to the researcher.

Despite her statement that she was now happy, she continued to persist with discussing her desire to move, again. She admitted that she was forcing the issue with her fiancé and started wondering whether constant moving from place to place was because she did not know where home was. The researcher used this space to flip the key statement/question that Magda had exposed ('I don't know where home is'), by stating that, "the question that comes up for me is: I don't know what home is". Magda noted that this was correct.

In response to the researcher raising the question of, "And who makes that definition...authorising you to define criteria of what it is?", Magda introduced her father into the narrative, stating that her father died when she was five years old. She made the connection that growing up with her mother and sister did not feel like home because someone was missing. She added that, "A lot of my projections and transferences are around male authority". As she spoke, Magda referred to being happy in her relationship with her fiancé. She believes that this gives her the confidence and security to move as she does. As she reflected on this, a second insight dawned on her, when she stated that, "Actually my home is where I am now, with whom I love and what I do in my space". Attempting to return to the question of 'what home is and not where it is', the researcher stated that, "Home is where there is a missing someone, and now that missing someone is you, making it hard to embrace the spirit of a traveller (the one who moves on)". Magda paused, and concurred ("This makes sense"). Following on from this, the researcher amplified

the statement in the following manner: “You have an adventurous spirit but you can’t embrace it because ‘who’ is missing from home is you and you are angry with this person. So if you embrace this now, then you will be the person you are angry with”. Magda uttered relief, saying, “Yes I think that completes the circle. This is interesting and makes a lot of sense”.

The researcher introduced a new concept at this point in the narrative, one of ‘no judgement’ (since Magda had used this word repeatedly during the pre-GRE interview). She did this by saying, “Sometimes it is not about changing what is – we are all pieces of this legacy and life, without judgement but just through acknowledgement...” This allowed Magda to begin embracing an emerging insight of herself, describing the critique she gets from her fiancé about her continuous relocation. Every time she starts to gain momentum or begins to see success, she has the urge to start over again somewhere else. Magda was judging herself for her forced geographic moving around, and started to see a new perspective of what she has had to reject (split off) of herself. This self-insight and self-acceptance was affirmed by her statement, “But it is not a bad thing. If you see it in this context, it is what I love, it’s a challenge for me and what I embrace”.

The multiple use of the pronoun ‘I’ in her statement affirms a sense of empowerment, rather than critique. Magda had worked hard to keep her emotions in check (linked to what she calls ‘spiritual’). She split-off the adventurous spirit and could not integrate with it because of an undeclared belief that ‘leaving is bad’, which evoked anger. The researcher provided a metaphor for her narrative, namely ‘the warrior’, as the one who looks to the next challenge, moves towards it and starts over. This offered her a path to acceptance thereof; the acceptance that her fiancé represents in her life. He represents acceptance because Magda has been in judgement of herself.

Confirming the link that Magda has between the emotional and spiritual, the researcher checked, “You link the spirit with the emotional?” and Magda stated, “Yes I do very strongly”. The researcher offered Magda the following hypothesis: “You keep your emotions in check so much, because you are keeping your spirit in check, the spirit of the warrior”. This resonated with Magda, as she began describing her

past-life regression hypnosis, sharing that she had been a physical warrior in an army in a past life, and that she was in the military for four years and still rides horses every day. This suggested that the metaphor resonated deeply with her.

The researcher suggested that her motivation to 'move' (relocate) may be to what she is called, and Magda responded with, "You don't think like that; you think it's different". The word 'you' stands out here, since she used 'I' in previous statements. This highlights a leaning towards deferring responsibility and authority, so the researcher probed further about this issue. However, Magda returned to the 'warrior' theme, associating it with the projected roles in the GRE, including the role of protector (namely, the 'one who stands up for them').

The researcher made a secondary association with the warrior theme that Magda adopted, namely that of loyalty, to which Magda replied, "To the cause, to the people, not so much to the cause". The denial of 'cause' prompted the researcher to ask, "What is your cause?". Magda linked this to purpose and disclosed that she had been working on this aspect. Furthermore, she noted that, "I think that is where my yearning is for the more spiritual stuff because I think somewhere in there lays my cause somehow". It was of interest to the researcher that Magda used the term 'somewhere', associating finding her cause with travelling to find it.

The researcher at this point asked whether Magda was holding back from purpose because she subconsciously suspected that it is large in size. Magda noted that this is why she tends to block people out, and the researcher pointed out that blocking people out is likened in the systems psychodynamic paradigm to splitting-off the parts of self with which the individual does not want to deal. The researcher asked whether holding herself back is as a result of a fear of success, and Magda said it is a fear of what 'we could be' (again using deferring language of 'we' rather than 'I'). She then added that, "There is that issue of judgement and a question around am I good enough, clever enough?" Magda immediately shifted the focus in her narrative to working in environments (such as the military) that offer structure and authority, as if this would provide her with authority, or at least the sense of containment to relieve the anxiety.

The researcher re-directed Magda to the statement of 'not good enough', challenging her by noting, "The whole idea of not good enough, clever enough is about not claiming your greatness right now". To this end, Magda asked, "What is it that will be that greatness in me?" Without answering, the researcher realised that this is a critical question for Magda to uncover for herself. Thus, she rather observed that, "I suppose then it comes full circle back to the question of what is my cause to which I am loyal". Magda replied by saying, "And being a warrior is to be noble". This was a profound statement for Magda. The researcher stated that, "The noble cause is clarified when you bring it in alignment wherever you are", to which Magda confirmed, "It doesn't matter where I am". She mentioned that she does not think too long on relocation options, but rather acts quickly.

As the time of the interview drew to an end, the researcher started to consolidate and pointed out the following:

*It's not the place, it is the cause that anchors you and I think you already know the cause. What has to happen for you is that all the other mystifying elements, like the missing father, etc. has to resolve. When the clouds / mist lift you will again see what the noble cause is of this warrior. You know the spirit in you will re-emerge when you bring about the coming together of spirit, emotion, intellect, and you allow all of them to marry.*

Magda, with appreciation, noted that:

*This conversation has been hugely powerful and useful to put all of this into links, it would probably have taken me a year to get all this sorted out. It is interesting because a lot of the themes, I knew a bit of the warrior stuff and I know a bit of my boundaries around space, I know about the change, the authority. Those are the themes that are floating around out there, I know they are there. I kind of had to make the link with all of them and I haven't really done that until now. When I do get to analysis stuff or the spiritual stuff, we really work with emotions in people, it gives me energy, I really like that.*

The researcher was aware that this was in contrast to Magda's post-GRE focus group statement of, "I work hard to keep emotions at bay".



To conclude the interview, the researcher offered some thoughts to Magda, namely to “watch your energy; things that are effortless take little energy, the effortless things are what we are born to do, it’s in our DNA and thus your energy is a clue”. Moreover, she mentioned that, “There is a wired-ness about you that is geared towards conquering challenges and exploration and being out there, whilst being plugged in and you need to be clear on how your loyalties confuse you or confused loyalties. Understanding the loyalty to your cause as opposed to loyalty to people”. Magda’s closing remarks included a word of thanks, noting that the interview was “really really awesome”. An air of elation and lightness was apparent, with a sense that the singleton had reconciled learning and insight post-GRE.

To summarise the discussion, a number of insights emerged for Magda, notably her connection of emotions and spirituality, including that keeping emotions at bay has the effect of keeping the spirit in check. A further revelation for Magda was that she did not know where home is, and that her nomadic lifestyle and distance from her mother and sister had made this even harder to define. Fundamental to deepening an awareness that ‘home’ for her changed at the age of five when her father died (since he was missing from the home) included that her new identity of home evolved like a three-legged dog who had adapted to a new mode of existence. Since Magda became the missing entity in her later years, she perpetuated this home-identity and may have developed resentment towards herself for being the one ‘who leaves’. Magda developed a method of coping with her internal conflict by swaying ‘back and forth’ into and out of the structure of intellectualism and the comfort of spirituality (in the form of connectedness).

Magda experienced a realisation that being a traveller (in this way, a warrior of sorts) was part of her spirit (that is, her innate nature), which is not bad. The fact that home is where she is and that she could embrace this without judgement was a relief. This point was the balance that she was seeking, involving moving from judgement to acceptance. Magda began to embrace the notion that her warrior-spirit of adventure sought challenges; and that her desire to travel and have new experiences were also challenges. They were not character flaws, but rather characteristics of which she could be proud. These characteristics resonated so deeply with her that she

could feel liberated by the sense of identity that they afforded her. While she continued at the time to struggle with defining her purpose, Magda may be able to access this through integration of her emotional, spiritual and intellectual sides.

Magda recognised her tendency to ‘split-off’ people as a defence mechanism used to counter unconscious anxiety and avoidance of embracing her identity that lies beneath the surface. Another issue that surfaced for Magda was the question of whether she is good enough and clever enough. She asked herself, “What is the greatness in me?”, and then stated that, “Being a warrior is to be noble”.

The interview process aided Magda to enter into and acknowledge her emotions. It also helped to recognise the issues she had unresolved around male authority and projections in this regard that have influenced her decisions and her experiences of these decisions.

#### *5.4.4.2 The researcher’s process reflections and experience*

The researcher found it helpful to begin the interview where Magda had left off in the post-GRE focus group. Magda was open and trusting in the conversation, and what may have started as an interview developed into a conversation that involved a sharing of perspectives from both parties. The researcher used symbolism and metaphors to amplify or illustrate the narrative that was unfolding, such as using the term ‘warrior’ to illustrate Magda’s conquering of so many new challenges and adventures in new lands. The use of metaphors and representing the truth in its opposite was useful to lifting Magda’s perspective and removing judgement from her self-impressions.

Based on the researcher’s own history, there were parts of Magda’s narrative that were reminiscent – which may have conjured up repressed emotions. Magda’s conferring on the researcher such accolade may have projected ‘knowing and wisdom’ and this indicates Magda’s tendency to transfer authority to another (in this case the researcher) – the effect on the researcher was to take up this authority, to act with certainty, to be the one who is trusted. Playing into exactly what Magda needed in order to integrate the insights she formed during the FANI.

#### 5.4.4.3 *Magda's integration as singleton*

Magda's integration as singleton was enabled through adjusting her existential role with the phenomenological role, in response to the normative role of 'one who moves around a lot'. How she experienced herself in this role was largely determined by her fiancé's feedback (namely, what she thought he thought), and could be calibrated as having understood parts of her unconscious that were influencing her lens.

The singleton was empowered with having accessed her spirituality through the psychodynamic 'stuff' (as she put it) and by resurrecting the emotions that she had buried alive to become at-one-with herself. Atonement for Magda was akin to less judgement.

#### **5.4.5 Discussion of post-GRE interview: Gavin**

The following sub-sections expand on the emerging insights from Gavin's post-GRE interview, the researcher's process experience, and his integration as singleton.

##### *5.4.5.1 Emerging insights from Gavin's post-GRE interview*

Gavin's narrative was initiated with him talking about his wife and what they do professionally, since they both work in business. He mentioned that she does not share her difficulties with him. Immediately this shifted focus to the GRE experience, since he noted that he was oblivious to the absence of the white female in the consulting contingent. At this point, he made the first link to his own tendency to be oblivious to the white females in his life. He mentioned simultaneously that his wife was unaware of what he was doing, and that she showed little interest in anything that was beneath the surface. He believed that she preferred to remain in a mode of "it is all groovy, life must be fine, and we don't fight". There was a slight indication of resentment at this 'naive' outlook.

He then made an admission of, "I think this white female role has just gone, where is it? We would say it is like a nurturer, mother. And I said but that is a black female

role for me. I mean I was brought up on a black woman's back, the proper white South Africa way". Gavin then initiated the first question, namely, "I wanted to talk to you about that – what is the white female role? How would we label it? What are the attributes?" These questions are of interest to the researcher, mostly because of the use of the word 'label'. Notably, the fact that Gavin began with his concerns is the first indication of narcissistic tendencies.

At this point, the researcher made the first statement based on her observations, which related to the white female role being whatever one makes it to be (that is, objects relations). This led to the question of what Gavin associates with a white female. To this, Gavin responded saying that the white female is a 'sex object', which objectified the role from the outset. He then added 'companion' as an additional descriptor. Gavin expanded that he is attracted to women of all races, and that he finds beauty across all races. The researcher reminded him of what he said in the GRE, namely that he found women who take up their own authority to be appealing.

She then asked if the absence of the white female in his awareness was in fact the absence of authority in white females. To this Gavin responded that, "Yes, that is, what it is. Like they are not putting their hands up and saying: This is my space, piss-off, or I'm fighting for it, I am drawing my boundaries". He thereafter described that his experience of white females in business is that they represent the object of an affair (that is, a sexual object). His transference from his personal life to the business sphere and even into the GRE was evident, emphasising that he has a demeaning and trivialised view of white women. Gavin continued to use words with sexual connotations, as if to evoke a response from the researcher.

Gavin was the only participant who amplified the diversity issues from the past – it was as if he wanted to be the voice for the unrepresented in the study. It is interesting that he felt it necessary to demean the white female in order to place the black female on a pedestal. For the first time in the conversation, the researcher was then able to position the study and align the conversation thus far with it. She stated that:

*This study is essentially about finding patterns and organising. To get to that patterning let's talk transference. So what parts of your history replicate this idea of the white female being dismissed?*

Gavin started to describe his wife and their relationship, stating that his marriage was not fun and that he had resigned himself to his wife's lack of engagement with him. In the post-GRE focus group, he had made an association with work being fun, and fun representing freedom. The statement of his marriage no longer being fun was indicative of his loss of freedom. This could also link to his narcissistic tendencies, needing his wife to make him the centre of all. Her 'failure' to meet this expectation was causing the frustration that he expressed. Gavin expressed his need for his relationship with his wife to 'be better' and expressed surprised that she understood this as meaning that "she is not good enough".

He affirmed himself by saying that, "80% I would think of my feedback is really positive and I think that is what she values in me. It is the fact that I build up, I support, I accompany, I encourage. I am not the critical dick that she met fifteen years ago. I've become far more positive, far more optimistic". His wife is older than he is by two years, which he indirectly made mention of. He believes that he is comfortable with himself and has grown, but wonders why his wife has not done the same, noting that she is not willing to work on herself. He went on to state that, "And I think that is what I resign myself to – she is just going to be another woman that is going to enter middle age and that's it". This was the second time that he has used the word 'resign'.

As Gavin was not recognising his transference, the researcher prompted him again. In relation to his wife being 'stuck', the researcher asked when else this might have occurred, for example in relation to his two mother figures (namely, the black woman and the white woman). Yet again, Gavin resisted exploration of this pattern, and continued discussing his wife. When asked, "Where do you want it to go?", he responded with "I just want movement". It was evident from his input in the pre-GRE interview and post-GRE focus group that Gavin associates movement with progress.

Despite this, he remained in the conversation and his narrative, not wanting to explore his transference. He then asked, “Help me with the transference here with her”. The researcher reminded Gavin of his two actions in the GRE that had the effect of closing the system. These actions were known to him and to the researcher, and they served as a trigger for Gavin when he remembered them. He stated that, “Yes, yes, yes...I want to be in there, I want to hear and I want to see”. The researcher highlighted to Gavin that him wanting to be in there had the effect of closing the system. Gavin asked, “Is this a good or bad thing? Is it blocking?”, to which the researcher explained the paradox of trying so hard to move things by forcing it, that one ends up blocking it by creating resistance. Gavin replied that he had received this feedback from his wife and others, namely that he is too forceful. This tendency arises when in pursuit of one’s own agenda, again reinforcing the narcissistic tendencies that Gavin had not yet recognised.

The next attempt to shift the narrative further back in order to find origins of the transference that characterised his narrative was done through the question, “Where does that come from, saying ‘I want movement?’” Gavin revealed that when he was younger, he would be criticised for not winning the sport in which he participated. His father would be aggressive and his mother passive-aggressive. Even when he won, he would be told, “This could be better”, which is evidence of transference. Gavin is now transferring his mother’s role (absent and passive-aggressive) to his older wife.

At this point, he changed the topic to his desire to buy another business, which relates to the father theme, since he hated work and drove Gavin to securing fun through variety. To aid Gavin to see his motivation or drive, the researcher asked him how he defines success. A long-winded monologue followed, which indicated that Gavin was figuring out the answer to the question as he was answering. He eventually said, “So for me winning is doing something intelligently with insight, thought, debate, work, engagement”. The researcher used this definition to link back to his frustrations in his marriage, noting that, “Insight, thought, work, engagement – are these the elements that are missing from your relationship?” Gavin responded with denial, saying that, “It’s not missing, just restricted to a few things”, as if to protect the notion of goodness. He then began to explain aspects where such is

missing in his marital relationship, focusing on matters that are superficial, when things are good. He used the term, "I have resigned myself" in terms of having to guard his words to avoid being accused of being "cross" again. He did not articulate when else he had been accused of being "cross".

He described that his wife grew up with a protective father in a predominantly female home, and he grew up in a male-dominated home with an absent mother. In this way, he subtly dropped in the reference to having an absent mother, while at the same time revealing that the protective family his wife grew up in also covered up a 20-year affair that no-one spoke about. This gave some indication of Gavin's unspoken fear, namely that he may be living with a cover-up (that is, an elephant in the room) that no-one addresses. The researcher therefore probed why this 'cover-up' mode held valence with him. He resisted any reference to where this may be coming from, stating that, "the past is the past".

The researcher then bluntly asked him to speak of his mother. To this, Gavin responded that she was an absent mother, who slept late but was very open. For example, he remembers that sex was openly discussed from an early age. He disclosed that he went from a "too-open relationship" with his parents, to one with his wife that is "closed, constipated and stuck". He described the freedom and lack of boundaries in this relationship, noting that he was never shy or ashamed to speak to his parents, but did not trust their input and was unsure of the quality of their responses.

The researcher asked him if he always felt like the adult, to which he replied, "Now I am a child and its playtime". He went on to describe his playful relationship with his children and midway stated that, "I think I married my mother in many ways, that shouting...". Gavin described her frustration with the boys and her lack of authority, including that she tended to use his authority. In his own frustration he would say to her, "Claim your space, you got to manage this, you can't rely on me!" This frustration might echo the unspoken frustration that he experienced with his parents. The researcher pointed out that this same accusation ("claim your space") is the one he made to the white females in the GRE. Ironically, he responded with, "But she is incredibly independent. You know it wouldn't matter if I'm around or not".

Gavin deflected, talking about individuals that he gravitates towards, including those who make an effort. This is in contrast to his wife who according to him does not make an effort in their relationship. This he qualified with her unwillingness to make decisions, expressing frustration that he makes all the decisions. His transference of the absent mother to his now 'absent' wife was apparent. The researcher summarised that, "I think there is some kind of patterning there, that maybe the frustration in this relationship is influenced by the frustration that went unspoken, you had a very open home but, to what extent did you say: I am tired of being the child who makes the decisions that acts like the adult. Did you say that?" He responded by saying no, but then explained that in fact, all of his childhood was characterised by him making all of his own decisions; from going to school every day, playing provincial level sport, changing schools and so on. He went on to disclose that despite the openness in his home, where no subject was taboo, they did not speak about what really mattered, resulting in being alone in those things and having to make his own decisions. Beginning to reveal his actual unfulfilled need, he said:

*I wish someone had told me this, somebody had sat me down and spoken to me. It is that guidance. I wanted that. Like what I do with people on my projects, when I really see some potential, I really want that. I want somebody to say: I see some potential in you and I want to work with you. I think I want some of that from my wife. And even some of that in my business partners. I do all of it. Although I empower them to run the business.*

The researcher paraphrased, using his expression as follows:

*That is a big theme for you. "I do all of it", and the tiredness, the having to have contained my playful self to weekends, I do all of it. It is a lot to project onto just one person. When "I do all of that", comes from being in school. It is a history of I have always done all of it, made my own decisions. So now – what? You are wanting your wife to be a knight in shining armour, save the day, rescue you from your tiredness.*

To this summary, Gavin exclaimed, "Yes, yes...help me to sleep at night because I don't sleep". The researcher reminded Gavin that this was a lot to expect of



someone, and he admitted that his wife also told him that he was being demanding. The researcher bluntly amplified his emerging denial by highlighting that, “You are demanding, you are expecting her to rescue you from a life of being in charge – an entire life!” Gavin deflected again, referring to his wife appreciating that he does this for her and he just wants a bit in return.

While it is not unreasonable, Gavin’s unspoken ‘beneath the surface’ issues that underpin the expectation he has in his relationship infuse the engagement with tension and his own unconscious anxiety. This anxiety catalyses the transference and creates an inverted relationship with authority. As a child, he took up authority even when it was not assigned, and he wants this action vindicated by a significant female who can ‘make amends’ for the absence of the nurturing (mother) role.

The researcher and Gavin spoke of him taking up authority and how as he did this, his authority grew. This then translated into self-assuredness. The researcher tentatively suggested that this assuredness could masquerade as an armour, and then asked him whether it was easy to penetrate this armour. Gavin used this to seduce and deflect with a sexual connotation, stating that, “I am inviting penetration all the time”, and the researcher noted that it seemed as if he was asking someone to break the armour. Gavin responded that this was the reason he was wanting ‘engagement’, since he was in fact asking for the armour to be broken. He deflected again to the start of the conversation, referring to white females. At this point, the conversation was paused and a second contact session was arranged. Gavin is the only participant who required a second post-GRE interview, since he asked for one.

The second interview began with Gavin speaking for ten minutes about a business deal, which had no connection to the previous conversation. It seemed as though he needed an audience to whom he could unload from the day. Eventually, this business-related download revealed a driver, namely shifting from ‘consultant’ to ‘active participant’ and ‘investor’, including gaining more responsibility by becoming the decision-maker in the business rather than the consultant. It was apparent that the very urge from which he wanted his wife to save him, is what he was pursuing in business. This seemed peculiar to the researcher.

For this reason, the researcher highlighted the paradox as follows: “Here is the question: To dive back in to, pulling ideas, thoughts and themes together, you have so much on your plate, and you are loading more on, and you have the audacity to say, will someone please take it off my plate. That seems like a bit of a paradox, don’t you think? That is the position you took on”. Gavin recognised this and agreed with the researcher, who then amplified this further by stating that, “You ask – why should I make all these decisions anyway”. Gavin explained this as sharing the responsibility, and again revealed his anger at those who do not step up and take responsibility.

The researcher, finding Gavin’s tendency to be elusive and evasive as very time-consuming, adopted a more direct mode of prompting. She asked him what aspects of the GRE had ‘pushed his buttons’ and created an awareness for him. Gavin again only highlighted the absence of the white female, and when asked how this parallels with his lived experiences, he noted that he connected this to his mother. This suggested that he is dismissive of her, since he mentioned that, “she does all sorts of dumb things” and then connected his wife to this reasoning. He confirmed his dismissal of his mother by stating that, “And when she opens her mouth, I am not interested”.

He admitted that his valence towards those he experiences as ‘making an effort’, and that he is drawn to this. When asked what it is about those who do not make an effort that triggers him, Gavin declared, “When they play victim”. When asked why, Gavin made the connection to his own tendency to play the victim, possibly because he acknowledges the entire conversation about his wife having been a monologue of complaint. Through describing a work event, he revealed his growing impatience with what he perceives to be as excuses. Ironically, playing golf was such an example; yet, he claimed to see work as play. His valence seems to lie in excuses, which lies within the state of victimhood.

The researcher challenged Gavin with a question about his end-goal, namely who it is that he thought he would be, and what he would be surrounded by after all the effort and time he put into his endeavours. Gavin stated that, “I haven’t led a one-

dimensional path”, and when asked about his wife, he said that he would regret not having worked at it. The researcher offered a tentative summation, stating:

*So it sounds like what the small voice inside of you is alerting you to, that you could be ignoring the one most important white female role you have in your life right now and not seeing it. Not seeing its absence or presence and being dismissive of it. That is kind of what you are saying, regret not having worked on it. So the connection between that future state and this experience in last week may be the voice inside of you saying: ‘am I giving sufficient credence to the white female role, the cardinal white female role in my life right now’.*

He declared that he “makes expectations”, and when the researcher highlighted the implications thereof, including the likelihood of feeling manipulable and being the victim, he recoiled into business mode and avoided deepening the exploration further. When the researcher asked him about his apparent impatience, such as his tendency to move things when he experienced a stasis, he responded by explaining, “There is very seldom a lack of movement when I am around. I get a bit depressed when that happens. Then I will shake it around a bit”. The researcher exclaimed that, “Then you should say; thank God I have a stubborn intelligent partner who won’t take my nonsense!” He replied that his wife does not take it, but rather she gives it. Offering him an alternate perspective of the relationship dynamic, the researcher noted that the way his temperament is moderated is through a relationship with his counter. He agreed that he would not want a relationship with someone like himself, revealing a level of self-rejection.

Gavin reduced his interactions with his wife and mother to malevolence by trivialising them. He seem to pick up on the inference and immediately defended himself by highlighting that he is more appreciative than critical, despite his narrative. He noted that the criticism he had relates to aspects that should change. When asked where the need for change comes from, Gavin suggested that he has always wants to be better and to get better. The researcher asked him whether this has to do with how his father drove him. He responded by stating that, “I do see that, but...”, which was a further indication of deflection and denial. He referred to his

drive for change being healthy rather than dysfunctional, and ended the explanation with, "It's all internal stuff".

Once this was said, Gavin began speaking about his business deal again, making this a tendency for him to escape into work. For this reason, the researcher reminded him that he has a shadow concern, namely the white female, and that the other issue he had highlighted was 'work as play'. Gavin used the work examples to amplify this new approach he had stepped into, including the play aspect and not taking things so seriously. As the researcher affirmed his example, and gave credence to it, Gavin stated a reversal of this. He appeared to be seeking debate and attention, rather than answers. The researcher then stated, "But if you transfer your mode of operating into this central relationship, understand that some of what you expect is projections. I don't want you to be like my mother, in other words". Gavin responded by trivialising, but the researcher persisted by highlighting that he was projecting. He refused to confirm this. The researcher then declared, "Recognise there has been a projection and transference and possibly also recognise it is more your own expectation that gets you feeling a stuck-ness. It may be helpful to you". To this, Gavin replied, "It is probably true but I also like where I am. There is enjoyment out of it".

To summarise, the overriding theme for Gavin was that of the role of the white female and what this role represented for him. He was willing to admit this to himself but was unwilling to allow himself to explore and connect with its origins. There remained a narcissistic shell that he chose to maintain, claiming that, "There is enjoyment out of it". Gavin gravitated to the notion of being 'rescued' but resisted this in the conversation. He linked this with his ongoing struggle with insomnia.

#### *5.4.5.2 The researcher's process reflections and experience*

There was much paraphrasing and summarising within Gavin's interviews, and at times metaphors were used to assist in shifting his thoughts. The researcher found that being direct was the best means by which to progress the conversation.

Gavin seemed to be seeking commitment but displaced it with variety (for example, in business ventures), which seems to be a contradiction and an escape, as if he

were attempting to fill an emptiness. Yet, Gavin was unwilling to explore this and exhausted the researcher's attempts. Every time progress was made in the conversation, Gavin would escape into talking about work or business. The researcher found this deflection in conversation to be tiring and demanding. Despite this, only Gavin asked to have a second conversation to complete the process.

Gavin mentioned that needing to be an adult for most of his life explained why he has regressed into his playful nature, including viewing 'work as play'. However, he was irritated by his staff who played golf during work hours. He seemed to confuse movement with progress, which is ironic given that he made movement in sessions, but no progress. His narcissistic tendencies placed great demand on the researcher. Gavin appeared to be 'stringing the researcher along', and the level of deflection was exhausting. The race and gender issues, so deeply rooted in the South African past, raised by Gavin in the GRE and thereafter, is what he may have sought absolution from the researcher – the only person of colour in the study.

Gavin exuded charm and seduction to his own detriment, and sabotaged his own progress despite claiming that he wanted such progress. The researcher wondered what Gavin's motivation was for agreeing to the researcher's study, such as owing to an innate curiosity relating to the topic, or because he desired to be the centre of attention. She considered the latter owing to feeling that the interviews had become a game to Gavin. It felt like he was playing the researcher, or playing with the researcher. The researcher moreover felt like he sought out debate or an audience to his shenanigans, and did not really want to learn or know more, perhaps because he felt he knew enough or knew it all. Gavin, who had throughout GRE and the debriefing interviews referred to the absence and irrelevance of the white female – the researcher may have been seduced into not being irrelevant and so worked harder at being relevant. This may explain the second interview. Evidence of counter transference is that the researcher may have put more effort into the interview with Gavin, based on the transference of the expectations he had of his wife to the researcher.

#### 5.4.5.3 *Gavin's integration as singleton*

It might be important to Gavin to understand the white female role, including how they rule his existence. This is despite his dismissive stance towards them, which he portrays quietly yet intrusively.

Although he proclaimed that he wanted movement and progress, there was an ongoing paradox in his statements. His belief that he had always been an adult makes him swing to the other side of the continuum and be more child-like in the present. As a child, he took up authority and he now seeks to be vindicated by a significant female. A further theme that emerged is Gavin's desire for 'someone to take care of him', who would sit him down, recognise his potential, and guide him. What he sought out, he expected his wife to provide, and this loaded expectation makes the relationship difficult. As he has taken up authority, he has translated this into a self-assuredness. Gavin has some unresolved issues with regards diversity (both race and gender) – he was the only participant who repeatedly reverted to demeaning the white female, while revering the black female.

A further insight obtained from the post-GRE interview was a revelation on the importance of work to him, prompted by his father's stance to work, which he wanted to change. Desiring work to be fun accounts for his trivialisations and provocations in sessions. Finally, "As I get older, I get younger", was another self-proclaimed status that revealed Gavin's apprehension with his aging and mortality. This may be the beginning of his midlife crisis.

#### **5.4.6 Discussion of post-GRE interview: Sam**

This section will describe the emerging insights from Sam's post-GRE interview, together with the researcher's process experience, and Sam's integration as singleton.

#### 5.4.6.1 *Emerging insights from Sam's post-GRE interview*

The researcher initially established rapport with Sam by speaking of his new job and organisation, and then by discussing surfing and the influence that this has for the surfer. Since the researcher did not have the benefit of a pre-GRE interview with Sam, this lead-up to the conversation was deemed to be necessary.

Sam shared his dissonance about the decision to change his personal and professional life drastically, and revealed that he typically did not question what he does, as much as he was at the time of the interview. He noted that the prior month had been difficult for him. The researcher did not probe, but rather used surfing as a metaphor for the way in which life can be conducted, namely that surfers, "Trust life. They trust the magnitude of it. They know they can't control it. They can harmonise with it". She used this as an entry to link to the post-GRE focus group feedback that Sam had received. The participants in the focus group fed back to Sam that although he was provocative, he was neither confronting nor harsh.

The researcher then offered him a provisional perspective on the dissonance that he shared, suggesting that he feels disconnected from that which is bigger than him, like the ocean is. Sam perceived this to be correct, and reflected that it was possible to take this insight with him, but that he was not doing so. Continuing with surfing as a backdrop, the researcher stated that, "I think you recognise that magnificence, the magnitude, the awe, of it all. You can plug into it and become one with it. But what you are not seeing is that you are it. It is not separate from you. It is a little bit similar to the feedback that they were giving you". Sam thought this was just projection, to which the researcher asked, "Are you acknowledging what you give?" Sam replied, "No, there is something that blocks me from understanding and viscerally knowing what it is. I get this real sense that there is something else. Throughout the whole time, putting into the pot, but I don't see it myself. It is not on my radar consciously".

Only at this point did the researcher offer the context of the study, outlining the aims and process broadly. Using his understanding, the researcher contextualised the study, suggesting that finding patterns of organisation would help him to make sense of his experiences over the four days of the GRE. This could possibly shed light on

his dissonance regarding his relocation and new recent job role. The researcher noted that, “So we are piecing together what comes outside of the three days, your experience of surfing, and your experience of having moved from Durban to a concrete environment. Maybe your move has less to do with moving from being an independent consultant to an employed person has more to do with making concrete...what I am not clear. You said visceral. The emphasis is finding the concrete”.

The researcher suggested a further theme as understanding what ‘freedom’ means, since Sam referred to a lifestyle wherein he worked four days a week and went to the beach every day. To this, Sam responded, “Complete freedom to much more structure and time boundaries. I have to be at a certain place at a certain time. It has always been my choice, before”.

The researcher made reference to a comment made in the GRE, noting that, “Yesterday you spoke about, you deliberately took a back seat or the leadership stuff, in fact you announced to the world that you are not taking that leadership position like when you were thirteen. Part of you making that decision was, you linked it to not taking sides”. Sam related this to when he underwent a “churned up time emotionally....The stuff was bigger than I was (I think). Obviously at fourteen I wasn’t processing it”. It was of interest to the researcher that he spoke of things being bigger than he is, since this was similar to his experience in the GRE where he experienced much of the process as playing out beyond him.

Sam linked this to his parents separating and eventually divorcing, suggesting that the ‘family of origin’ breaking was the first loss that he experienced. This family of origin reference is potent and potentially indelible. He narrated that since the age of six, he was always the captain. He then described a moment, which was of significance:

*I even have a very clear memory of the last time I played captain in the rugby team and for some reason they (my parents) came together to watch the game, it does not make logical sense but, afterwards they said they were so proud to see me as the captain. And it was almost though this was the reason why we should make it work and stay together. I don’t*



*think they said that but it seemed like something that went into my head. Perhaps it was less, I am not taking sides, but more I am not take responsibility for this thing to, I don't want to be the person that makes this thing work or doesn't work. I think that was it. It wasn't only after that I am not taking up leadership anymore. I think I stopped a lot of agency, ownership and responsibility for, as a dynamic, in things that I do and the ways that I do things. I am completely amazed that this has never ever surfaced during all of my hours of therapy and analysis. Why?*

In the moment described above, Sam decided that he would not take the lead and did not want agency or responsibility for his parents' choices. This was also the moment that he set himself upon a particular trajectory/pathway without realising it, which subsequently became his pattern. Sam reiterated this with the statement, "And that got bound up for me with every choice that I make. I'm not going to make this choice actively, because that makes me responsible for more than I have the strength to be responsible for". He went on to explain that, "You are right about the movement to concrete stuff, but it is a good example of how I just let myself float into something in a sense. I didn't go after anything, it came to me. And because it came to me I said fine I will take it. The move to the concrete though, it's accurate. It resonates to me as accurate". The researcher notes that it likely felt accurate for Sam because he felt that seeking understanding was making a choice. Sam concretised this by stating that, "I haven't done that before".

The researcher affirmed the profoundness of this, and speculated on an alternate understanding of choice, in the following sense: "Because in this issue of making a choice I think also, and taking position, also is a little bit, I think there is some overlap of you denouncing, denying, and not recognising what you are putting in there. I am sensing there is a connection". To this, Sam replied, "There is definitely a connection. Because if you don't take position, it's almost like by taking position, you then give yourself coordinates from which to see yourself from, somehow. If you don't take position you have no angle perspective to see what you are and what you are doing. Where it comes from". Again, the researcher affirmed him by stating that this was a positive means by which to interpret such.

Sam went on to consider that, “It really interests me to know, and I will over the next few months, is this really the watershed moment in a process I have been following, where suddenly after 26 years I take up my position again. Sort of a coincidence but not a coincidence it would be, because it is just four days and it is just a process, and what if I haven’t been involved in this, would it happen at the same time or would it have needed longer?”

The researcher pointed out that the only common denominator in any of the scenarios that Sam described was himself. She noted that he had started this process of realisation by using the analogy of 27 years of incarceration to remind him that he had restrained himself from taking position based on what others chose. Sam suggested that this might be connected to his use of the word ‘freedom’. The researcher shared the intuitive and visceral sense that she was experiencing, asking, “Do you feel like you want to break out of your skin, kind of like an energy that is pushing from the inside out?” Sam replied, “Absolutely”, revealing that he had previously projected that onto others (especially surfers), but was suddenly having contact with it. Furthermore, he shared that this was, “inside changes. Because it has been as significant as it has, and strangely not in a hugely emotionally significant way, more like it feels like it is energy and it feels like it is insight”.

Sensing the time to expand the exploration, the researcher asked Sam about the provocateur role that he adopted in the GRE. Sam revealed that he thought it was the only role with which he could add value. This is because since he denied the leader role, he could adopt the shadow of the leader. He went on to explain that:

*Saying no to the leadership, responsibility, agency, whatever, I took up the darker. And for some reason it felt it is all I had. So it is always my defaults where there is a little bit of stretch and that would be my default way to state my identity and this is who I am sort of thing. So it comes easy to me and whatever the valence is, it's very strong. I am not sure what it is, maybe it is the easiest route.*

Sam furthermore admitted that it was easy to be provocateur, as it did not require an active engaging stance. However, at the same time he revealed that he uses this to challenge ignorance. He claimed that he did know how it related, and he stated

that, “I know I use it mostly when I see that people seem to have made assumptions and are just going with their assumptions without questioning them. I don’t know how this all relates”.

The researcher assured Sam that he does understand more than he believes that he does, and she used affirming language to infuse confidence. She added that when he provokes, he uses questions in order to establish the strength and integrity of what is unfolding. This seemed to resonate with him, because Sam then revealed that he held anger towards holding assumptions. He shared that:

*There is more of a childlike anger towards assumption holding. It is some kind of parental thing. It is hanging on to old ways of doing things and I don't know why it makes me so angry, without thinking about it. Then if they are able through the questions to see that, then they passed the test. But I can't relate this back to family stuff. I can't see where the transference lies and what the relation dynamic was.*

The researcher offered that the socialisation process individuals undergo as children suggests that they are regulated to accept that which comes from our parental figures at face value. Sam noted that he experienced this to be the reverse for him, since, “Mine completely counters that. So the more authority the person may have, the more likely I will be looking for where their assumption is”. The researcher pointed out how this reveals the issues that he holds with authority, both his own and that of others. Furthermore, by quoting a definition of integrity to refer to wholeness, the connection he was making between authority and expectations of integrity suggests that Sam first interrogates to find the ‘holes’ in the authority figure, and will only trust once these become whole.

When prompted by the researcher regarding when his issues with the integrity of authority started, Sam disclosed that before the family of origin split, “There were a number of years of affairs and that kind of thing. I must have somehow been aware of it, a double kind of life. Lots of holes in integrity and that is in the only male authority figure that I have ever known. I must have also introjected it, a very flawed sense of what trust and integrity in terms of authority is”. The researcher affirmed this perception of Sam’s, by mentioning that his reflections made sense. Sam went

on to add that, “So I will continually be projecting that broken sense of authority with integrity onto every authority figure I meet. They can’t be trusted. And you are right in saying that therefore how can I stand and take that kind of position because, it is a broken thing”.

Sam recalled his projection of brokenness into the GRE, reflecting that it was his projection of mess and difficulty, not the systems. The researcher then explored the extent to which these seminal experiences with flawed authority became introjected and then split off by his decisions to recoil from leadership. The researcher pointed out the irony of, “by splitting off and putting it at bay constantly, you have not been able to step into all of who you are”.

Sam further explored his view of the world and the lens that he used, describing it as post-structural because it allowed him to tear everything down. He had been doing this for 26 years. It allows him to deconstruct anything, which he stated as reflecting his visceral sense, and revealing his belief of “nothing never really holds”. This double negative is a powerful indication of his amplified negation. The researcher echoed that, “nothing really holds”, and Sam continued by explaining that, “it couldn’t hold water because it has holes”. The researcher went on to echo his words and combined it with a previous question that Sam held, relating to the value that he adds as, “Nothing really holds. And it is interesting, tear down everything and there is no reality. So in having deconstructed everything there is no reality. So who am I, what do I contribute, what is it I actually bring here”.

Sam agreed, to which the researcher responded that by deconstructing everything, he deconstructed himself. For the first time in the post-GRE interview, Sam shifted into a victim mode, mentioning that, “It was done to me”. In order to re-frame Sam’s view of his own deconstruction, the researcher offered a spiritual perspective relating to the annihilation of the self. She suggested that this might have enabled Sam to proceed through life by being experienced as embracing. The researcher clarified that his spiritual journey did require both a deconstruction of the ego-self and detachment to outcomes. Seeing this as having enabled growth, compounded with the positive feedback in the post-GRE focus group, Sam was able to understand that despite his best efforts to avoid living his life, he had been living it.

That said, he noted that, “But nevertheless, the climbing has been done, I think. It is not all lost. Otherwise it could fill you with a lot of sadness as to what you haven’t been connected to for a long, long time”. This provided Sam with a sense of hopefulness.

The researcher further suggested that, “Everything that has happened actually has enabled you to be all that you are right now. Your trajectory would have been completely different had the lead up not been, had the training not been, so actually it has enabled this spiritual, transformative state”. The researcher sensed that sharing a reference would be helpful, and thus highlighted that:

*I am not sure if you have ever read of Castaneda’s work, a big part of what he speaks about is honing attention, the ability to see and perceive. And actually a lot of what you talk about uses those words. Clarifying, it’s seeing. And I think that is what this is about. And you use the word lens. It is refining and being explicit about taking position, being clear of that position and let me read your words to you; If you don’t take position you don’t have coordinates and you don’t have an angle to...*

It emerged after the interview that Sam had had encounters with Shamanism a few years back. Thus, the above resonated with him, to the extent that he asked for his interview transcript to allow him to reflect further upon it. He stated that, “Can I get this stuff back...because I would love to reflect on some of this a bit more. It has been a conversation I couldn’t engineer on my own”. The researcher, using Sam’s request to emphasise the insights that were emerging for him, continued by paraphrasing this request as, “It is quite profound, and that is the honing of being very explicit that I am now taking and stepping into a position, in order to clarify my ability to see. This position gives me coordinate to give me perspective, the angle from which I am my vantage point”.

Sam reflected for a while on his Shamanic experience, before the researcher brought him back to the insights that were emerging by provisionally summarising as follows:

*Two more things that I think would be useful to just amplify, it is the ‘seeing thing’, it is the quest towards integrity, wholeness if you like, and*

*understanding that possibly the transference comes from some defining relationship with authority and your definitions of authority and how that has been challenged now. Maybe your company thing is giving you either reinforcements of old notions of authority you have, or it is giving you an opportunity to see a different side to authority.*

Sam agreed that his new job had enabled him in this way, and the researcher asked him why he was speaking about this job in the past tense. He replied that he had left it already, as follows:

*Maybe exactly because that work is done. I do really feel like that. So up until now I have been trying to make sense in such an intense way what is going on in myself and myself relating to my organisation that I have been unable to lift my head out of it. It has never been comfortable, it has always been stretch until maybe before this time but certainly this time I feel that it is no longer that. Somehow there is a space now. I understand things. I have whatever space I need to understand things in. All of a sudden. So to bring the integrity in it, before I am not sure if I was always able to act to the fully conscious sense of integrity. Some of my decisions were not of the integrity of what I want them to be. And suddenly I have this space to make the decisions that have integrity and to call people when theirs don't.*

The excitement in his voice and tone was palpable. He went on to comment that this had happened quickly, both over his four days of experiencing the GRE, as well as during the past two weeks of the Doctoral programme. Sam added that, "I have a vantage point – it is quite exciting. Where to from now?" The researcher verbalised his sense of energy and he responded by stating, 'fantastic', which was an optimism that was not present at the beginning of the post-GRE interview.

The summary provided by the researcher to Sam, as follows, aimed to provoke further reflection for him as the session drew to a close:

*Congruence and substance leads to your wholeness and release. That is the journey and that is what could be trusted, should be trusted to be, and have integrity. A figure of authority acts with integrity and honour.*

*When that is broken, I am now going to check every other relationship has the quality before I engage with it. And I think it is in the wholeness that you realise that you are the integrity in the equation. You are what gives it integrity and wholeness. That is what they were saying to you yesterday. In all of the feedback they gave you. You give this thing wholeness. 'Christine' even said when something comes up, I kind of look to 'Sam' to say something. You are what gives integrity. It is not to be founded alongside or parallel to you. And also you were not kind of put here to be the judge of who is, and has integrity.*

Sam was intrigued, asking whether this meant that he would hold the space. However, the researcher continued bluntly, responding that, "No, I don't mean that you hold it. Because that means at some level you are determining it by checking it. Your job is not to test it. Your job is to be it. You need not test it". Sam noted that he should "just be it". The researcher reassured him that he had a deep sense of knowing that he can trust what is, to which he replied, "I think there was always a knowing, but a parallel inability to be what you know. I hope to change that". After this, Sam thanked the researcher, mentioning that he "got a lot more out of this than you might get in terms of research".

#### *5.4.6.2 The researcher's process reflections and experience*

Sam was open and receptive. He was sincerely (and perhaps desperately) seeking to understand himself, and thus committed to the conversation from the beginning of the interview. Midway through the conversation, he asked the researcher to send him the transcripts after the interview, to enable him to reflect further on the conversation.

Sam tended to trail off in his narrative, often not completing sentences. The researcher used Sam's words to piece together his story and/or ask questions. She found it important to place Sam at the epicentre of the conversation, in the sense that, 'It's not them, it's all a reflection of you – so what do you see?' This was important because Sam had 'bowed out of his life', as if living as a spectator to the procession of life, but never a part of it. He needed to see life from his own epicentre.

Furthermore, the researcher used affirming language and positive feedback to infuse confidence, for example, “you did know”, and/or through echoing his words.

Another mechanism that was useful was that of the mirror, which provided an inverted perspective, since the truth lies in the opposite. For example, what is lost is actually found, and so forth. The researcher found that Sam responded well to these subtle alterations in perspective. Owing to the fact that Sam adopted the provocateur role in the GRE, the researcher took on the provocateur role at the end of the post-GRE interview to provide thoughts on agency.

The researcher felt an immediate bond and connection with Sam. This considering there had been no pre-event interview, was interesting and potentially revealing. Sam revealed some career choices, which he grappled with – and this was relatable – possibly revealing counter transference of assurance, and a response to Sam’s tendency of handing over decision to others. The closeness may have been because Sam by his own admission was open.

#### *5.4.6.3 Sam’s integration as singleton*

To summarise this interview, Sam stopped making decisions and taking the lead in his youth and continued as such into adulthood. He did not want agency or responsibility for other people’s choices. This became his pattern, yet he noted that he did not identify this previously, despite undergoing therapy. He had worked hard to understand the world without ever making a choice about it. He was trying to understand the world, yet never attempted to understand himself. At the time of the interview, it was the first time in his life that he had made a choice to take a job in another city, involving a concrete decision and choice. Seeking something concrete that made sense was of importance to Sam, because for years he had not chosen anything, rather waiting for it to ‘float’ to him. This new job was a decisive step.

Taking position was another insight for Sam. He reflected that without taking position, one would have no angle from which to see what they are, what they are doing, and where such behaviour was coming from. He realised that for 26 years, he had placed himself in purgatory (that is, limbo and anguish), by suspending



himself from taking a concrete position. By breaking everything down, there is no reality. Ironically, he deconstructed himself and nothing else. This is the reason why he had been questioning, 'Who am I? What value do I actually bring?', and why he could not claim his space. His life had effected growth on another level. Even though he thought his life was static, he had moved despite his greatest efforts.

A further insight for Sam was the provocateur role. He described this as the shadow of leadership and an easier role, one that did not require him to take a stance, but rather that allowed him to challenge things. His anger towards those who held onto old assumptions or did not question such, stemmed back to male authority in his life who 'lived a double life' and broke the family of origin. This revealed his anger at authority lacking integrity, and the tendency to split off authority because of his association with authority lacking integrity. This arose from a fear that he would demonstrate his own lack of integrity, meaning that he could not step into something that is broken. His own experience of a broken family caused him to project brokenness onto other systems. This perpetuated the belief that he possessed, namely that nothing ever holds. He reached a point of liberation by acknowledging his own lack of integrity as displayed in some of his decisions, with a sense of being set free from a cage (in terms of his self-imposed imprisonment for 26 years). At the time of the post-GRE interview, he was ready for "Where to from now?", since he was ready to act ('just be it').

Sam was ready to integrate because he was feeling liberated. He exuded energy and excitement, and felt released from self-imposed imprisonment. He recognised his projections and the situations he had recreated without realising as such. He also recognised which situations he had deflected, and this afforded him a sense of liberation. This liberation provided him with a sense of readiness to take on his life, and to take agency and position.

## **5.5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

This chapter reported on the reflections that participants shared, and insights that they gained, in the pre-GRE interviews as well as the post-GRE focus group and the post-GRE interviews. The experience of the GRE was different for each

participant, and more importantly, the reflections that he/she discussed were unique. Four of the six participants were able to trace their experiences (including their defences and anxiety) to their formative years. By making connections to such, they were able to make meaning of their experiences. The GRE was not significant; rather, what was significant was the extent to which the GRE was able to unlock self-awareness and through reflective conversations, bring about meaning-making.

The reporting within this chapter was structured according to the researcher's contact with each of the participants. It began by explaining the pre-GRE interview for each participant, followed by a report of the participants' post-GRE focus group reflections. Thereafter, a discussion relating to the reflections and responses of each participant's in-depth FANI was provided, detailing the meaning they made of the experiences they had in the GRE, as well as the insights they arrived at because of the reflective space that the one-on-one FANI discussions provided.

Christine, Magda, Lisa and Sam were engaged throughout the above processes, remaining open and deeply interested in pursuing an understanding of themselves. Gretha was interested in having an academic debate on the GRE and the researcher's process. When an insight emerged, she did not acknowledge it. Gavin was less interested in finding meaning, instead engaging immaturely with the process by deflecting and re-directing the conversation away from insight and learning.

## **5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter set forth the flow of process and the narrative that unfolded from the participants in each of the above stages. This served to facilitate an understanding of the processes that were adopted, and the emergent effects that each stage had on the participants. This developed a foundation for understanding the following chapter, which interprets these findings.

## CHAPTER SIX

### INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

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#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The interpretation of research findings are presented in this chapter. These interpretations are discussed under specific systems psychodynamic themes, and for each theme, a working hypotheses is formulated. In addition, the researcher's role and emergent process questions and techniques will be explored. Each of the working hypotheses inform the formulation of the overall research hypothesis, process model and framework, which will follow at the end of the chapter. The chapter also presents proposed methodologies and techniques that may enable the singleton to discern insights post a GRE. These aspects are integrated with literature, and a working hypothesis of a process model for singleton meaning-making and insight formulation is presented.

#### 6.2 THE PARTICIPANTS AND RESEARCHER

This section will discuss the nature of the participants as defended subjects, and the researcher as a defended researcher.

##### 6.2.1 The defended subject

All participants revealed a level of anxiety during the GRE, which inevitably triggered unconscious defence mechanisms (Cilliers, 2001, 2005; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, 2013). This includes the pre-GRE interview, wherein incongruence between normative, existential and phenomenological roles were evident across participants. This revealed the possibility of unconscious anxiety manifesting, as if acting as a premonition of likely reactions to the GRE.

In Christine's narrative, her investment in an idealised moment of 'awakening' served a defensive function. In this moment, she had arrived at a point of surrender

and acceptance of self, which legitimised and mitigated her experience of 77 job rejections and difficulties in her childhood. In placing significance on the event of sitting on the roof, she was able to defend her self and distort her construction of events.

Gretha's escape into theory and postulations served as a defence against the anxiety of disconnectedness and of being 'found to not know'. This intellectualisation served as a defence against anxiety. She used reasoning by means of theory to block unconscious anxiety, and was able to detach herself from the situation, which left her feeling disconnected and in need of a 'bridge or translator'.

Lisa's anger at her mother created so much anxiety that she deeply internalised this. Consequently, she deeply feared that the same illness as her mother would capture herself in a similar way to how it hijacked her mother's life. She felt hijacked in the sense of being in denial and persecuted for a deed committed in her final year at school, which is something she continues to feel shame about. Lisa's defensive struggles between splitting off the helplessness of her mother, and her fears of becoming dependent and a burden to others, were represented by her continuous reference to occupying the breadwinner role in the family. By holding a secret from her past, she locked herself in to herself.

Magda displayed fight-flight responses at an unconscious level, assuming a nomadic transient existence through which she struggled to find an anchor. Her anxiety seemed to have stemmed from the loss of her father at the age of five, which affected the construction of her memory recall and the separation from emotion that she set up in her life.

Gavin used rationalisation as a defence against his anxiety, which manifested in his insomnia. He used logical justification to defend himself, bearing in mind that he was able to mask himself as smart, coming across as 'cocky' by his own admission. He found excuses for his actions and justified his actions in accordance with these. Gavin's further defence was depersonalisation, in the form of denial of the significance of the individual, especially when that individual is a white female. He objectified the white female and/or demeaned the role. This defence against anxiety

evoked by the white female role was originally connected to his mother, whom he described as being absent and passive-aggressive. This distorted his interactions with, and understanding of, white females.

Sam compartmentalised by splitting off parts of himself and his memories as a defence to his anxiety. His choice not to make decisions for others, which he took as a young teenager, initiated his tendency to compartmentalise and ultimately separate his self from others. All the 'structures' in his existence resulted in his drive to deconstruct the world, projecting action into the world away from himself. Towards the end of his post-GRE interview, Sam stated that he was prompted to recall memories that he had long forgotten, which is something that years of therapy had not uncovered for him. Sam moreover admitted in the post-GRE focus group that he is particularly receptive to projective identification.

Hollway and Jefferson's (2013, p.17) contention that "a dynamic unconscious that defends against anxiety and significantly influences people's action, lives and relations" is fully supported by what participants in this study demonstrated, as revealed by the summary above.

### **6.2.2 The defended researcher**

In this study, the researcher actively participated with the 'sense-making' process of participants during both the pre- and post-GRE interviews as well as the post-GRE focus group. As Nicholls (2009) explains, the response of the researcher is critical to developing insights. For this reason, it is noted that at the time of the study, the researcher was also a consultant-in-training within the GRE and as such, was fully engrossed in the systems psychodynamic event and experience. In some ways, this might have heightened the acuteness by which the post-GRE focus group and post-GRE interviews were experienced by the researcher.

Throughout the exploration process, the researcher was uncertain of how the process would unfold and had limited control of such. Additionally, she could not fully impose her own logic. These limitations could be deemed as a negative capability. The researcher found it impossible not to feel compassion for some of

the participants during the post-GRE interviews, as each of their unique narratives and willingness to share of themselves exposed their vulnerabilities and in some cases, their gentle natures. Consequently, the researcher's responses in the post-GRE interviews were authentic and as in-tune with the participants as possible.

The researcher relied on her intuition during these interviews (Nicholls, 2009), as informed by her own history and motivations. The researcher had a particularly tumultuous relationship with her own father, and while this was difficult to process, it did not negate that he was the most important teacher in her life. For this reason, she holds a certain perspective and life view that perceives everything to be related. She believes that nothing is a coincidence, but rather that we should derive meaning from events, otherwise such events will define us. This is a constructivist perspective. Her perceptions and motivations affected the modality with which she listened to and processed the narratives of each participant.

The researcher's own anxieties were amplified in an attempt to optimise the benefit of time with each participant (Armstrong, 2005; Cilliers, 2001; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). For this reason, she would at times offer more to the conversation than may have been needed. The researcher reflected internally on the participants' discussions long after the conclusion of each session, replaying each conversation in an attempt to make sense of them. This required long periods of 'resting' the data, to allow the researcher to return to the data without being emotionally-loaded. This time-lapse was useful in gaining further perspective of the study's findings.

### **6.2.3 Integrating the experience of the researcher into the research**

The researcher played numerous roles during the process of conducting this study, as discussed in Section 4.3.2. The primary roles were that of *researcher* and *defended researcher*. Moreover, the role that she played during the post-GRE focus group was different to that played during the post-GRE interviews. During the post-GRE focus group, the researcher assumed the role of *facilitator*. On the other hand, during the post-GRE interviews, she assumed the role of *sounding board* and *reflector*.

The management of boundaries became highly challenging during this process. As noted by Beedell (2009), remaining neutral is an important part of psychosocial research, but as confidence and experience is gained, a researcher becomes less focused on neutralising his/her presence. In order to build genuine trust and rapport to enable participants to reveal intensely personal information relating to their lives and psychological states, Beedell (2009) highlights the need for a researcher to be present, and to react and respond as him/herself. In this study, the researcher indeed found that responding in the moment to participants was effective, since different techniques and methods emerged naturally and uniquely within each of the interviews. The researcher used metaphors, amplification, antonym and/or synonym phrasing, as well as other free-flowing expressions to lift out underpinning meaning for participants. These emerged from the conversations with no set formula; rather, the researcher was 'real', present and responsive in the discussions.

At a conscious level, the researcher was calm and fully focused on the participants' sharing and narratives. There was no way of predicting the flow or nature of the post-GRE interviews. Thus, since the researcher did not know how each interview would go, she put effort into remaining in sync with each participant to the best of her ability.

At an unconscious level, however, she might have experienced anxiety regarding the ultimate product to be produced from the body of empirical findings, which needed to yield something of value. This might have evoked performance anxiety, mostly displayed during Gretha and Gavin's post-GRE interviews. This is because these participants proved to be particularly resistant to revealing personal insights that during their post-GRE interviews. Owing to the researcher's latent anxiety, she might have become impatient with Gavin, and agreed to a follow-up as a means to enhance the chance of reaching meaningful conclusions with him.

However, most of the post-GRE interviews yielded value for each participant and were thus deemed useful by them. It was only when the perceived value of the post-GRE interviews seemed less evident, as per the above explanation, that the researcher felt somewhat determined to bring this forth on behalf of the participants, as if she were responsible for their insights. The researcher would at times become

obsessed about each interview, and continue them in her head long after they were concluded, attempting to process the discernment on her own.

Additionally, as set forth in Chapter 4, the researcher took up multiple roles in this study including those of industrial psychologist, systems-psychodynamically-informed consultant and executive coach, Doctoral student, interviewer, observer and researcher. The overarching experience for the researcher was that of 'one-role in the here-and-now'. In other words, multiple roles could not be assumed simultaneously. As systems-psychodynamically informed consultant, the researcher found it helpful to have had experience in the field, since this contributed to an understanding of relevant terminology. This enabled rapport with participants based on a degree of competence demonstrated by researcher.

Additionally, being a Doctoral student may also have contributed to the rapport with participants, owing to the fact that it levelled power perceptions. In other words, the researcher was seen as equal to the participants ('all in the same boat'), which alleviated potential distortions in conscious or unconscious exchange between the researcher and participants. Having been involved in the GRE also provided the researcher with deeper context, and established a degree of credibility with participants. Participants were aware that they could be truthful about their experiences because the researcher was a witness to them. This enabled deeper levels of engagement, as participants experienced a connection to the researcher because she knew what they had been through, and thus assumed empathy. This built further rapport.

### **6.3 DISCUSSION OF PSYCHODYNAMIC THEMES**

In order to interpret the findings of the study, this section will set forth a discussion of the common themes that emerged, which describe below-the-surface psychodynamic issues. Each theme will be discussed in its varied form as manifested in the interviews, and integrated with literature. A working hypothesis will be highlighted after each theme.



### 6.3.1 Theme 1: Anxiety

The systems psychodynamic perspective accepts anxiety as the basis for, and driving force (dynamo) of, relationships and relatedness behaviour (Armstrong, 2005; Cilliers, 2001). According to Menzies (1993), anxiety is accepted as the basis of all group behaviour and is the basis for Hollway and Jefferson's (2013) defended subject.

Participants displayed anxiety during the GRE, since this is a process that simulates organisational dynamics and amplifies latent anxiety. This is because the design is posited upon setting up a degree of uncertainty (Cilliers, 2001). The members of the GRE were not familiar with each other, with their primary common factor being their participation in the Doctoral programme within the university under study, which was hosting the GRE. Owing to this, anxiety was expressed during the post-GRE focus group and interviews.

Such anxiety was not explicitly expressed during the pre-GRE interviews, however, most likely because at this point, it would have been masked with excitement and/or ignorance of the process into which they were about to enter. That said, participants incongruence of role analysis in the pre-GRE interviews might have been a clue to the unconscious anxieties that they held. Unconscious conflicts produce anxiety, both persecutory and depressive (Cilliers, 2005).

#### 6.3.1.1 *Experiences of anxiety*

In this study, participants experienced anxiety in different ways, which will be described to follow.

##### *a) Performance anxiety*

As reported by Mor et al. (1995), socially prescribed perfectionism, self-oriented perfectionism and low personal control are associated with debilitating performance anxiety. All of the participants in this study were enrolled in the Doctoral programme described in Chapter 4. Participation in the GRE for these Doctoral students was part of the programme, and thus was involuntary. Since their lecturers were the

consultants of the GRE, there was an unspoken and unavoidable notion that their performance at some level would influence the perceptions that lecturers had of them. Participants therefore experienced performance anxiety to varying degrees because of the GRE.

*b) Persecutory anxiety*

Persecutory anxiety is a primitive anxiety related to a fear of annihilation (Czander, 1993). It takes hold when objects in the system get inside the ego and annihilate the ideal object and the self, eliciting anxiety and conscious fears such as paranoia (Czander, 1993). A number of participants experienced persecutory anxiety during the GRE. For example, Christine noted that, “They think I speak too much”. Gavin related that he felt that others thought he was disrespectful, even though he was trying to help the system make progress. Sam specifically felt persecuted in his role as leader, a role he experienced inner conflict about holding.

*c) Depressive anxiety*

Depressive anxiety is characterised by fear that one’s own destructive impulses will destroy the loved object and that good will be lost; that is, anger at the loved object gives way to guilt and mourning (Czander, 1993). Some of the participants indicated depressive anxiety in their responses. Throughout the GRE and in the post-GRE focus group, Sam displayed a state of loss and mourning, identifying with projections of provocateur and deconstruction of authority structures. Lisa felt a connection to the wellness group to which she was assigned, but lamented that she was not part of the leadership group. Gretha expressed fears of being caught out for “not-knowing”, and Magda tried to separate herself from those she perceived as being too emotional.

*6.3.1.2 Basic assumptions driven by anxiety*

The following sub-sections outline two basic assumptions that are modes of operation driven by anxiety.

*a) Pairing (baP)*

This basic assumption is a response to anxiety or loneliness, and therefore an attempt to pair with others is seen as being able to alleviate these anxieties. Pairing implies that the group will be split, and thus pairing-off of some group members will break the whole and allow for the establishment of a smaller system (Banet & Hayden, 1977; Bion, 1961; Hirschhorn, 1993). As evidence of baP, both Christine and Gretha formed an alliance prior to the GRE to debrief at the end of each day. This was done to offer support and insulate each of them from harm or intrusion by the process. They established a smaller system for themselves, so that both experienced connection and a defence against isolation.

*b) One-ness (ba-O)*

This basic assumption is described by Koortzen and Cilliers (2002, p.269) as occurring when “members seek to join a powerful union with an omnipotent force, surrendering self for passive participation, thus experiencing existence, well-being and wholeness”. One-ness was evident in the coming together of the original five participants, to the point where the sixth participant requested participation. This subgroup of the GRE united and submitted to participation in the post-GRE focus group and interviews, as though these discussions offered some comfort and relief from the anxiety provoked during the GRE. During the post-GRE focus group specifically, participants displayed ba-O by emphasising similarities between themselves, and offering supportive and affirming feedback to one other. Indeed, one-ness is also referred to as “we-ness”.

*6.3.1.3 Defence mechanisms used against anxiety*

To contain or reduce anxiety, defences are employed, and the self is “forged out of unconscious defences against anxiety” (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, p.17). In this way, when various defences are employed, they result in a distortion of reality and reduction in feelings of anxiety (Stapley, 2006). Thus, in order to manage the anxiety highlighted in the preceding sections, participants engaged in the use of defence mechanisms. The following sections will describe the individually structured defences of the participants, also known as their ‘basic assumptions’.

a) *Splitting, introjection and projection*

The defences used to deal with persecutory anxiety are introjection and projection, used simultaneously through the defensive process of splitting (Czander, 1993). Most of the participants introjected the confusion and uncertainty that took place in the GRE, as evidenced in the post-GRE focus group and its Role Analysis template. Three of the six participants stated their pull towards clarifying objectives or trying to find structure, as well as predicting the trend in discussion, contextualising unfolding in the system, and being a change agent or agitator to change.

The defence mechanisms of splitting and projection are associated with the basic assumption drive of fight-flight. For example, Gavin's urge of fighting 'the absence of the white female' was evident. An associated emotional state was experienced as Gavin perceived himself as sacrificing and making himself alienable, hoping to mobilise or energise the group, which instead ostracised him.

Magda split 'emotions', separating herself from "emotional stuff" and stating that, "I work hard at it, isolating myself from those who are emotional". She moreover split off emotions by stating that, "Not get into all the emotions, I work hard to isolate myself from those who are too emotional". She projected issues with authority into the system. Lisa felt inadequate for "not stepping up to leadership". She experienced being split off from the leadership role when she was assigned to the wellness subgroup, and she split off authority and introjected wellness, which resonated with her. Both Lisa and Magda projected anger with authority.

Christine had a fight-flight response to imposed structure and rules. She felt "pressured to silence", stating that, "They think I speak too much". This devalued her own contribution phenomenologically, which is a defence of the dependency by functioning. As noted by Cilliers (2001) and Klein (1946), the process of splitting starts with splitting the object into good and bad parts, and then projecting the bad into an object to keep it at bay, while introjecting the good. The persecutory objects feared are thus projected to keep them from damaging the idealised objects within the ego (Cilliers, 2001; Czander, 1993).

To highlight this further, Sam tried to split off the acceptance of the group as he denied the pull of taking up his role as leader. He remained conflicted by his leadership role and adopted the shadow role of provocateur. In other words, Sam's normative role identified as part of the leadership group, but he split-off the leadership/authority aspects and projected that into the group. He introjected the provocateur role, seeing the provocateur as the 'shadow of the leader'. Indeed, projection happens when an individual rejects unwanted parts of the self, because holding these inside is too painful (Cytrynbaum & Noumair, 2004). Projection, like all other defence mechanisms, is an unconscious process that is automatic and involuntary (Stapley, 2006).

As anxiety increased amongst participants, they would project their issues onto the system to cope (Menziess-Lyth, 1960). Some of the research participants were prone and primed to notice these projections. For example, being part of an academic endeavour meant that for many participants, holding knowledge was an important implied state. For this reason, they split off the uncertainty and projected onto the consultants, while Gretha and Christine introjected the state of 'not-knowing' and ignorance.

The defence mechanism of introjection, on the other hand, is associated with the basic assumption drive of dependency. For example, participants were also Doctoral students and held high regard for, and unspoken reliance on, the consultants of the GRE (who were also their lecturers). The associated emotional state that the participants experienced included an uncertainty akin to inadequacy and frustration, and a dependence on the designation of power (omnipotence) and knowledge (omniscience) of those in power (that is, the consultants).

Most of the participants introjected doubt and confusion in the system, and experienced a vacuum of leadership and authority. Five of the six participants experienced themselves taking up a leadership or authority role at some point.

Some of the introjections made by the participants related to 'not-knowing', and concerned the roles of authoriser (including motivator and protector) and provocateur. Gretha introjected the fear of 'not-knowing', and on reflection,

recognised a fear of not-knowing. Lisa introjected the role of emotional container, despite believing that she was ignorant to other's feelings. She introjected failed leadership, noting in the post-GRE focus group on three occasions as well as in her pre-GRE interview that she had not taken up the leadership role, as she usually would have.

Gavin spoke in the post-GRE focus group of his desire to "integrate the split off part into the whole". Yet, he resorted to trivialising through humour and sexual innuendos to deflect his own anxiety while trying to integrate. He described this as "work as play". There was evidence of a retreat into child-like behaviour to deny the anxiety and the splitting in which he engaged. Sam stated that, "People project onto me a need for feedback" (that is, a defence of idealisation). This gives indication that the ba group functioning included dependency assumptions, and that the members of the post-GRE focus group introjected the roles of motivator and reflector.

Some of the participants indicated that they introjected shame and disappointment of the system and their respective systems. Lisa introjected an emotional disconnect, stating that, "I think I am ignorant of others' feelings". From a systems psychodynamic perspective, shame comes from not meeting normative expectations and thus devaluing the self (May, 2007). According to this author, shame is a warning that relationships have been disrupted, and it promotes the event to consciousness to bring appropriate attention and action. The introjective identification of shame for participants provides a warning of disrupted personal relationships (particularly pivotal for formative relationships such as parents, wives and children), and a need to address such.

Sam introjected helplessness, stating that, "I don't claim my space". During the post-GRE focus group, all the female participants gave him reassuring feedback as if to come to his 'rescue'. To this, he rebounded with denial, noting that, "I am not an out-there giving person", indicating his own sense of inadequacy. Gavin introjected a fractured-ness; that is, a split-off part of himself that needed to be brought into the whole. The split-off part was the playful child. He felt driven to "move things along", but introjected the 'stuckness' of the system more than any other participant.

Notably, the introjection of 'ignorance' fell on the white females, onto whom was also projected that of absent, insignificant member by Gavin. Projective identification may be reflected by this emergent dynamic (Blackman, 2004; Cilliers et al., 2004). This is discussed further in the following sub-heading.

*b) Projective identification*

The key defence of depressive anxiety is projective identification, which is interpersonal (Czander, 1993; Klein, 1935). For example, Sam split off from the authority role of leader, projecting this into the group. However, he introjected the role of shadow leader (provocateur) and behaved accordingly. He stated that he experienced his role as "provocateur and holder of the other view...experienced myself as removed or smaller". While projection deals with placing an unwanted part of self into another to separate from it, projective identification instead places parts of self with others in order to feel close to ('at one with') the object, or forcing others to become what one needs them to be for one's own unconscious reasons (Shapiro & Carr, 2012). Projective identification amounts to identification with the projection by both object and subject, while maintaining a loss of awareness of the whole (Blackman, 2004; Cilliers, 2001; 2005; Obholzer & Roberts, 2003).

A further example is that of Christine. Owing to the fact that she believed control to be bad, she split this off and associated control with taking charge. She thus projected "taking charge" and felt that she should pass this on, seemingly to Sam. She then identified with his authority. Even when he adopted the shadow leader (provocateur), she (and Gretha) seduced him with feedback that he did this so well that it was "safe, constructive". Christine engaged in much projective identification during the post-GRE focus group, providing feedback to other participants in a constructive manner. She affirmed Magda, who split off emotions, by saying that, "when you showed emotions it was a turning point in the group". To Lisa, she noted that, "You go where others fear to go". These affirmations demonstrate Christine's identification of projecting the good parts of herself (that is, her own personal journey of transformation), to which she sought to create connection and affirmation. This would serve to create a familiar comfort to offset anxiety relating to the imposition of rules and structures, akin to that which released her from anxiety within her personal life.

Gretha projected connections into the group, and indicated that she needed others (such as Christine) to be a bridge for her to be understood. She moreover admitted that her work role is that of a medium or facilitator for individuals who are transitioning. Gavin unconsciously forced his internal image of white females into the group dynamic in order to validate his views.

*c) Denial*

Denial is the unconscious process of disowning some aspects of a conflict, with the result that the conflict no longer appears to exist (Stapley, 2006, p.49). This author goes on to explain that denial relates to aspects of a situation that the individual does not want to perceive. Both Gavin and Gretha engaged in denial in the post-GRE interviews. They preferred to pontificate about others and theory, and refused to understand themselves, their experiences, and what these experiences could mean. Gavin resorted to trivialising the GRE and the process that resulted from it, making everything seem like a joke and deliberately being provocative and agitating.

Denial manifested in Christine, Gretha and Gavin when they resisted finding insights through the awareness of their unconscious defences. In the post-GRE interviews, they persisted in speaking abstractly about the process or deflecting into external aspects of their lives.

This defence mechanism is aligned with the basic assumption of the drive of pairing. Throughout the GRE, there was the hope for the 'messiah' to be uncovered. Sam expressed feeling the pressure of leadership, to be more than he felt he could be. In terms of emotional states, feelings of security were sought from the pairing, with the hope that a "person or idea will save the group...from feeling destructiveness". Gretha and Christine conducted 'off-the-books' debriefing sessions after the end of each day of the GRE, to insulate themselves from GRE-related effects, as if they expected to have a negative reaction and wanted to control or prevent this. Gavin attempted to save the group from stagnation, and agitated to effect movement that he thought would progress the group.



#### *d) Detachment*

Both Magda and Lisa experienced detachment, since both negated their emotions and/or split off from their emotions. Magda wanted to stay distant from people who are emotional by keeping them “at bay”, but she later disclosed her struggle with maintaining stability and continuity with her family of origin and her nomadic existence. This made attachment harder, coupled with her realisation that what home was to her, or even where her home is, remained unclear to her. While Lisa punished herself and refused to forgive herself, she also displayed an inability to handle her emotional distress by stating that, “I think I am ignorant of others’ feelings”. She later disclosed her inability to connect with her mother owing to an insidious fear about her own health and well-being.

This suggests that in order to cope with anxiety, one learns to control one’s feelings and refrain from involvement to aid detachment and minimise interaction that may lead to attachment (Klein, 1946). This is characterised by the pain and distress of breaking relationships and the importance of maintaining stable and continuous relationships, often employing repressive techniques to deal with emotional distress. This includes advice such as having a ‘stiff upper lip’ or ‘pulling yourself together’. Such individuals may lack confidence in their own ability to handle emotional stress (Klein, 1935; 1950).

#### *e) Sublimation*

Gavin employed this in the post-GRE focus group and interviews. After acknowledging his phenomenological role as being arrogant (“My joking can be seen as dismissive, rebellious and disrespectful”), he quickly added that it was helpful and playful (“others enjoy having me around”). He saw himself as a “mover”, and in referring to his provoking role, stated that, “some members of the group who seemed to want to get somewhere...was quite happy to go with what unfolded”. In his post-GRE interviews specifically, he revealed a need to be taken care of, and thus would find the rejection of a group to provoke anxiety. This invokes sublimation as a defence mechanism, which refers to redirecting unacceptable areas of the self to areas that are acceptable to others, in an attempt to make the unacceptable ‘acceptable’ and useful (Stapley, 2006).

*f) Rationalisation*

Gavin, Christine and Gretha were particularly prone to creating 'explanations' of events, in an attempt to avoid experiencing the event. In the post-GRE focus group and interviews, they sought to turn these conversations into academic discussions. Many of the participants also described their involvement in the GRE as relating to their learning of methodology (in the form of a systems psychodynamic GRE), either so that they could use this learning in other situations, or because the GRE was a course requirement. Only Sam suggested that the purpose of the GRE was to uncover the self. This confirms that rationalisation is the formulation of false but credible justifications, which Stapley (2006, p.48) describes as an unconscious manipulation of our opinions to evade recognising the unpleasant or forbidden, thus avoiding the panic of failure. Rationalisation is used to remain emotionally detached, while still being in control (Gabelnick & Carr, 1989; Neumann et al., 1997).

*g) Intellectualisation*

Intellectualisation manifested when participants experienced the post-GRE interviews as threatening. This occurred when they came too close to unlocking their self. Gretha and Gavin employed this defence excessively in different ways during the post-GRE interviews. Gretha provided extended monologues relating to theory and the Leicester Institute, speaking on different tangents that were irrelevant to the discussion at hand. Gavin derailed into talking about his business pursuits, which seemed random to the conversation and context. He further deflected with sexualisation, which involved endowing an object with sexual meaning that it did not have, in an attempt to defend against anxieties related with prohibited impulses (Coen, 1981). Gavin did this both in the post-GRE focus group (referring to white female as a sex object) as well as in his post-GRE interviews (stating that he invited 'penetration'). Such intellectualisation, like rationalisation, is employed so that individuals do not have to emotionally attach, while remaining in a position of control (Gabelnick & Carr, 1989; Neumann et al., 1997).

In this way, intellectualisation refers to the excessive use of abstract thinking to avoid or minimise unpleasant feelings in an attempt to take an objective viewpoint (Blackman, 2004; Plutchik, 1995). Excessively using intellectual processes to avoid affective expression or experience is characterised by undue emphasis being

placed on the inanimate, to avoid intimacy with people. Attention is given to an external reality to elude the expression of inner feelings, and emphasis is placed on unrelated and extraneous details to avoid perceiving the whole (Henning, 2009). Intellectualisation is closely allied to rationalisation and allows for conscious analysis in a way that does not create anxiety (Blackman, 2004; Plutchik, 1995).

#### 6.3.1.4 *Discussion of defences*

Defences are employed to contain or reduce anxiety – out of which the self is forged (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). To know this self, therefore requires an understanding of the defences. Kilburg (2004) described the multiple methods that can be employed in coaching to elicit and work with psychodynamic aspects. These include, amongst others, storytelling, empathic resonance, pattern recognition, intuition, creating theories of mind about others, rational analysis, clarifications, confrontations, interpretations, reframing and reconstruction. These were not premeditated, but emerged in the post-GRE interviews and were uncovered by researcher during data analysis.

The **working hypothesis for ‘anxiety’** is that all of the participants employed some form of defence against anxiety throughout the GRE as well as in the post-GRE focus group and post-GRE interviews (as understood by Bion, 1961, 1970; Blackman, 2004; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Vaillant, 1994). This manifested at different points in the process. All individuals became aware of their in-group experiences and defences, given rise to by this anxiety. However, not all of them understood what these defences meant or where they stemmed from, without active reflection and processing. Left un-processed, such awareness would recede.

#### 6.3.2 **Theme 2: Conflict**

In the post-GRE interviews, conflicts that may have been the impetus to original anxiety and defences were experienced on two levels, namely intra-personal conflict and interpersonal conflict. Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) describe conflict in psychodynamic terms as the splits experienced within the self, between the self and others, inside of groups and between groups. For the purposes of the discussion to

follow, only the conflicts within the individual and between the individual and others in their experiences beyond the GRE will be explored.

The intrapersonal conflict for each participant stemmed from events prior to the GRE. However, such conflicts were agitated by the GRE, triggering varied defences. In the post-GRE interviews, by understanding the root of the participants' anxieties, different intrapersonal conflicts were identified. Indeed, individuals experience intrapersonal conflicts owing to anxiety from unacceptable feelings or desires, which in turn lead to defensive reactions (Kets de Vries, 2006). Similarly, interpersonal conflicts were evident with the participants, stemming from important relationships that resulted in intrapersonal conflict. It seemed as though the participants were conflicted by having feelings of conflict with an important 'other'.

The interplay between these two forms of conflict, and understanding the source of anxiety, proved to be useful to the participants' understanding of how the singleton's experience can be swamped in the collective. Hollway and Jefferson (2005, in Garfield et al., 2010) wrote that the process of conflict resolution produces greater insight. Indeed, Cilliers (2005) suggested that the opportunity to discuss fears and conflicts enables an individual to gain insights and understanding that fosters growth, development and change.

The primary task for the participants in this study can be assumed to be 'living their life fully'. Assuming the participants' capacity to do this might have been compromised by their lack of resolution of their unconscious conflicts and anxiety, or their lack of awareness of these conflicts. Such unresolved conflicts could lead to increased anxiety and lowering of task performance (Dimitrov, 2008). The post-GRE interviews, however, lifted most of the participants out of their conflicted states, as discussed in the paragraphs to follow.

Magda had unresolved intrapersonal conflict about her nomadic behaviour, namely that she "could not settle in one place". For this, she blamed and criticised herself but remained stuck in continuing to do this. Her recovery was to oscillate between structure and spiritual, as if this ritual would give her absolution or atonement. Atonement might be perceived as a desire for "at-one-ment" (Bion, 1970). She was

splintering her existence by not acknowledging her inner conflicts, including where this was coming from and whether it was worthy of critique. Magda discovered in her post-GRE interview that her conflict extended into the interpersonal domain. She experienced conflict with her mother, and felt regret or conflicted-ness about the close relationship that her sister and mother had, which she lacked. She acknowledged their love for her, but had difficulty being around them for extended periods. This stemmed from her view of the 'whole' family being broken by the loss of her father. Since then, her family unit has not felt complete, and thus did not feel like home. Her nomadic response was an attempt to find 'home', and the post-GRE interview helped her reconcile that 'she was home' (in multiple ways).

Lisa experienced long-held intrapersonal conflict. She had not forgiven herself for something that remains her own secret. She continued to feel like "I am supposed to be..." (for example, a leader, a bread winner and so forth). This was her ultimate self-persecution and self-recrimination from which there is no absolution or recovery. Lisa also revealed her current interpersonal conflict with her mother. It emerged that her mother was the representation of her deepest fear; that is, not being engaged with her child and with the world. It was easier (rather than more comfortable) to remain in conflict with her mother than to acknowledge her fear during a vulnerable time of change and upheaval in her life.

Gretha experienced interpersonal conflict with her mother, who reportedly did not support or understand her professional endeavours. This interpersonal conflict seemed representative of Gretha's experience of how the world behaved towards her, in terms of not understanding her nor supporting her endeavours. Gretha discussed at length her conflict with the Leicester Institute, which stemmed from her view that they have excluded the female 'energy' and presence from their methodology. This is a simplistic metaphor for how she experiences her existence in the world at large.

Christine displayed less conflict than the other participants did (both intrapersonal and interpersonal). She demonstrated congruence in the role analysis conducted as part of the pre-GRE interviews, which might account for her lack of 'on-the-surface' conflicts. She only displayed a sense of conflicted-ness relating to feeling pressured

to silence.

Gavin discussed conflicts with his wife and mother. His interpersonal conflicts stemmed from their lack of engagement, noting that, “They are just not there – present”. His conflict bordered on anger at these important female roles, but he dismissed their importance in his life, stating that he grew up “on the back of a strong black woman”. He disclosed the laissez-faire approach that his mother adopted, explaining that he experienced her as irresponsible, which prompted him towards being ultra-responsible. This spurred his intrapersonal conflict relating to having lost his youth too soon, and the drive to bring fun back into his life.

Sam’s intrapersonal conflict manifested in adopting a self-critical mode, including not being able to see any good in himself. He also announced his lack of ability to hold his “space” and the multiple projections that he experienced. At the time of the post-GRE interviews, Sam had recently changed jobs. He was feeling conflicted about the job change as well as its accompanying relocation. His intrapersonal conflict stemmed from the “exit” he had unintentionally chosen as a child, namely, “To not make choices for others and not take responsibly for other people’s lives”. This choice, however simple, caused him not to take position in his own life for an extended period. This choice was fuelled by an act of ‘betrayal’ by a significant role, through which he had mixed feelings. Thus, the inter-personal conflict that he never acknowledged or reconciled led to a life of disconnect, being “unplugged” from his own story.

The **working hypothesis for ‘conflict’** is that by understanding the nature of conflict and the origins thereof, the singleton may get closer to **K**, which emerges from the phenomenological experience of in-group exposure. The singleton’s **O** can become **K**, conjectured through processing this experience in groups.

### **6.3.3 Theme 3: Task**

French and Vince (1999) define ‘task’ as that which needs to be done. One’s primary task is the dominant activity that is supported by his/her secondary task. Work-related tasks fulfil, while anti-tasks oppose the primary task.

Participants experienced their tasks as learning during the GRE, although they struggled with this task's boundary. Learning, however, did not stop in the GRE; rather, it inevitably extended outside the boundary of the event. For example, Gretha and Christine held debriefing conversations after each day of the GRE to support one another. At a conscious level, this task was simple. However, at an unconscious level, tasks were perceived as emotional in nature.

The GRE experiences below the surface varied for each participant. All the participants experienced incongruence in their tasks, which gave rise to heightened levels of anxiety. For example, the participants expressed the aim of participation in the GRE as learning about the process, yet found learning about themselves difficult because it was not congruent with their stated aim. Lisa felt drawn to the leadership group, but was placed in the wellness group, while Christine believed the GRE process was about expression, but felt silenced in session.

The **working hypothesis for 'task'** is that a lack of clear primary task boundaries will effect anti-task behaviour and derail efforts to develop the self.

#### **6.3.4 Theme 4: Role(s)**

All the participants reported incongruence between their normative, existential and phenomenological roles during their post-GRE discussions. Roles refer to the conscious and unconscious boundary around the manner to behave (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). Behaviour (actual, implied or potential) is expected within a title, which is recognised and valued by others (Henning, 2009). Role is at the centre of an individual's activities, and is differentiated from others by way of boundaries that delineate responsibility. Cilliers and Terblanche (2010) as well as Obholzer and Roberts (2003) define 'role' as the position that an individual takes up based on the normative (task), existential (the individual's own experience of performance) and phenomenological (the individual's sense of how others experience him/her in role).

Congruence between these three types of roles enables an individual to take up each role effectively, whereas incongruence leads to anxiety within and between

systems, and a loss of effectiveness (Dimitrov, 2008). In the present study, the initial debrief in the post-GRE focus group together with the Role Analysis template revealed a lack of congruence for all participants. This indicated the potential for heightened anxiety, and confirmed a lack of effectiveness that participants experienced in the GRE, which was revealed by their frustration within the process.

Participants exhibited a flux in their roles, and described multiple roles into which and out of which they have evolved. These will be described within this section. Henning (2009, p.138) indeed suggests that, “role relationships are never static, but are in continual flux in relation to each other”.

#### *6.3.4.1 Discussion of roles analysis*

The following sub-sections will highlight specific information relating to the normative, existential and phenomenological roles of the participants in this study. The researcher notes at this point that the participants’ normative roles were confused with their existential roles in some cases, as the normative was left undefined in the GRE. For this reason, their own perception of their performance reflected some ambiguity, including idealisation of their role on the one other hand, and role apprehension (in the form of role conflict, role incongruence and role stress) on the other. Taking up a role is complex, at the core of which is identification, boundary and authority (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005; Czander, 1993). Role is seen as acting at the intersection between the individual with his/her biography on one side, and the system with its tasks, structures, history, culture and norms on the other (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005).

The participants described their phenomenological roles as different to their existential roles, suggesting that others viewed them differently to how they experienced themselves in these roles. For this reason, experiencing counter-transference included having reactions to being perceived in a way that was incongruent to how they perceive themselves (Shapiro & Carr, 2012). They received (and sometimes identified with) projections of incompetence (that is, not being good enough). This might reveal evidence of projective identification present in the GRE system. These projections manifested in self-doubt and inadequacy for the



participants. Incongruence between these different roles could lead to anxiety and substandard performance (Dimitrov, 2008; Shapiro & Carr, 2012).

*a) Normative roles*

In the pre-GRE interviews, the participants defined their normative roles in terms of family (such as father, mother or daughter) and in terms of work (such as consultant, psychologist or coach in the Industrial and Organisational Psychology profession).

In the context of the present study, the normative role of each participant was that of Doctoral student, a role to which each participant was fully committed and engaged. Since all of the participants were Doctoral students, they demonstrated interest in their own learning from the GRE and actively engaged in the post-GRE focus group and post-GRE interviews. Their role as participants in the GRE were less clear though, since the GRE was entered into as part of their coursework requirements. One of the six participants indicated that this normative role felt imposing and structured, which created anxiety for her.

In the post-GRE focus group, the participants' definitions of their normative roles were less consistent, often confusing their experience in this role with their formal work roles. For example, Christine stated that her normative role was that of "clarifier of the objective of the process". She felt anxiety with the imposition of rules and structure, which she experienced as the normative assigned role. Gavin's normative roles, as he defined them, included mover, 'Sherpa', humanist, authoriser and student/learner. Sam, at first, considered his normative role to be a participant in the system, and then suggested that he identified as part of the leadership group, although whether the latter was his experience (existential role) or a role assigned to him was unclear.

Gretha included multiple normative roles in her discussions within the post-GRE focus group, including student/learner, participant as well as leader/follower, authoriser and internal consultant. These may be a blend of her experience in the system and the normative roles to which she was assigned. Lisa's normative roles were both a student and observer. She was also moved from the leadership to the

wellness group (which held special meaning for her). Magda described her normative role as being a “task person” trying to find structure.

*b) Existential roles*

In the pre-GRE interviews, the existential role of each participant was essentially described in positive terms, with the exception of Gavin who experienced himself as difficult (in the sense of being antagonising) to effect change.

Each of the participants experienced taking up their roles differently. This may be because of the nature of the GRE and the range of prior exposure that the participants had with a systems psychodynamic stance. In the pre-GRE interviews, the participants all indicated a commitment to learning, and therefore remained open to the experience of the GRE.

In the exploration of their existential roles, some participants idealised their tasks. For example, Gretha suggested that she was predicting themes, and Lisa indicated that she was comfortable and at ease, but contradicted this with being the one who establishes structure and challenges the system. Magda experienced her task as being that of ‘protector’, and Gavin experienced his role as ‘Sherpa’ or ‘shape-shifter’, agitating the system to progress. Sam, however, acknowledged the shadow side of leadership, including the provocateur and the projective identification that this represented. He indicated an identification with the shadow of leadership, owing to his own sense of disillusionment with leaders who lack integrity.

For some participants, the GRE experience was more intense than for others. Lisa indicated that she experienced anxiety and became acutely aware of humour as her defence mechanism. Gretha experienced herself as comfortable and relaxed in her roles, and found herself initiating structure when needed.

Magda projected her issues with authority into the system, splitting from emotions as being bad. She said that she worked hard to keep emotions at bay. Lisa thought that she should be in the leadership circle but found herself in wellness group, thus existentially experiencing herself as ignorant of other people’s feelings. Lisa felt that the wellness role was projected onto her, but she identified with this nonetheless.

Christine introjected being silenced because existentially, she experienced “speaking too much”, suggesting that she felt pressured to silence. She experienced herself in roles as taking charge and feeling the need to pass on this authority. Additionally, Christine felt anxiety in response to imposed rules and structures. She suggested that the normative role she took up was determined by her phenomenological role and how she experienced the system.

Gretha experienced herself as a predictor of themes in the system (in terms of knowing), but feared the projection of ‘not knowing’. She experienced being structured and a litigator, while vacillating between feeling knowledgeable and un-knowledgeable. She dissociated from not-knowing to allay her anxiety. Her existential role as knowledgeable was the introjection from the tension/anxiety within the system. Gretha said that she did not feel bounded by the system.

Gavin attempted to create movement both in the GRE itself and in his post-GRE interviews by using seduction and provocation (as well as seductive provocation). This was an attempt to authorise the collective and ‘overturn’ those perceived to be in charge of the process. As noted by Kahn and Green (2004), taking up a role may be as a result of seduction, which implies aspects of authority (formal or informal) and intimacy (psychological or physical). Possibly, this resulted in Gavin positioning himself as the ‘saviour’ of the group. By way of sexual provocation (that is, demeaning the white female), he used agitation to challenge a response that may encourage the ‘impotent absent white female’ to stand up and take authority, in the hope that the white females in his life could play that role too. Indeed, in assigning authority, individuals hope that others can be trusted (Smit & Berg, 1987). This can be understood as projective identification on Gavin’s part, in terms of unconsciously coercing others (specifically the white female) through covert actions to become what he unconsciously needed them to be: an authority figure for him (Shapiro & Carr, 2012). Gavin became ‘Sherpa’ and antagonist to catalyse movement.

Sam experienced himself in his roles as curious and engaged, and became more engaged as the GRE unfolded. His experience in his existential role was that he

does not claim his space, and that he is not an 'out-there giving person', even though the feedback that he received from others emphasised the opposite.

Sam experienced his role as being that of provocateur and the 'holder of the other's view'. He perceived projection onto him of the views in the system as being expected, or that he was responsible. He shared in the post-GRE focus group that he experienced being a catalyst at times. At the end of his post-GRE interview, Sam kept stating that he now has space to think, act and be different.

Notably, the two male participants indicated that they had been seduced to take up leadership roles, but had experienced a resistance to this. This resistance manifested in them each assuming a provocateur role at different times, as if confirming that this was the shadow of the leader role.

The participants introjected difficulties with regard to authority in taking up undefined roles. Their uncertainty left them feeling de-authorised to perform within the system, and evoked ongoing attempts to create structure and forge objectives. The latter was often initiated by Christine and Gretha, who experienced themselves as 'authorisers' in sessions (and reported this as normative roles). They both shared that prior to the GRE, they had contracted to debrief and decompress with each other at the end of each day, as if to set up a parallel support system to insulate themselves from exposure.

In coping with the anxiety that the system amplified, the participants employed various coping mechanisms including splitting, projection, denial, rationalisation, idealisation, intellectualisation and fight-flight responses, as described in Section 6.3.1.3 of this chapter.

#### *c) Phenomenological roles*

The pre-GRE interview participants described their phenomenological roles in a positive light, with Gavin being the exception. He portrayed some negative descriptions of how others might experience him in those roles. However, there was not an absolute replication between his existential and phenomenological roles, revealing a degree of role incongruence even before the GRE.

The participants' phenomenological roles, in terms of their descriptions of how others experienced them within the GRE, were incongruent with their existential roles. Christine felt "pressured to silence" because she was on the receiving end of projections of verbal dominance ("They think I speak too much"). In turn, she identified with those projections and experienced performance anxiety with the imposition of rules and structure, and persecutory anxiety with the pressure of being silent.

Sam noted that the role of provocateur was projected onto him. He disclosed that he experienced people as projecting the need for feedback onto him, which was reinforced when the post-GRE focus group participants gave him reassuring feedback. He also experienced protective mothering transference. The projective identification of females played out as they projected a need for safe provocation into the system and directed this to Sam. They needed to be protected, as Gavin was demeaning of white females in the larger system (in this case, in the GRE).

Gavin disclosed his 'joking', which was a means to catalyse movement in the system. Phenomenologically, he thought others might experience him as arrogant and snotty, stating that, "My joking can be seen as dismissive, rebellious, disrespectful, but others enjoy having me around". He idealised this role by suggesting that others enjoy it. He had the valence to be the jester in the system owing to his split-off child, which he desired to integrate to achieve 'wholeness'. Gavin projected lack of substance onto white females but did not admit to this in the post-GRE focus group. He nonetheless revealed his transference in the form of his internalised images of white females stemming from his childhood (Shapiro & Carr, 2012). Gavin was initially the observer (voyeur), and then adopted the role of 'Sherpa', as one who moves things along.

Gretha had valence to 'not-knowing', and thus readily identified with the projection in the system that stemmed from the uncertainty that prevailed. Her own confusion in the system led to projective identification of 'not-knowing'. Similarly, Magda split-off uncertainty and her lack of action, and then identified with her projection, referring to herself as 'ignorant' and a 'slow-starter'.

#### 6.3.4.2 *Taking up the role as 'singleton'*

The post-GRE interviews allowed for deeper reflections, to enable participants to discern insights. Each of the participants formed their own patterning as a fractal of their lives, enabling each to explore the possibility that their experiences in the GRE were not coincidental or random.

“Role is at the intersection of the person and the system” (Long, 2006, p.127). According to Sievers and Beumer (2006) role analysis is a tool designed to help individuals explore the origin and development of their role. In Geldenhuys’ (2012) study, he describes the group-as-a-whole concept as the unconscious mind of the group – one which binds group members to form a gestalt that functions as the core of the group. Individual members, he reports, represents parts of the group’s unconscious mind. Geldenhuys (2012) findings concludes that studying behaviour from the group-as-a-whole perspective allows for a unique contribution to understanding individual behaviour. For this reason, a brief interpretation of this concept (group-as-a-whole) serves as a precursor to the individual participants sub-sections.

These sub-sections, which follow, provide an interpretation of the encounters with each of the participants in order to highlight the themes that emerged for each. Each participant is discussed in relation to the three encounters with him/her, as per the three stages of the empirical research. The insights and questions offered below were not mentioned during the encounters, but emerged upon the researcher analysing the transcripts.

##### *a) Group-as-a-whole*

The experience in the post-GRE focus group are the most pertinent to understanding the group-as-a-whole concept. Geldenhuys (2012) reported that attributes that is ascribed to individual members (especially the negative one), are often projections that members are unaware of and thus group-as-a-whole perspectives helps to explain that behavior. In the post-GRE focus group some salient reflections were shared – that of feeling stuck (Gavin), being the provocateur (Sam), being silenced (Christine), having the fear of not-knowing (Gretha), validating

those who shared their vulnerabilities (Christine and Gretha), keeping emotions at bay (Magda) and going boldly into spaces other will not go (Lisa) – and these may be a reflection of what the group mind was for the participants. The focus group forged the participants into a system post-GRE – and this system with its own boundaries became the landing space, the safe space for the participants.

*b) The singleton: Christine*

In the pre-GRE interview, Christine indicated that she was seeking connection to the group, and the researcher thus considered whether she wanted to fit in. It seemed that Christine experienced a deep, unspoken need for acceptance. She shared that relinquishing control was enriching and enlightening, and that she found this while sitting on her roof.

In the post-GRE focus group, Christine noted that she is best without the normative, implying that she prefers life without rules. She feels projected onto, which affects her existential role. Christine moreover attempted to get a bird's eye view, as if she was seeking to repeat the 'rooftop' insight in other encounters.

In the post-GRE interview, Christine's seeding belief about life was that it would be difficult, and she relived this belief in her encounters. This occurred until life exhausted her, and she chose a different, opposite belief, namely that life is simple. This shift resulted in a reconciliation for Christine. She had introjected responsibility for others and the expectation to fit in. This was deeply conflicting with her 'not fitting in' convention, revealing why the imposition of the normative felt restrictive. She had come to the acceptance of embracing the simplicity of life.

Christine noted that she was frustrated with members throughout the GRE, which represented her transference from her previous experiences. She had projected the part of herself that she had renounced (split-off); that is, the part that had not accepted herself and felt rejected within the system. She claimed to feel 'their' loss, but this was revealing a regret at the loss of time that she had experienced replaying the flawed narrative that 'life is hard'. It seemed that Christine was in fact feeling her own loss. Christine also displayed a fight-flight defence to structure and authority, and she confused projection with rejection. Her stroke of insight came through

submission, which is the acceptance of what is; namely, that which was inferred from the pre-GRE interview as being her deepest need. She displayed gratitude as well as relief at being understood by the researcher.

For Christine, the integration as singleton was dependent on recognising the emergent dimensions of her psyche on a continuous basis, manifested through her existential and phenomenological roles. She came to understand that she is a 'work in progress', and the journey she referred to as an inner journey continued beyond her one moment of insight on the roof. The researcher notes that as long as Christine remains fascinated by her own significant discovery, she will hover and not move beyond it. She must realise that recreating her 'rooftop' insight throughout her life will stagnate her progress, rather than advance it.

*c) The singleton: Gretha*

In the pre-GRE interview, Gretha believed that she had an integrated perspective of the roles of self and others, but did not see her stubbornness nor her fixated-ness in her own perspective. She claimed to be curious about new perspectives, and used the word 'perspective' a lot.

In the post-GRE focus group, the researcher gained the impression that Gretha was hanging in an inter-space ('*barzakh*'). She claimed to cross boundaries and later changed this to the term 'wormhole', namely a bridge to connect two points. Paradoxically, in findings links, Gretha separated. She held a self-confessed fear of not knowing, and a need to define the value of her contributions.

In the post-GRE interview, Gretha employed intellectualisation as a defence. Her escape into theorising and academic debate was so recurring that it indicated heightened anxiety when having to discuss her own self. Gretha demonstrated an intellectual connection with her father, but felt seen by her mother's intermittent presence. She had been deeply affected by the aspects of death and dying, and finally revealed that this is connected to her mother dying while Gretha was in-utero. The unconscious memory of this occurrence lingered, and informed her quest for reconciliation. Her time orientation and waiting for others might also be affected by



this period of pregnancy prior to her birth. All this connects with her *libido* (that is, her life instinct) and her *morbido* (that is, her death instinct).

Gretha experienced frustrations with the Tavistock Methodology and what she called the “Leicester Institute”. These frustrations seemed to be transference from the unexpressed frustration that she held with her male energy (that is, father’s) presence and her mother’s absence from her life. She sought a healing presence, to allow her to feel seen. Gretha experienced herself as ‘on the boundary’ and on the edge, which is akin to being side-lined. She disclosed a need for a bridge to connect her to the crowd, and to be her translator, as she is not understood. This is in stark contradiction to an early reference that she herself acted as a bridge that connects two points. She felt that she had to ‘wait’ for others because she is ahead of time. Gretha had not synchronised herself to the world she lives in, but rather lived in parallel, as if in another dimension. She looked to answers in the constellations, when they could instead be on the earth.

The researcher’s sense was that Gretha would struggle to reconcile and integrate aspects of herself discovered in the post-GRE interview and in the GRE itself, because her readiness to apprehend the self in any other manner would require an embrace of paradigms outside of her personal elected constellation. She intellectually understands, but rationalises to reach conclusions that take her away from herself rather than towards a gathered-ness. She remained trapped in gestation while surrounding herself with those who are dying or transitioning, yet stubbornly did not transition herself.

*d) The singleton: Lisa*

In the pre-GRE interview, Lisa held unexpressed pressure of being the ‘breadwinner’. The new roles that she had were creating a sense of a time crunch. The researcher sensed that something must give way, as the pressure to perform would eventually become overwhelming.

In the post-GRE focus group, it was clear that Lisa set high standards and expectations for herself. She served as an emotional container and assumed responsibility for others, and might see this as the role of leadership. She received

feedback that her rawness of emotions might be blocking her emotions. The researcher questioned whether she would embrace that she was responsible *to* others but not *for* them.

In the post-GRE interview, Lisa's initiating theme was that 'people have not moved on', which became the theme of her existence. This is because she had not been able to forgive herself for a mistake that she made as teenager. In other words, the accusation was self-referential; she had not moved on. This projective identification unconsciously served her own neurotic urge. Furthermore, her deep fears that her future life might mirror her mother's helplessness, disconnection and absence had caused her anxiety, and her defence was a fight-flight response. Lisa deflected responsibility *to* others, in favour of responsibility *for* others. She split-off the good part of herself, which she projected into the system, and looked after 'them' because she is 'bad' and did not deserve it. She realised that she had given her life to 'the story' (that is, her secret), and that taking back her life was the cause she wanted to win. Thus, healing for Lisa would emerge through forgiveness of herself. At the start of her discourse, Lisa described her existence as ensconced, which is a synonym for being shielded and concealed, likened to her behaviour during the GRE. Likewise, her frustrations in the GRE with members who had 'not moved on' or do not process emotions was the projection of the splitting-off of the part of herself that had not processed emotions and had gotten stuck. The physiological condition she had recently been diagnosed with was likened to this state, and to the physical manifestation thereof.

In reconciling the GRE with her life events that had unconsciously shaped her defences, Lisa was able to admit to herself the underpinning causes for her strained relationship with her mother and for her fight-flight responses that spanned her career. She therefore found the origins that trigger these encounters. Furthermore, she considered the possibility that her health issues might have stronger psychological roots than she had previously realised. She discerned that she had given her life to her secret, and that she wanted to get her life back. She therefore realised that vindication was a choice that only she could make. The post-GRE interview in particular was empowering for her, clarifying an integration of insights into the singleton.

e) *The singleton: Magda*

In the pre-GRE interview, Magda perceived parental critique as being different to feedback from her fiancé. She used the word 'judgement' often (such as, "My mother does not judge me"), yet she felt judged. This prompted the researcher to question whether Magda is her own greatest critic.

In the post-GRE focus group, it became clear that Magda worked hard to keep emotions at bay, in doing so holding herself back. These emotions created a turning point for her, and holding emotions back therefore kept her stuck. She had issues with authority and was self-reprimanding. The researcher questioned why she held back, and what she was waiting for (such as the need for authorisation, and if so, from whom).

In the post-GRE interview, Magda finally revealed her ongoing oscillation between the spirit and emotions, and the intellect and academia. This highlighted her equivocation about these aspects and her lack of integration. Her seeking of balance was a clue to her yearning for integration with the split-off parts of her self. She lived in self-imposed isolation, as if this provided cover for her ("I live too far"), but rather it was to disguise that she "did not know where home is". Deeper than this, she had not defined what home was for her. Until this reflection, she did not self-authorise. She recognised the projections of male authority linked to her father's absence, and her continuous moving was to replicate her father's leaving. She introjected this "missing" role and then split this off, creating an emotional blockage. Relaxing into this reflection allowed Magda to view herself metaphorically as a warrior with less judgement, embracing this as noble to give her a sense of identity. She correlated the warrior metaphor to the projected role in the GRE of protector, namely 'the one who stands up for others'. In this way, her phenomenological, existential and normative roles became one.

For Magda, the integration of role analysis across these three encounters, as well as her reflection on transference, counter-transference and projective identification in the GRE, enabled the singleton to emerge as whole. The most significant movement for Magda was her willingness to let go of judgement, thereby allowing

herself to embrace her self and her choices. Furthermore, recognising that the anger she had turned inward was what she nurtured towards her father for 'leaving', and that her anger at herself for 'leaving' (that is, always moving around) could be reconciled and forgiven, meant that Magda could embrace a wholeness. She might be able to explore the issues of 'her cause' with more purpose.

*f) The singleton: Gavin*

In his pre-GRE interview, it was apparent that Gavin was seeking harmony and contribution. He was feeling stuck and frustrated, and wanted progress and movement. The researcher questioned what barrier he was not passing.

In the post-GRE focus group, being still created agitation for Gavin, and thus he became the agitator. He took on the roles of jester, joker and provocateur. It was clear that he sought play as work and work as play, letting go of the serious and sensing that this would bring him freedom and liberation. The researcher considered from what he was seeking liberation, since he was seeking whole-ness and completion, raising the question of what part of him was incomplete. There appeared to be a link to his father's hatred of his work. Gavin seemed to confuse movement with progress.

In the post-GRE interviews, Gavin described his wife as withholding, and this paralleled with the absent and passive-aggressive roles that his mother represented. He expressed a need for attention, and demonstrated the same in both of his post-GRE interviews. The white female role in his life was significant, and even though he was oblivious to the presence of white females, he attempted to label them using sexual references. He also criticised them as not acting on their authority. This was a clear example of transference in the form of unconsciously placing internalised images onto the white female role, thereby recreating the familiar and deflecting insight.

Gavin revealed valence to 'cover-up' and be the victim. When faced with his own unconscious, he escaped into his work. Gavin's anxiety catalysed transference and created an inverted relationship with authority. He took up authority from an early age owing to the absence of a mother-role, and now sought vindication from the

white female to make amends. His vulnerability in this regard was covered by an armour of self-assuredness, which was his valence. He recognised his victim-state, but wanted someone (namely, his wife) to 'rescue him', as a knight in shining armour to help him sleep at night. Gavin used seduction by means of sexual innuendos to deflect. He disclosed self-rejection and introjection from the parental exchange that he grew up with, and remembered that, "nothing was good enough" during his childhood.

Gavin needs to let down his guard and shed his armour in order to reconcile with the 'child' with whom he is so desperately attempting to integrate. His pull to make his work fun is due to his work being the place where he escapes, since it is familiar and safe to him. This is why the child was being invited into that space. He pursued change at work, adding to his diverse portfolio, as if he confused movement and change with progress. Gavin needs to acknowledge his projections, transferences and introjections that have been activated by his anxiety in order to make this integration possible. His intellectualisation of the topics under study served as the mechanism of procrastinating the inevitable.

*g) The singleton: Sam*

No pre-GRE interview was held with Sam. In the post-GRE focus group, Sam stated that, "I don't claim my space" and "I am not an out-there giving person". In this way, he made an announcement of what he is not, as if denying what he was or not knowing who he was. He had valence for shadow and provocation, and held self-confessed issues with leadership.

In the post-GRE interview, Sam experienced a sense of disappearing, through a feeling of being invisible and insignificant. He became unable to discern himself and his contribution from the brokenness that he projected into the system. Sam became aware of his projections and introjections, especially those relating to authority and his own resistance to taking up his agency. His refusal to take position related to his implicit choice as a child not to take responsibility 'to make things work', because it meant taking responsibility for more than he had strength for. This played out in his unconscious and informed his mode of engagement, and ultimately his post-

structural worldview. He spent 26 years deconstructing the world and in the process, his own lived reality was deconstructed. Thus, he could not discern himself, as explained above. He realised that this reality lacked the integrity that he unconsciously believed was present in leadership. Sam had spent his existence avoiding leadership roles and only adopting the shadow role of provocateur, and now found a readiness to take position and 'just be it'.

Sam's participation in the study, by his own volition, had a material effect on his engagement in the post-GRE interview. Sam's integration was palpable, and he displayed a marked shift in hopeful energy, making multiple discoveries into the workings of his unconscious. These allowed him to gain the self-awareness that would enable healthy integration as a singleton.

The **working hypothesis for 'role(s)'** is that participants experience heightened levels of anxiety as a result of the incongruence between their normative, existential and phenomenological roles. Normative roles might be defined, but individuals may tend to introject shame and guilt in their existential roles and receive projections of 'not good enough' in their phenomenological roles. Individuals will struggle to take up their role/s and thus continue to experience incongruence in the three role levels if they (a) experience a juncture between their biography and a system when they are unclear of their boundaries of time, task and space, and (b) have failed to gain insight into how authority is enacted and initiated.

### **6.3.5 Theme 5: Boundaries**

Boundaries refer to the line or space between elements of a system, be it individual, group, or groups of individuals (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2007). Rice (1965) pointed out that the mature ego is one that can define the boundary of what is inside and what is outside, and can control the transaction between the one and the other. The participants, all subjected to projections and introjection (and other forms of defence mechanisms), demonstrated that they needed to develop their own sense of ego maturity by enhancing their ability to define boundaries and control the transaction between what was inside and what was outside of themselves.

In this sense, a number of aspects indicated a participant's need to understand and differentiate what was inside and outside of his/her boundaries. This included the degree to which he/she projected or was introjected into; the degree to which his/her unconscious defences arose to combat anxiety; as well as the extent of incongruence between his/her normative, existential and phenomenological roles. In other words, with the degree to which boundaries become blurred, it became important to make greater sense of (that is, make meaning of) what was happening in the conscious and unconscious. This would enable the individual to become more capable of controlling the transaction between these two realms (namely, inside and outside).

Unclear boundaries gave rise to heightened anxiety, yet the use of boundaries by the participants varied. Some used boundaries to keep others out, while others used them to hide themselves. For example, Gretha's boundary kept her separated from others, and she organised a translator to bridge with the social other. She also set up time boundaries, suggesting that she was "always ahead of time" and thus managed to maintain a separation from others. She conducted counselling for people who were dying, that is, who were on the boundary between life and death; and in this way helped to usher them across to the other side of life. Gretha indeed described herself as a boundary person. When the researcher challenged her stance that being on the boundary meant being on the periphery (like being a spectator), she resisted this notion and preferred to perceive this as an engaged presence. Gretha might simply become a commentator on life and forget to live.

Space boundaries were of particular importance to Magda, who characterised herself by the nomadic existence that she had chosen to live, as well as by the manner in which she chose to oscillate between the intellect (academic) and spiritual. She kept these two realms separate, alternating her emergence into, and pursuit of, these endeavours as if they were mutually exclusive. Madurai (2007) suggests that the boundary region must have an appropriate degree of both insulation and permeability for the individual to survive. Containing Magda's anxiety was important, and when anxiety, guilt and shame heightened in one realm, she would cross the boundary into the other. As per Lawrence (1979), a boundary is a barrier that separates two things and provides space for human beings to relate.

Gavin found that maintaining boundaries was restrictive. He displayed this through the extensive diversification of his business portfolio on one hand, and intrusive sexual innuendos during the GRE itself and the post-GRE interviews on the other hand. He used boundaries to divert attention to where he wanted it, seldom revealing what was inside of him. This might relate to his fear that he would find little of value inside himself when he looked.

Sam established new task and geographic boundaries, or rather, he eradicated the ones that existed by taking up employment that entailed moving from self-employment in a different land-locked city, away from the coast. Inadvertently, this was his first step towards determining his identity and releasing his revealed self. Individual effectiveness or ego maturity lies in knowing the boundary between what is inside the self and what is outside the self, and being able to control the transactions between the two. Projections blurs these boundaries and waste energy on distorted facts and reality (De Board, 2014), and in this regard, Sam was particularly prone to projections by his own admission.

The GRE was a rupturing experience, rupturing the unconscious and bringing it to consciousness (Faber, 1998). Anxiety manifestation on the boundary of self and others therefore became acutely apparent. The boundaries of time, task and space varied for each participant, though for each it related to his/her sense of identity. The degree of projections that took place throughout the process continued to blur the realities of participants (De Board, 2014). At the same time, the permeability of participants' boundaries was useful to their reconciliation and understanding.

The **working hypothesis for 'boundaries'** is that knowing the boundaries of one's self and how they are constructed does not mean existing on and for them. Understanding boundaries means that a sense of self-identity can emerge by knowing what is inside of the self; what is outside of the self; and being able to transact between the two, thereby developing an ego maturity and ultimately survival.



### 6.3.6 Theme 6: Authority

In the GRE itself, the structure of the process established relational and relatedness dynamics to enable the consciousness around issues of authority. As noted by Koortzen and Cilliers (2007), authority is the positive energy bestowed from above, below or within upon which an individual will act. This positive energy mobilises action and is akin to power. According to Dimitrov (2008), authority also has a relational quality, in that one must stand superior to another's inferiority in some context.

There were attempts during the GRE itself to de-authorise the white female, evidenced by Gavin disrespecting and disregarding this role in these sessions. Along this line, Hirschhorn (1997) defines personal authority as the emotional appreciation that an individual has of who he/she is, what he/she wishes to be, and what he/she can contribute to the group. He/she brings this into his/her role. Accordingly, the exercise of personal authority enables a psychological presence and ignites from within. Thus, when authority is bestowed, to act upon it in a role requires activation of personal authority. The degree to which each participant was able to act on his/her personal authority was arrested by a lack of insight into each of his/her self-identities and boundaries. Introjections of incompetence influenced Christine and Magda in the GRE itself, and affected a sense of being de-authorised.

Gretha sought authority by claiming the role of 'knowing' and felt the fear of being 'caught out' as not-knowing. Lisa felt stripped of authority in the role of leader when she was moved to the wellness group. During her post-GRE interview, Lisa revealed her tendency to 'stand up against authority' in the workplace, yet failed to demonstrate this in the GRE. Christine and Gretha agreed to support each other at the end of each day of the GRE, in a way undermining the authority of consultants and the aims of the event, which is a typical response in baP to join forces against authority (Fraher, 2004).

The influence or power projected onto Sam was an attempt to authorise him as leader, although this was resisted. Czander (1993) points out that authority is contained within a role and that power is projected onto a role. Stapley (2006)

defines power as the capacity to influence others, whereas authority is the right to do so, implying that these two may or may not exist alongside each other. Magda sought authority in the types of structured, military organisations where she worked, as if to fill a vacuum of authority. She had not realised, until the post-GRE interview, that she had systemically de-authorised herself by failing to activate her personal authority. Gavin assumed power in the absence of authority, even when that influence was achieved through distraction and trivialisation that masqueraded as humour.

Participants challenged all three levels of authority described by Dimitrov (2008), both in the GRE itself and/or during the post-GRE interviews. These three levels were representative authority (restricted freedom to share across boundaries); delegated authority (more freedom in sharing within content boundary/content restricted); and plenipotentiary authority (complete freedom in boundary crossing, decision making and behaviour). Within the GRE and/or during the post-GRE interviews, the participants were able to act with representative authority, while others experienced delegated authority. However, none of the participants evidenced having plenipotentiary authority in their day-to-day systems, linked to the previously mentioned lack of personal insight and boundary awareness that lowered their personal authority.

The participants' ego maturity (that is, their ability to control or regulate between what is inside and outside of their boundaries) naturally affected their experience of authority and where it was located, as well as their ability to activate their personal authority. This is in line with the work of Miller and Rice (1967) on authority relations, stating that boundary management is linked to authority. Authority is used to regulate boundaries, and thus low ego maturity would provoke low authority.

The participants experienced a degree of disempowerment when their ability to self-authorise had been arrested by uncertainty of authority boundaries. According to Dimitrov (2008), blurred authority boundaries appear to immobilise and disempower representatives to another part of the system. Sam de-authorised his role as leader, while Gretha and Christine sought to confer authority on him. Sam felt manipulated as a result, which might indicate the presence of baD phenomena.

The **working hypothesis for ‘authority’** is that an absence of authority or blurred authority boundaries will arrest development and immobilise the empowerment of individuals across the boundary into other systems. In other words, the ability to self-authorise (that is, to activate personal authority) is inhibited by not understanding one’s authority and its sources. Owing to low ego maturity provoking low authority, it stands to reason that this process mechanism (that is, the process of reflecting on the GRE experience), which is aimed at building ego maturity, would enhance authority.

### **6.3.7 Theme 7: Identity**

During the post-GRE focus group, the Role Analysis template structured the initial debrief. The participants reported an incongruence with respect to their normative, existential and phenomenological roles, which was discussed in detail in Section 6.3.4 of this chapter. However, this has relevance in terms of the degree to which participants identified with their existential and phenomenological roles, since a lack of identification was apparent in this regard. According to Cilliers and Koortzen (2005), identity represents the fingerprint of a system. These authors describe identity as the characteristics that make the system and its members, as well as their tasks, climate and culture, different and unique from others, and the realisation of what the individual stands for and what lies within his/her boundaries. When there is a lack of identification with the nature of the team, and no clear identity boundaries, then high levels of anxiety arise.

The leader role was projected onto Sam during the GRE, to which he was averse. The leader role represented both betrayal and a lack of integrity to Sam, stemming from a seminal figure in his life. However, he rejected this, rather embracing what he called the ‘shadow leader’ role (that is, the provocateur). For Sam, his identity contained a split: leader and provocateur, holding a position in the GRE and stating that, “I don’t claim my space”.

Christine, however, sought a level of acceptance from the group, feeling ‘rejected’ (“pressured to silence”), and having experienced multiple rejections from the corporate community in her job search. This acceptance was unspoken but present.

As noted by Carr and Lapp (2006, p.120), “to be accepted into a group is to have self-esteem in identity conferred”. These authors highlight that such group acceptance is symbolic of experienced parental reassurance and identity stabilisations, dependent on transference being established and maintained.

Lisa’s identity was originally centred around the leader role. However, in the GRE itself, she was assigned to the wellness group. Initially, she reported feeling expelled from her rightful place, linking this to a long-experienced sense of guilt dating back to her formative school years. As noted by Dimitrov (2008, p.39), the process of mirroring in formative years shapes our sense of self by taking cues about “being and behaving”, which goes on to inform the dynamics between the individual and others. In Lisa’s post-GRE interview, she admitted to strongly identifying with the wellness group owing to her own health concerns. Czander (1993) indeed argued that a sense of identity forms the foundation of individual wellness.

Gretha struggled to identify with groups and felt isolated, needing an auxiliary connector (bridge) to ‘the other’. This disconnectedness or lack of personal identity left her feeling alone and not understood. This might reflect mirroring from formative years of a maternal disconnectedness and disassociation, as per Dimitrov (2008).

Magda’s identity was embodied in her nomadic existence, but as she reconciled her behaviour, she became aware of what home represented to her: that of a missing member. Therefore, to replicate home as she identified with it, she assumed the identity of the missing member in the family, allowing her to distance from the emotions associated with the loss of an important figure.

For Gavin, work identified with what his father hated, which fuelled his desire not to relive this experience and rather make work ‘fun’. This he associated with variety, not necessarily with joy.

During the post-GRE focus group and interviews, the participants’ identities were fragmented and unclear, characterised by a manifested narcissism, shame and motivation in unique ways. An interplay between Klein’s (1935) paranoid-schizoid and depressive states enables a constructive sense of identity, one that is integrated

and whole (Henning, 2009). However, 'with escalating sameness', there is the risk of arrested identity development. The following sub-sections describe how the participants experienced identity.

#### 6.3.7.1 *Narcissism*

Some participants' responses, such as those of Gretha and Gavin, implied a level of narcissism. Gretha demonstrated a form of intellectual narcissism, revealed by the introjection of 'knowing' paralleled with her fear of 'not knowing'. Gretha challenged the completeness of the "Leicester Institute", suggesting that her intellectual superiority would be realised. She was of the view that others (including her parents) do not understand what she does ("They don't get it"). This suggests that she was not considering the possibility that she herself did not understand them, and that her perspectives might be flawed. Indeed, narcissistic defences refer to a denial of external reality, which is reformatted to fit with, and accommodate for, one's inner needs (Levine & Faust, 2013). It was apparent that Gretha reshaped her external reality both in the GRE and with the work that she does, in order to adapt to her inner needs of being accepted and understood by others.

Gavin's narcissism manifested differently. He required, and at times expected, special attention. He was the only participant who had two post-GRE interviews, since one was insufficient and needed to rollover into a second personal meeting. He used the second post-GRE interview to discuss his businesses and success, and to reveal the lack of support that he received from his significant others (both parents and wife), despite them always being there for him. He lamented at one point in the interview that he wanted someone to rescue him.

In this regard, Koortzen and Cilliers (2007) describe the narcissistic leader as one who experiences narcissistic injury, feels overwhelmed, blames others for not working, micromanages, takes on too much responsibility, does the work alone, and becomes prescriptive and rude. These descriptions of the narcissistic leader fit with the researcher's understanding of Gavin. His narrative described his impatience with his wife and those with whom he works, such as for taking things too lightly while he

took on more challenges and responsibility. He expressed that he felt alone and suffered from insomnia since he could not rest.

In the GRE itself, Gavin's behaviour to the white female was one of noticeable intolerance. He related to them as sexual objects, or simply as being absent or not having a voice. This is in line with Koortzen and Cilliers' (2007) symbolic role of the white female as the lesser gender who is not good enough, which is the symbolism that Gavin appeared to have adopted. The behaviour this unleashed in him towards the white female was to demean and obliterate, as if exhibiting a more primal desire to destroy the white female role in the system. He reported a disappointment with this role, experiencing white females as 'not showing up; being absent', and disappointment with the system dynamics that unleashed such. Whether Gavin was willing to see the mirroring and transference in this experience would determine his ability to reconcile and grow.

A further manifestation was closet narcissism. Throughout the GRE itself and both the post-GRE focus group and Sam's post-GRE interview, he appeared to devalue himself and remained focused on his failure to contribute within sessions. He experienced 'people projecting the need for feedback onto him' as criticism, since he perceived that he was somehow needy. Levine and Faust (2013) describe the closet narcissist as one who devalues self and praises others, remaining focused on their unfulfilled expectations of the self. These authors highlight that "the closet narcissist is absorbed in grandiose fantasies that are unrealistic given the individual's lack of initiative and self-confidence" (Levine & Faust, 2013, p.200). In his post-GRE interview, Sam described his disappointment with leaders who lack integrity, giving some indication of his concerns that should he take up a role as leader, his integrity would be in question too. According to Kets de Vries (2001), the integration of self-identity with self-image enables a well-adjusted self-identity. Through this understanding, it is apparent that Sam's identity had not adjusted, owing to the fact that he had spent so many years determining what he would 'not-be' that he stalled the process of determining who he *is*. He described himself as adopting a deconstructive stance in the world since he could break things down, yet he failed to build it together with his own sense of self.

Crockatt (2006) notes Freud's (1914) perspective that what fundamentally motivates narcissism is the attainment of self-gratification, which implies that participants exhibiting forms of narcissism were motivated to this out of a need for self-gratification.

#### 6.3.7.2 *Motivation*

All participants were seeking to improve, be it themselves, their understanding of the systems psychodynamic process, or simply their knowledge of the study. Their motivations were positive, and they remained engaged throughout the process. All of them were appreciative of the post-GRE interviews in particular, to varying degrees.

Sam was so intrigued by his experiences during the GRE that he requested to participate in the study despite not having participated in the pre-GRE interviews. He stated that the process of the GRE and the post-GRE interview enabled him to unlock parts of himself and to gain insights that he had not gained despite being in years of therapy. He was elated and energised by the experience of participation. Magda and Lisa also expressed gratitude for the opportunity of the post-GRE interview, and stated that they would not have come to make sense of the experiences in the GRE had they not processed them with the researcher. Being able to see themselves, and being seen by the researcher, was affirming to them.

#### 6.3.7.3 *Shame*

Magda and Lisa were both liberated from the sense of blame that they cast on themselves once they were able to face their projections and introjections, and understand in general the defences that disguised their identities. Being able to embrace their identities was gratifying to them. For Gretha, shame was particularly characteristic of her sense of self-disclosed disconnection, since she had been isolated and alone, and needed a 'bridge or translator' in the world. As noted by Lewis (1971), shame is experienced by an individual owing to perceived loss of approval.

For Lisa, this sense of shame stemmed from her loss of approval at school and the ongoing state of focusing on the self as bad. May (2017) highlights that shame focuses on the self as bad, and emerges from one's consciousness and around others. This author goes on to describe that it becomes unbearable when it indicates separation through loss of connection to the social order in the form of social annihilation, which is what Lisa imposed upon herself.

Magda's sense of shame stemmed from self-censure for being nomadic and not staying in one place, implying it is bad to leave. Gavin's shame was associated with his criticism of his children, including being too hard on them, just as his parents were on him. As May (2017) points out, shame is the sign of defence against anxiety due to an awareness. She notes that shame is not a defence against instincts, but rather against the painful awareness of having a flawed sense of self or not being worthwhile. This description may be apt to depict both Gavin and Sam's shame.

Christine's display of shame might be highlighted by the acute experience of rejection that she had encountered throughout her life and within the GRE system. She felt 'pressured into silence' and resisted the normative role, feeling that it was imposed. In some way, all participants had an experience of being inferior or unlovable, which aligns with May's (2017) explanation that shame as a defence represses the awareness of drive conflicts relating to an individual's sense of inferiority and being unlovable.

The **working hypothesis for 'identity'** is that participants experienced anxiety in the GRE, which gave rise to unspoken questions around their own identity, and how they have constructed it. The reflections and outcomes from the post-GRE interview suggest that offering a guided process to understanding the self provides a sense of integrated identity and wholeness, and removes delusions of self.

#### **6.4 INSIGHTS GAINED BY SINGLETONS**

The participants displayed movement between Klein's (1946) two positions, namely paranoid-schizoid and depressive. Brown (2003) explains that the paranoid-schizoid position is characterised by splitting and projection, resulting in a sense of



omnipotence or persecution. At different stages of the process, these characteristics were displayed. However, the depressive position's characteristics were also apparent, such as the experience of responsibility, guilt and ambivalence. Klein (1946) posited that the movement between these two positions is a necessary part of the individual's growth. The reflective process that this study facilitated for participants enabled reparation that, according to Klein (1935), integrates the good with the bad and brings the ego ideal into alignment with reality.

Table 6.1 provides an indication of the integration that is possible after a GRE, based on the insights gained by the singletons that partook in the present study.

Table 6.1: Emergent insights and integrated resolve

<b>Research Participant</b>	<b>Emergent insights</b>	<b>Integrated resolve</b>
<b>Christine</b>	Christine began the process with the view that 'accepting what-is' is the answer to contentment. This insight occurred to her post deep reflection after experiencing rejection. From the psychodynamics stance, it is hypothesised that Christine continues to seek acceptance of her 'philosophy' of acceptance of what-is, as if she too would be accepted if that was accepted. She resisted normative role structures, suggesting that she responds to her existential role and phenomenological role. This indicated a tendency towards being responsive but might result in her avoiding the pursuit of the primary task and thus not completing this task. Avoiding the primary task is a way to sublimate a fear of failure. She	Christine engaged with the process, without recognising a need for growth, as if she had already found the answer and did not want to find another. Until she recognises the need for further growth, she will fail to integrate the unconscious wisdom that could have been derived from the GRE.

	<p>additionally confused projection and rejection.</p>	
<b>Gretha</b>	<p>Gretha was alive inside a dead mother, since her mother died while she was in-utero. This could explain her sense of isolation and disconnectedness with others. She continued to experience her existence as being disharmonious with the rest of the world, and needed a 'translator' or bridge to connect her to the world. She spent time counselling those who were in their transition period towards death, sustaining her experience. She struggled to understand the role of female energy in the world, and felt it was ignored, as if she was being ignored. Gretha escaped into a world that she had intellectualised to the point of separation from her core self, as she continued to exist alone.</p>	<p>Gretha found some meaning in the process of discerning insights and connection. However, her strong tendency to intellectualise the GRE experience, as opposed to integrating her insights, resulted in a stasis. She embedded the 'in-utero' experience as her reality, and so she rejected any reality that challenged this.</p>
<b>Lisa</b>	<p>Lisa persecuted herself to the point of illness. She had not been able to forgive herself and continued to 'take on the system' in order to gain vindication for a deed long gone. Lisa was able to recognise the patterning and dysfunction in her behaviour though. She was also able to understand how her fears and her self-persecution tyrannised her existence. She realised that vindication was a choice that only she could make.</p>	<p>Lisa was vulnerable within the GRE and found solace and insight in the process of the post-GRE focus group and interview. She was able to lift out the patterning that her unconscious revealed, and make sense of it to gain clarity for her way forward. This process was helpful and uplifting to her.</p>

<p><b>Magda</b></p>	<p>Magda had searched for the missing authority figure in her life, and attempted to substitute this with other forms of authority. In the search, she found it necessary to compartmentalise her emotions from her pursuit, but struggled with this. She adopted a nomadic life, moving from place to place in search of home, without recognising that she associated home as being the place with a 'missing authority' figure. In the process, she criticised herself for these choices. After processing with the researcher, she came to embrace her nature owing to her post-GRE interview, suspending judgement thereof and instead recognising the courage in her choices. She also came to terms with her definition of home, and that she was indeed home. In this way, she was able to reconcile her conflicted-ness with her mother and sister.</p>	<p>Magda was reserved within the GRE, keeping emotions and the emotions of others at bay. She remained somewhat inhibited within the post-GRE focus group, saying less than the other participants did. However, she was fully engaged in the post-GRE interview. She was able to view her experiences and her awareness of the unconscious dynamics that stirred her, and felt understood rather than judged. She was able to make sense of her life and her choices, and perceive herself in a refreshed manner. Magda was liberated by the opportunity to fully integrate her insights and reconcile into a whole singleton.</p>
<p><b>Gavin</b></p>	<p>Gavin struggled with the role that he assumed very early in life, namely being responsible when those he believed should have been, were not. He felt disappointment with his parents, and he transferred this to his wife and perhaps to his children, too. This disappointment fuelled an incessant need to be idolised and to be perceived as the 'king'. Strangely, he adopted the role of 'jester'</p>	<p>Gavin required two post-GRE interviews, and yet he continued to recycle the same lamentations in both interviews. He was intelligent and recognised his dynamics and psychodynamics, but seemed unwilling to acknowledge these. Until he is willing to take responsibility for</p>

	<p>and/or antagonist in order to garner attention, when all he seemed to crave was being 'saved' from the role of 'being responsible'. He was conflicted because not being responsible could result in becoming that which he is disappointed by. He perceived progress as variety, since variety represented play to him. Thus, he resorted to making work varied in order to find 'playfulness' within it. His antagonism towards white females was palpable, and unconsciously he had transferred his formative pain into the relationships he had at the time of the present study.</p>	<p>his insights, these will simply dissolve and he will spiral into existential crisis. He considered this study's process to be an interesting distraction, and he escaped into intellectualisation and business posturing, not capitalising on the process.</p>
<p><b>Sam</b></p>	<p>Sam was the provocateur, a role projected onto him that he introjected. He recognised the aversion that he holds to leadership roles, aligning to his beliefs that those in authority and leadership lack integrity since they are full of holes. For this reason, he chose the shadow leadership presence. The shadow, which is not seen, holds those in leadership answerable without challenges. Sam realised in the post-GRE interviews that this stemmed from the decision he made as a child 'not to make decisions that would take responsibility for other people's lives'. He systematically established this as a pattern of not taking position in his life. He had seen so much broken-ness that</p>	<p>Sam had an epiphany, since he made connections and recognised his own dynamics and psychodynamics that were beneath the surface. This afforded him a newfound clarity. He felt lighter and liberated. He also remarked that he had not in many years of therapy had these insights, which four days of the GRE and post-debriefing afforded him. Furthermore, had he not had time to process the emergent dynamics from the GRE actively, he would not have found the patterning to unlock himself from the cage</p>

	<p>his worldview was deconstructive, and therefore he had successfully deconstructed his own existence, without the material to construct a life. At the point in his life at the time of the present study, he had moved to the 'concrete jungle', as if searching for something concrete. In not wanting to take responsibility, he refused to make choices, and in so doing, lost himself.</p>	<p>into which he had placed himself as a child. He moved from 'not claiming his space' to having the space.</p>
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It is evident that three of the six participants were able to extract significant benefit from the post-GRE focus group and interviews, while the remaining three found insight without reconciliation. This suggests that at-one-ment is facilitated by a process such as that which the present study adopted, but ultimately is activated by individual choice or will.

The overall hypothesis for this study, therefore, is that *individuals can learn from group encounters (Bion, 1970), but only if they are able to pull together their meaning-making insights in a manner that can be integrated.* Participants may feel positive while psychoanalysing aspects of their lives, but if their insights dissolve or retreat back into their unconscious, then the process of integration has not been effective. Borwick (2006) highlights that a gap in GREs is learning without action, resulting in a dissipation of insight. The process of meaning-making may help to make insights explicit and facilitate integration for the singleton.

While the benefits of group encounters are significant contributors to growth, this study has revealed that facilitating the reflection and integration of learning can have impact for individuals beyond the group encounter, and this needs to become explicit. According to Le Bon (1896, in Dimitrov, 2008, p.33), "an individual in a crowd is a grain of sand amid other grains of sand, which the wind stirs up at will". Moreover, Gould (2006) has highlighted that learning, from a group relations or systems psychodynamic perspective, has not been as extensively explored, even

though the focus of the latter is insight and understanding.

## 6.5 RE-INTEGRATION PROCESS

Figure 6.1 depicts the three stages of the participants, firstly prior to entering the GRE; secondly through experiencing the GRE; and thirdly as emerging from it. In doing so, this figure demonstrates how an individual can move out of the collective and into the singleton. The bracketed sections highlight the focus of this study, namely how re-entry post a GRE can be managed.

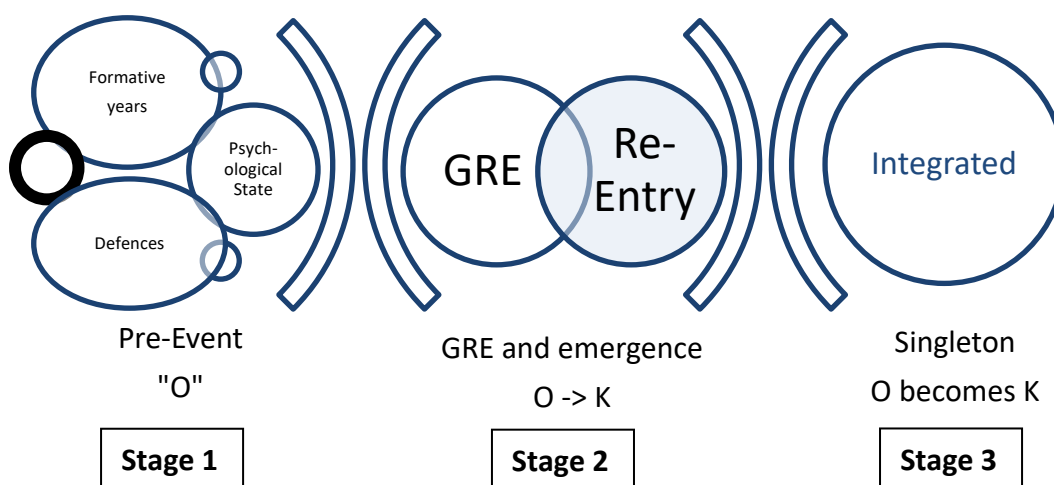


Figure 6.1: Re-integration model

It is hypothesised that the meaning-making process upon re-entry (shaded light blue) influences the integration of insight for the singleton. As explained by Bion (1970), the success of psychoanalysis is dependent on the psychoanalytic vertex (**O**; see Stage 1), and in so doing, the analyst has to become **O** so that he/she is able to know it (see Stage 2). Therefore, Bion (1970) explains that the analyst must wait for the session to evolve and for the analysand to talk, gesture or be silent. This is because **O** only becomes **K** through knowledge gained through experience, which is conjectured phenomenologically. This author goes on to explain that the

“transformation **O**->**K** depends on ridding **K** of memory and desire” (Bion, 1970, p.88). This results in Stage 3, in which the singleton’s **O** becomes **K**.

This process was adopted with each of the participants in the present study, and was intuitive and responsive. The researcher flowed with the conversations in a manner that was authentic in the moment. The postulated process that emerged during this study is depicted in Figure 6.2, as broadly adapted from Kilburg (2002). This figure demonstrates the primary research hypothesis for this study.

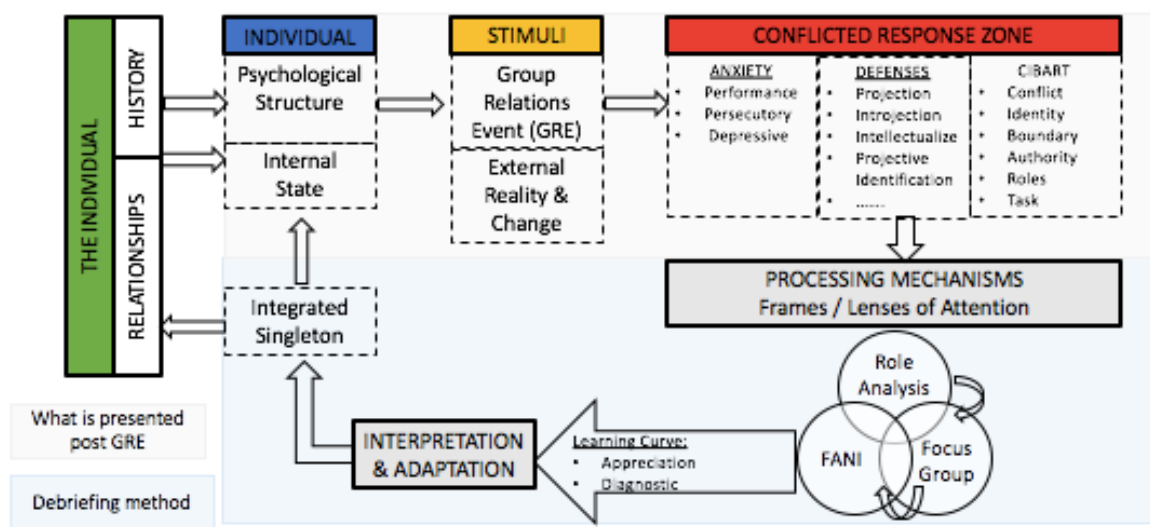


Figure 6.2: Post-GRE processing and debriefing method

As per Figure 6.2, an individual is composed by a historical make-up, which is formed in part by the relationships that he/she holds (as shown by the green in the figure). The individual (shaded in dark blue) possesses a particular psychological structure (both conscious and unconscious), as well as an internal state. Once confronted by a stimuli (in this context, the GRE itself, shown by the yellow block), the conflicted response zone begins to reveal the self to the self (as highlighted in red). This can also be referred to as the unconscious response zone. The section shaded light blue is the debriefing/reflective process. From the literature reviewed in Chapter 3, this may also be considered a psychodynamic coaching process post-GRE, and is enabled by placing different frames or lenses of attention upon it. In the present study, these lenses were facilitated through the Role Analysis template, the post-GRE focus group, and most importantly, the post-GRE interviews. These were

the mechanisms that enabled learning, because the narrative allowed for probing into that which formed the self in an appreciative manner, and enabled a diagnostic inspection by the self.

The diagnosis emerged as a result of interpretation based on understanding, and this enabled adaptation. For some of the participants, adaptation enabled integration into the singleton, as one who was no longer swamped in the collective. As the new insights became integrated, the singleton is able to inform his/her relationships, which in turn has a formative effect on the psychological structure and internal state of his/her self.

## **6.6 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

It is clear from the interpretations and working hypotheses set forth thus far that although all participants became aware of their defences given rise to by their anxieties, they did not understand what these meant or from where they stemmed. Without active reflection and processing, the awareness sparked by a GRE will therefore recede. Furthermore, behavioural manifestations such as role incongruence and a lack of boundaries and authority will influence the self-identity of participants, providing evidence of a need for understanding, learning and the development of ego maturity.

The primary research hypothesis of this study, therefore, is that integration of a person as 'ultimate reality and absolute truth' might be viewed as entering the domain of **K** through knowledge gained by experience, which is drawn from the phenomenological role evident in a GRE. The singleton is able to discern insights from group relations (such as an intensive GRE immersion) when enabled to process the meaning of his/her unconscious dynamics, which are stirred and become apparent phenomenologically. Processing this meaning requires patterning and linking to formative experiences and behaviours that have occurred throughout their lives. As Bion (1970, p.88) describes this, one needs to "take in the scene as a whole", which is part of an ultimate reality.

**O** cannot be known, but its presence can be recognised; thus, it is possible to be at



one with it (Bion, 1970). For this reason, facilitating a process that makes meaning of experiences may contribute significantly to an individual's ability to reconcile with the split-off or projected parts of his/her self, and integrate this into the singleton who is at one with the totality of his/her absolute truth and ultimate reality.

Thus, the process shown in Figure 6.2 is offered as the primary research hypothesis that has emerged from the present study. The integrated singleton is the object of the exercises, and the process mechanisms (such as frames and/or lenses of attention) are the means by which this can be achieved.

Derived from Kilburg's (2004) methods, Table 6.2 summarises the various methods utilised in the present study, which were informed by both the literature and empirical components of the study.

Table 6.2: Processing methods during singleton re-integration

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Typical Defence</b>	<b>Methods to enhance appreciation of story and probing levels of meaning and understanding</b>	<b>Methods to enhance the diagnostic process for meaning-making and self-insight</b>
<b>Christine</b>	Denial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amplification</li> <li>• Empathic resonance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpretations</li> <li>• Meaning-making</li> <li>• Reframing and clarifications</li> <li>• Metaphors and analogy</li> <li>• Interpretations</li> </ul>
<b>Gretha</b>	Intellectualisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contradictions and stating the opposite in order to challenge the belief or intellectualised comments</li> <li>• Confrontations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pattern recognition</li> <li>• Understanding the nature of conflicts and lack of relationships</li> <li>• Interpretations</li> <li>• Metaphors and analogy</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarising and re-phrasing</li> </ul>	
<b>Lisa</b>	Displacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affirmations of self and significant others</li> <li>• Storytelling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarifications</li> <li>• Reframing</li> <li>• Interpretations</li> </ul>
<b>Magda</b>	Compensation; Repression, isolation and introjection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metaphors to provide the positive view of same/different perspectives</li> <li>• Removed judgement from statements</li> <li>• Storytelling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reframing</li> <li>• Understanding the nature of relationships and conflicts</li> <li>• Tendency to avoid emotion</li> <li>• Interpretations</li> <li>• Metaphors</li> </ul>
<b>Gavin</b>	Projection – unconscious rejection of unacceptable thoughts to placing them in others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rational analysis</li> <li>• Anecdotes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pattern recognition</li> <li>• Interpretations</li> <li>• Clarifications</li> <li>• Metaphors and analogy</li> </ul>
<b>Sam</b>	Regression – retreating into self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metaphors and analogy,</li> <li>• Removal of judgement</li> <li>• Storytelling</li> <li>• Confrontations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging the deconstruction and the shadows (confrontations)</li> <li>• Reframing</li> <li>• Clarifications</li> <li>• Interpretations</li> <li>• Analogy</li> </ul>

## **6.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the interpretations of the research findings were presented. The qualitative analysis of the data revealed themes for the participants that were not necessarily conscious. It was the unconscious that, when understood, helped the participants to better understand themselves. Each of the themes explored led to a working hypothesis, which was then integrated to formulate the primary research hypothesis for the study. The primary research hypothesis suggests a meaning-making process for enabling the learning of the singleton, post a GRE.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusions from this study. These conclusions are presented in terms of the aims set forth in Chapter 1. The limitations of the study are discussed, followed by the recommendations for future research. It concludes with a summary of the chapter.

#### 7.2 CONCLUSIONS

In this section, conclusions are set forth based on the research aims provided in Chapter 1. The general aim of this research was to explore a process of meaning-making, post an intensive experiential event (that is, a GRE). In doing so, the study aimed to utilise post-GRE reflections to explore what personal insights individuals distilled that could affect their learning and personal growth, and thereafter to develop interventions/approaches/methodologies that can be used to assist individuals in making meaning post-GREs.

The literature aims were:

1. To conceptualise the systems psychodynamics stance, its constructs and its application to GREs with a view to understanding its impact on individual learning;
2. To conceptualise meaning-making, insight formation and growth in order to explore methodologies and approaches that can be adopted to enable individual meaning-making and growth; and
3. To integrate meaning-making processes theoretically for individuals within the systems psychodynamic perspective in order to formulate an approach that could be applied post an intensive experiential GRE.

The empirical aims were:

1. To explore meaning-making post an intensive experiential event; and
2. To present a hypothesised conceptual 'meaning-making' framework demonstrating processes and techniques that may be used in future GREs to facilitate meaning-making for participants.

Conclusions with respect to each aim will be offered to follow, culminating in inferences relating to the general aim of the study.

### **7.2.1 Literature aim 1**

Literature aim 1 was accomplished in Chapter 2. This also answered research question 1, namely how the systems psychodynamic stance can aid in bringing about individual learning and growth. The researcher concluded that a GRE has a profound impact for its group members. This is because the GRE gives rise to anxiety, which reveals defence mechanisms that are used to defend against this anxiety (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). How these defence mechanisms manifest in groups, and are experienced in groups, can be revealing to the individual (Plutchik, 1995). However, it was found in the literature that while learning is the key focus of GREs, this learning may be so swamped in the collective (Bion, 1961) that it is not integrated by the individual. Gould (2006) reports that although learning is key for those working in the systems psychodynamic tradition, focusing on individual understanding and insight within a group has not been extensively explored. Thus, the literature review revealed that while the systems psychodynamic stance and group relations are focused on learning, they make use of the group rather than the individual as the focus of analysis. Although systems psychodynamics focuses on the group, Freud's (1922, in Winter, 1999) contention was that mass psychology does not define the 'bond' that unites individuals, which might be exactly what characterises a group.

This author furthermore posits that there is no real difference between individual and social psychology, and that psychoanalysis has been studying social psychology, which is an individual's relations to his/her family, siblings and/or object of his/her love. Group psychology is essentially concerned with the individual as a member of

some group (Winter, 1999). Winter (1999) cites Freud (1922) in explaining that this therefore incorporates social psychology into psychoanalytic depth psychology. Bion (1961, p.132) notes that, “no individual, however isolated in time and space, can be regarded as outside a group or lacking in active manifestations of group psychology”. He highlights that humans are group animals, and goes on to purport that there are significant characteristics of an individual that cannot be fully appreciated and understood unless seen within the context of an “intelligible field of study”; that is, a group of which he/she is a member (Bion, 1961, p.133). Furthermore, Bion (1961, p.134) suggests that the group “adds nothing to the individual...it merely reveals something that is not otherwise visible”. This revelation may be noted by understanding the defences that manifest in response to anxiety.

In conclusion, the impact of a GRE on an individual is aptly noted by Bion (1961, p.141), who offers that in “contact with the complexities of life in a group the adult resorts, in what may be massive regression, to mechanisms...typical of the earliest phases of mental life”. This author goes on to posit that, “the belief that a group exists, as distinct from an aggregate of individuals, is an essential part of this regression, as are also the characteristics with which the supposed group is endowed by the individual” (Bion, 1961, p.142).

Freud (1921, in Bion, 1961, p.21) aptly describes the existence of the group as a fantasy, given substance by this regression that ensnares the individual in a loss of his/her individual distinctiveness, thus obfuscating the observations as aggregations of the individuals. Bion (1961) has demonstrated that individuals need groups in order to establish their identity, find meaning, and give expression to different parts of themselves. Furthermore, he notes that the group likewise needs individuals to contribute to tasks and partake in the processes that maintain its distinctiveness, thus paradoxically threatening individuality. It is the contention of the researcher (supported by Gould, 2006 & McCallum, 2008) that the attention given to an individual, who has established his/her identity through group encounters, is implicit but has not been explicitly expounded upon. As noted by Bion (1961, p.91), “there is a matrix of thought which lies within the confines of the basic group, but not within the confines of the individual”.

Bion (1961, p.90) furthermore mentions that the group “is more than the aggregate of individuals, because the individual in a group is more than an individual in isolation”. This highlights a problem of group therapy, namely that the group is often used “to achieve a sense of vitality by total submergence in the group, or a sense of individual independence by total repudiation of the group, and that part of the individual’s mental life, which is being incessantly stimulated and activated by his group, is his inalienable inheritance as a group animal”.

### **7.2.2 Literature aim 2**

Literature aim 2 was achieved in Chapter 3. The literature revealed that insight is associated with gaining understanding (Schafer, 2003), and thus is linked to the process of meaning-making. Insight, although not explicitly defined by Freud (1936), is about making the unconscious conscious (Moro et al., 2012). Freud (1936) contends that gaining understanding of unconscious material is curative, and Benjamin (1995) adds that this new understanding has to be processed to be of value. Insight into new material provides meaning (Freud, 1936). Without insight, the individual will blindly repeat his/her painful past (Schafer, 2003). Moro et al. (2012) highlights that psychodynamic psychotherapy increases insight through connecting reactions to unconscious forces to one’s childhood.

Meaning, within a systemic perspective, is derived from the relationship between individuals, in that, “causality becomes a reciprocal concept to be found only in the interface between individuals and between systems as they mutually influence each other” (Becvar & Becvar, 2009, pp.66-67). This ties to Freud’s (1922, in Winter, 1999) contention that group and individual psychology do not really exist. Lawrence (2000) suggests that GREs offer an individual the opportunity to explore an experience within a group, and in turn, this can enable understanding of him/herself to be used in other interfaces. Thus, a GRE serves as a nexus between an individual and others. For insight to be found, the interviewer in his/her role as co-interpreter is critical, because expecting an individual to make connections between the experience and past experiences on his/her own may be beyond his/her capacity (Grinberg, 2000).

Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) provide guidance on how to “read the text” or make sense of GRE participants’ reflections, by discussing that it requires getting beneath the surface and finding the unconscious and emotional significance of events that are revealed through patterns in recurring themes. Hyypä (2014) offers the LP as a platform for meaningful, exploratory verbal articulation, wherein interpretations in the process are cooperative and co-created. This process aids the individual to see things in new ways. Hyypä (2014) notes that individuals carry their environment within themselves, and he thus recognises that an individual knows more than he/she consciously knows. Schafer (2003) moreover explains that influential interpretations are derived through the analysis of defence, transference and counter-transference. These are significant in informing the approach that the researcher undertook in conducting the post-GRE interviews with participants in the present study.

The integrated experiential coaching approach developed by Chapman (2010) highlights the complexity of understanding an individual within a group context. This model integrates the work of Kolb (1984), Smuts (1986) and Wilber (2000), amongst others. In agreement with what has already been presented, Chapman (2010) asserts that it is difficult to work with an individual without understanding the collective consciousness of which he/she is a part. This approach to seeking understanding resembles the stages of the present research study, in terms of congruence with others as established in the post-GRE focus group, and the post-GRE interviews that allowed for exploration in the other three domains (that is, quadrants), as suggested by Chapman (2010) in Chapter 3.

In terms of understanding a GRE experience using ORA, Bion (1970, p.26) notes that an experience “**O** does not fall in the domain of knowledge or learning save incidentally; it can be ‘become’, but it cannot be ‘known’”. According to Bion (1970), **K** (knowledge) evolves and is gained through experience and becomes formulated phenomenologically. Thus, for a GRE to become ‘known’ and meaningful, an individual has to make meaning of it, which would require a means and/or method by which to make inferences relevant for his/her maturation. In so doing, he/she should find the truth of the GRE, as it relates to him/her. An individual needs to infer



meaning of experiences by assuming both how he/she and others experienced him/her in his/her role during the GRE.

Methodologies and approaches that have been adopted to enable individual learning and insight formation includes ORA (Borwick, 2006; Long, 2006), and various coaching models (see, for example, Brunning, 2006a; Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010; Kilburg, 2002; 2004). ORA grew from a desire to transform ideas and learning into action (Borwick, 2006). Review and application groups were first introduced into GREs by Lawrence (2006), and Borwick (2006) used group study and action programmes for similar reasons, namely to enable processing of learning in order to effect action.

Systems psychodynamic models of coaching are aimed at enabling individuals to become aware of, and gain insight into, their conscious and unconscious behaviours and thus develop these individuals (Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010). For this reason, these authors suggest investigating six constructs, namely Anxiety, Task, Role, Boundaries, Authority and Identity, as well as three role dynamics, namely normative, existential and phenomenological. Kilburg (2002) moreover offers a 17-factor model for psychodynamic coaching, and supported this with techniques (Kilburg, 2004) that elicit psychodynamic material during coaching. These approaches have been used for coaching; however, they have not been integrated for application post-GRE.

### **7.2.3 Literature aim 3**

Literature aim 3 was achieved in Chapter 3 by reviewing various approaches, including ORA, systems psychodynamic models of coaching, integrated experiential coaching, and coaching within systems theory. From these, a conceptualised meaning-making method was formulated by the researcher.

This conceptualised model was produced by integrating literature into a practical coaching approach. Literature demonstrated multiple ways by which individuals may be coached and supported to elicit understanding. For example, Fraher (2004) points out that while a GRE unearths unconscious dynamics, it remains the

individual's responsibility to determine what learning is valuable within this. Group relations may leave the individual 'there', so a method or approach to support the individual in his/her learning process in order to make this determination needs to be structured (Gould, 2006). The need to bridge experiences from a GRE to an individual is informed by Chapman's (2010) four quadrants to understand the individual within his/her context, namely seeking truth through understanding the empirical facts, the inner space of the individual, the comparison to the understanding of others (cohorts), and the individual's fit within the bigger system. Therefore, launching from a GRE to individual reflection would ignore the third aspect (lower-left quadrant), and a bridge by way of small groups (such as focus groups) could allow for a smoother transition for participants.

The concept for debriefing in the present study was therefore formulated to include both small group debriefing (that is, the post-GRE focus group) followed by one-on-one interviews (that is, the post-GRE interviews). The former used ORA to frame reflections in the group (Newton et al., 2006), while the latter incorporated methods to elicit and work with psychodynamic material in a debrief (Keeney, 1983; Kilburg, 2004; Nicholls, 2009). FANI, being adopted as the tool for the post-GRE debriefing interviews, also incorporated Schafer's (2003) perspective of enabling a space for collaboration and co-authoring understanding, as well as the LP (Hyypä, 2014) methodology of cooperative co-creation of interpretations. This understanding resulted in the framework shown in Figure 7.1.

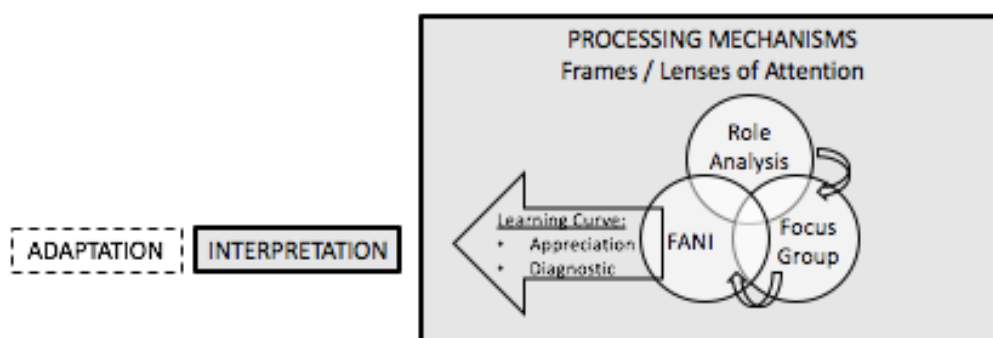


Figure 7.1: Reflective debriefing processing mechanisms post-GRE

#### **7.2.4 Empirical aim 1**

Empirical aim 1 was to explore meaning-making post an intensive experiential event, which was accomplished and reported on in Chapters 5 and 6. This also answered research question 2, namely how individuals who partook in a GRE can make meaning of their experiences post a GRE. Within Chapter 5, the contact with each participant was reported on, detailing each of their reflections as well as the connections and insights that they made during each post-GRE contact session. The findings, as set forth in Chapter 5, demonstrated how each of the participants made meaning of their re-view of their GRE experiences. All participants remained fully engaged throughout the research process and reported to have found the researcher's sessions to be helpful in making sense of their experiences. Some participants went on to mention that they would have taken much longer to reach insight and understanding if left to conduct their own reflections. This assured the researcher of the immediate benefit experienced by the participants, and that the study's focused attention immediately after the GRE might have expedited their learning.

ORA (used during the post-GRE focus group) served as a helpful departure for exploring transference, counter-transference and projective identification that occurred during the GRE, thereby making the unconscious, conscious. Participants went on to reflect on their unconscious functioning in the post-GRE interviews. Pattern-matching was utilised to make connections to their formative life experiences, thereby facilitating their assembly of meaning from their experiences in the GRE. The detailed FANI discussion that took place for each participant in the post-GRE interviews (as reported on in Chapter 5) demonstrated the unconscious dynamics and patterns that each individual uncovered during these sessions.

On analysis of the study's transcripts, the techniques and methods that were used during the post-GRE interviews became apparent. These were different for each participant and were reported on in Tables 6.1 and 6.2. These techniques are summarised in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Summary of techniques and methods by participants

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Techniques/reflection methods</b>
<b>Christine</b>	Amplification and meaning-making, re-framing, using metaphors and analogy
<b>Gretha</b>	Contradictions, confrontations, summarising, re-phrasing, pattern recognition
<b>Lisa</b>	Affirmation of self, storytelling, re-framing
<b>Magda</b>	Metaphors, removing judgement, storytelling
<b>Gavin</b>	Finding patterns, pattern recognition, making projections and connections explicit
<b>Sam</b>	Metaphors, analogy, removal of judgement, storytelling, challenging through confrontation, re-framing

The methods used for co-creating these interpretations include, amongst others, restating content in a manner that is new; making connections between aspects uncovered in the post-GRE interviews and focus group and/or pre-GRE interviews; reformulating behaviour in a new way; contradictions; and storytelling. These are methods advocated by Kilburg (2004). Furthermore, the researcher made use of commenting on meta-communications and using the participants' statements to reflect, as supported by Hollway and Jefferson (2008).

The technique used to format the post-GRE focus group discussion was ORA, advocated by Borwick (2006) and mentioned earlier in this section. From the participants' interpretations reported within Chapter 6, it is evident that the ORA technique proved helpful to participants in their meaning-making efforts. In applying these techniques, multiple systems psychodynamic themes emerged, which were

also presented in Chapter 6. This highlights the intensity with which individuals experienced the GRE and then departed from it. The extent of themes further demonstrates the importance of having a space for formally processing these insights as a singleton, rather than as a group member. This validates the impact of such a reflective post-GRE space.

CIBART is an adapted framework proposed by Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) to understand manifesting behaviour more effectively, as well as to assess these behaviours and manage conflict. For each of the dimensions within CIBART, a working hypothesis was formulated in the present study. This provided evidence of the impact that FANI had for participants, as a formal platform for debriefing post-GRE. Therefore, the themes and working hypotheses identified and discussed in Chapter 6 together provide significant evidence of the profound impact of a GRE and the benefit that explicit post-GRE debriefing may yield for the singleton.

Essentially, the themes and understanding of manifest behaviours (via CIBART dimensions) demonstrates the efficacy of a post-GRE reflective space. Anxiety increases when there is role incongruence, which indicates unclear boundaries. This in turn triggers questions regarding self-identity and inhibits the activation of personal authority, resulting in a struggle to take up one's role/s. This thereby perpetuates role incongruence. This cycle may sabotage an individual's growth, but it can be discontinued through a process of meaning-making. It was therefore evident in Chapter 6 that the volume of psychic material 'floating' in the individual system is significant enough to warrant deeper inspection and consideration. As Gould (2006) points out, it is the expressed intention of those working in the systems psychodynamic tradition to effect understanding, insight and deep change, yet such learning has not been sufficiently explored in literature. The present study's findings support Gould's (2006) contention that systems psychodynamics does elicit insight and understanding. Gould's (2006) second contention is equally true, namely that learning needs attention. As the present study's findings attest, much can be learnt by an individual when explicit attention and space is created for his/her reflection after a GRE. This supports McCallum's (2008) position that a GRE does not give sufficient attention to the development of individuals.

The key insights gained by singletons, as presented in Section 6.4, enabled growth for each participant, and showed conclusions at which the researcher arrived in her subjective capacity in order to make sense of the entire span of engagement with the participants. The three stages of this research process succeeded in making the participants resume their statuses as singletons. The group, the GRE, and the group's experiences that they had therein were no longer the primary focal point after FANI was concluded. The main focus of interest at that point was the singleton. It may be concluded, therefore, that having a mechanism that facilitates individual meaning-making has a profound impact for individuals who have undergone an intensive experiential event such as a GRE.

### **7.2.5 Empirical aim 2**

Empirical aim 2 related to providing a hypothesised conceptual 'meaning-making' framework. This answered research question 3, namely how are they (participants) were facilitated to learn and grow, in an interactive guided process informed by systems psychodynamics. The model that emerged in the present study confirms the work of Kilburg (2002; 2004) as well as Chapman's (2010) four fields of knowledge. It supports the LP (Hyypä, 2014) and Schafer's (2003) contributions that help an individual to re-frame his/her experience in a more meaningful manner and thus move learning into action by changing his/her behaviour through interpretation to influence adaptation. Figure 7.2 presents the researcher's conceptualised approach to meaning-making post an intensive experiential event, which is an adaptation of Kilburg's (2002) 17-factor model. It is a duplicate of Figure 6.2, except that it is presented here with a named title, "Meaning-making model".

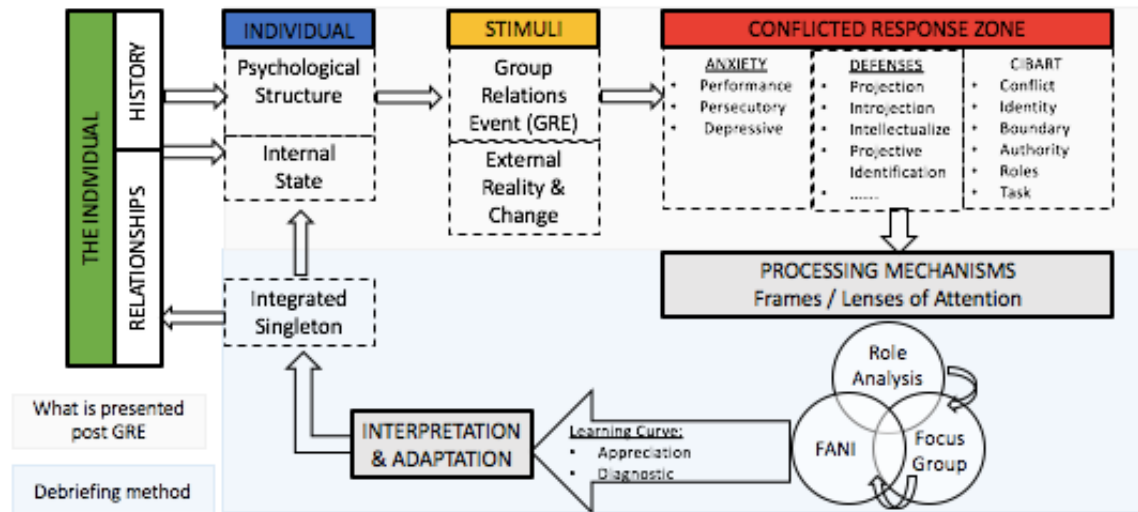


Figure 7.2: Meaning-making model

The grey shaded section of the process in Figure 7.2 represents how an individual presents after a GRE, with an established history and relationships, a psychological structure and a pre-existing inner state. This inner state and structure is triggered within a GRE, and defends against the anxiety provoked, thus manifesting certain behaviours. Much of this can be experienced by an individual but is not necessarily understood by him/her.

The blue shaded section represents the process to be undertaken to enable the explication of experiences in an attempt to make apparent meaning of these manifestations to the individual. The implication of the three overlapping processes implies a gradual transition from group to individual. The role analysis is a reflection that is completed and then shared in the post-GRE focus group (that is, small sub-groups of the original GRE). This is entrée to the one-on-one post-GRE interviews that take the form of FANI with interpretative co-creation (or 'thinking out loud' as Nicholls, 2009 notes). This last process enables learning (both appreciation and reframing), which enables individual interpretations and adaptations for integration as a singleton. From the present study, an approach has thus emerged that can be used as a future intervention (coaching process) to achieve meaning-making after an intensive experiential event such as a GRE.

### **7.2.6 General research aim**

The general aim of this research was to explore a process of meaning-making, post an intensive experiential event. In doing so, the study analysed post-GRE reflections, including personal insights that participants distilled (as presented in Chapters 5 and 6). Overall, it may be concluded that the research was successful in exploring meaning-making with individuals after a GRE has taken place. The research revealed 'below-the-surface' (that is, unconscious) dynamics, which upon reflection allowed individuals to see connections and find patterns that unlocked parts of themselves. These insights therefore revealed the self to the self, proving helpful to the participants in aiding their integration of insights as singletons.

By analysing the processes that were followed, the researcher conceptualised an approach or methodology that can be used as a future intervention for those partaking in GREs, in order to facilitate an awareness of the unconscious functioning that takes place within a GRE. This would aid in enabling such individuals to make meaning of their experiences post an intensive experiential event, thus enhancing their personal growth.

### **7.2.7 Contributions of this research**

Based on the conclusions drawn above, the contributions of this research study as related to group relations theory and systems psychodynamics is considered to be the following. To the researcher's knowledge, there are no studies in South Africa or internationally that focus on personal meaning-making after a GRE. Although studies evaluating participants' learning have been found (see, for example, Hills, 2018; Wallach, 2014; 2019), these focused on the learning that took place after attending a GRE, such as assessing the relevance of the methodologies that influenced learning about authority, power and group dynamics (to name a few) within a temporary organisation (that is, the GRE). Although their research findings suggest that personal learning did take place, it did not explicate on what specifically was learnt (Hills, 2018; Wallach, 2014; 2019). Typically, the primary task of a GRE is to provide learning opportunities to study how organisational dynamics unfold in the here-and-now, and how members take up their roles (UNISA, 2012). Thus, the



findings of Hills (2018) and Wallach (2014) relate to the efficacy of the primary task of these GREs, rather than exploring the personal impact of the event from the perspective of the singleton. However, Review and Application Groups (RAG) is intended to provide an opportunity to make sense of their experiences and review their learning (Cilliers, 2001; Miller, 1993) – this study provides opportunities to enhance RAGs and go beyond a group debriefing and reflection to an individual level of reflection.

The unique contribution of the present study, therefore, lies in the explication of the singleton's meaning-making post a GRE by providing an in-depth narrative, as well as the connections realised through intentional reflection on GRE experiences. This includes making the unconscious functioning conscious (for example, transference and projective identification).

This study therefore provides a hypothesised conceptual meaning-making model that adds to the body of knowledge in the group relations and systems psychodynamic paradigms. It could be used by singletons wishing to express their personal learning from a GRE, in order to make such learning explicit and conscious. The coaching / debriefing, reflective stance that this model provides enables the individual to assume his/her singleton status with a better understanding of his/her unconscious functioning that occurred in the GRE, thus making it meaningful. The singleton should be able to recognise previous below-the-surface reactions and the transferences that occurred, so as to become aware of patterning. This patterning is a whole representation of the singleton, as an integrated singleton.

Group relations theory (and GREs as a learning vehicle) focus attention and interpretation unequivocally on the group. According to Shapiro and Carr (2012, p.77), this is not done to help the individual develop self-awareness and understanding because the “group itself, and the group alone, is the focus of study”. The present research study therefore adds to the body of knowledge about group relations and systems psychodynamics as it relates to individuals.

Finally, for those psychologists who work within the Tavistock tradition in relation to systems psychodynamics and provide coaching and interventions to individuals, this

meaning-making model may be useful as a debriefing process to aid in the personal growth of their coachees.

### **7.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The limitations of the study will be discussed with reference to the literature review, the methodology, and the conceptualised meaning-making model presented as a hypothesis.

#### **7.3.1 The limitations of the literature review**

The literature review was substantial with regard to systems psychodynamics (Chapter 2) as well as meaning-making (Chapter 3). However, existing literature that explicitly explores personal growth within this paradigm is limited. No South African nor international studies were found that explored personal learning, post a GRE. This limitation further endorsed the need for the present study to contribute to this limited pool of knowledge.

Consequently, this lack of study-related literature influenced the design and conceptualisation of the research from an empirical perspective. The restricted research available on this topic meant that there was limited insight for the researcher to consider when designing the empirical study, in terms of how to conduct the empirical research effectively. She had to be inventive, organic and intuitive when formulating the research design, conducting the pre- and post-GRE interviews and the post-GRE focus group, and analysing the emergent data. This forms a further limitation of this study.

#### **7.3.2 The limitations of research methodology**

While this study intentionally provided a concentrated, in-depth analysis of the experiences of six GRE members, it did not attend as directly to breadth by means of a larger sample size. In other words, it was the researcher's intention to explore participants' descriptions of their insights deeply, in order to yield rich, detailed data.

This therefore limited the extensiveness or span of exploration in terms of sample size. This represents a methodological limitation.

Additionally, all participants were part of the same GRE in the same Doctoral programme, and therefore the results may not be comparable to participants who partook in a different GRE. The potency of the empirical findings reveals results for each individual, but these findings also relate directly to the actual GRE, the manner in which it was deployed, and the proficiency of those leading it. Therefore, it cannot be definitively stated that the meaning-making process conceptualised by this study alone yields benefit. If the GRE was run differently and was rendered ineffective, participants in this study may not have gleaned as much insight from the post-GRE process.

Demographically, the sample of this study was limited. Although sufficient in size to establish rigorous and robust outcomes (Rowley, 2002), the sample was comprised of a non-diverse group of participants in terms of race. It was not thus representative of the South African demographic profile. The sample was moreover limited in terms of occupational category, age and employment status. This limitation, however, does not detract from the depth of experiences that participants shared, or the meaning that they were able to garner from the process. It likely does, however, limit the degree to which the results may be generalised, because the experiences of self, role and authorisation could be different for individuals of different demographic profiles.

The use of working hypotheses as a research tool has inherent limitations. Amado (1995) opined that these working hypotheses (or assumptions, as he referred to them) would require data and methods in the specific arenas to be verified. Thus, the working hypotheses offered in this study require further research for verification outside of the scope of this research.

A further limitation of the study was a failure on the part of the researcher to foresee a need for follow-ups after a period of time to determine the degree to which learning had effected behaviour change. Such follow-ups could also have ascertained

whether the insights were in fact integrated in the longer term, in order to ascertain usefulness to the individual in his/her future encounters.

The final limitation of the study is that the researcher adopted multiple roles for the purpose of the research, including consultant-in-training within the GRE that served as the container for this study. This made it possible that the researcher's own bias might have been transferred onto the analysis and interpretation of findings. This was to some extent contained by the explicit reflections made by the researcher as presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

## **7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section covers the recommendations that emanate from the study. Since the second empirical aim was to present a hypothesised conceptual meaning-making model that would affect learning and growth and aid individuals in their quest for deepened understanding, the recommendations that follow for individuals as well as consulting psychologists focus on this aim.

### **7.4.1 Recommendations for individuals**

Individuals need to take responsibility for their own learning through meaning-making. Although meaning-making may require an analyst or sounding board, individual learning might be facilitated if they possess an awareness of a process such as the one developed in this study. It should be made explicit that an individual, upon entering into a GRE, ought to be guided through re-integration post this event. This re-integration should be stepped to ease transition (as suggested in Figure 7.2), and both small group debriefing and individual reflective debriefing (using FANI and interpretations) should be incorporated as modality.

The researcher recommends that this become part of the informed consent to which GRE members agree. When consenting to participate in a GRE, individuals should also commit to the additional time needed for post-GRE debriefing and reflection. Participation in a GRE is intended to effect learning in the group but does not promise that an individual will receive attention (Gould, 2006; Miller, 1993). It is

therefore crucial that individuals take personal responsibility for initiating this by eliciting the necessary support and utilising a structure format that will enable meaning-making, thereby facilitating their own learning and growth. This may address the tension between individuation and incorporation (Miller, 1993).

#### **7.4.2 Recommendations for consulting psychologists**

Consulting psychologists, especially those who work in the systems psychodynamic tradition, play a key role in facilitating the debriefing approaches offered in the model presented in this thesis. They should apply this to the benefit of those who enrol in GREs in the future, to ensure the efficacy of the GRE and its purpose. Through individual debriefing using this approach, they could support individuals to achieve greater insights, thus enabling them to transition more easily from insight to action. As Borwick (2006) points out, individuals often depart from experiences with learning, yet do not change their behaviour at all. The recommended method in this study provides a process that aids psychologists in enabling individuals to bridge this gap between idea and action, as Borwick (2006) describes it. To those consulting psychologists who have not experienced a GRE, it is recommended that they first attend a GRE to fully appreciate its impact.

FANI (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013), which was used in the post-GRE interviews, was found to be effective in eliciting rich data. For this reason, this technique should continue being used as a method for conducting one-on-one interviews. It is moreover recommended that this interview technique be used for GREs that have varied themes, durations and residency requirements, like the diverse range used by Wallach (2014) in her research.

Kilburg (2004) suggests that drawing interpretations is complex and challenging. He therefore explains various ways by which to effect this in coaching. These techniques emerged in the present study during the post-GRE interview, being the methods that the researcher intuitively used during the interviews. Henceforth, they are provided here as recommendations for use by coaching and consulting psychologists in future interventions. The researcher recommends that such psychologists:

- **Restate content in a manner that is new or familiar to the individual.** For example, the researcher asked Magda to consider both “where home is and what home is”, which helped her embrace herself as ‘home’ and move towards acceptance;
- **Make connections between aspects uncovered in post-GRE interviews.** As an example, using words from the post-GRE focus group (such as a wormhole) to enable Gretha to engage during the interview was helpful, and Sam responded well to connections. In fact, he wanted to understand these further; for example, his projections and introjections as well as why he was prone to these (the provocateur and not the leader);
- **Reformulate behaviour or comments in a new way.** For example, the researcher asked Magda to consider her nomadic choices as adventurous and warrior-like. She also enabled Gretha to notice that the link between boundaries and crossing over had more to do with understanding birth, rather than death. She challenged Gretha’s definition of being a ‘boundary-person’ by stating that being on the boundary was akin to sitting on the fence or being a spectator;
- **Comment on meta-communications that may reveal defences, conflicts and/or transferences of which the individual is not aware.** This was useful for Gavin, who deliberately spoke with innuendo to deflect;
- **Use individual’s statements to reflect and consolidate perspectives.** This is part of the FANI process recommended by Hollway and Jefferson (2013). For example, Gretha and Christine spoke much, and they needed to hear themselves speak to this extent as part of their own processing, so using re-phrasing and summarising was important to their FANI;
- **Speculate and explore implications that relate to connections between formative life experiences and the GRE, and form hypotheses of which individuals might not be aware.** For example, Sam began to recognise connections between events in his childhood and his parents, and the direction his life took. He also recognised how not making choices had left him deconstructed, which was not just a world-view, but rather had become his world;
- **Use contradictions, such as stating the opposite or a negative description.** For Gretha, negative descriptions or connotations encouraged her engagement,

while for Magda and Lisa, stating the opposite helped remove the judgement that they held over themselves; and

- **Use storytelling to create rapport and transmit understanding and acceptance.** For example, the researcher told Magda the story of the warrior, and Sam the story of the surfer.

#### **7.4.3 Recommendations for future research**

Further research is important to expand on the process that has been conceptualised in this study, both to validate and enrich the content and approaches. It is recommended that a similar study be undertaken with multiple GRE participants from a broad range of GREs. This would be useful to test this approach in different settings, including with participants who are not psychologists, to validate the meaning-making model presented in this research. Expanding the sample size and the sampling population will enhance the external validity of the study.

Owing to the limitation of possible researcher bias, arising from the role that the researcher played in the GRE, it is recommended that this study's empirical approach be tested by a researcher who has not partaken in the GRE that served as container for the participants in the study. This could aid in eliminating bias. Furthermore, it is recommended that future research be coupled with a follow-up one-on-one interview with each participant, to gauge the degree to which behaviour has successfully changed by each of them, and whether learning was integrated.

It is moreover suggested that individuals who partake in future studies include non-psychologists to ascertain efficacy with those not as familiar with the psychological constructs under study. Future research should also aim to be more diverse in terms of race, age, employment status and occupation, making it more representative of the South African demographic profile. Furthermore to understand the South African GRE participant profile in general, it is recommended that studying the race dynamics (conscious and unconscious), diversity and representation of a sample of a group of individuals who attended a GRE in South Africa, as a fractal of the wider race, diversity and representation dynamics in the wider South African context. The

degree of replication that this would show to the original study would add rigour to the findings (Rowley, 2002). The conceptual meaning-making process (that is, the model from Figure 7.2) could also be applied in a coaching context to ascertain its value for those who are experiencing life, not just an intensive GRE.

Finally, it is recommended that future research verifies the effectiveness of utilising working hypotheses for studies utilising a similar methodology as the present study, outside the scope of this study.

## **7.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter focused on the conclusions drawn in relation to the aims of the study, including discussing the achievement of the researcher's literature and empirical aims. While a GRE sets a platform for discovering 'truth' (Bion, 1961), the meaning-making model that has been developed in the present study holds the potential for explicitly and systematically exploring meaning to the point of individual insight formation and meaning-making, so as to afford individuals the best opportunity for adaptation through learning (Borwick, 2006). The chapter presented how the purpose of the study was achieved, followed by a discussion relating to the limitations and recommendations of the study.



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**ANNEXURE A:  
E-MAIL INVITATION TO PARTAKE IN STUDY**

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06 MARCH 2012

Dear Fellow Doctorate Student

I hereby invite you to be part of my Doctorate Research project:

**MEANING-MAKING POST AN INTENSIVE EXPERIENTIAL EVENT**

This research endeavours to study how people make more sense of a Group Relations Event (GRE) and how they begin to integrate the learning from the event into their personality, and subsequently into their work and personal lives. Furthermore, it seeks to provide a bridging methodology for 'after the event' – methodology that allows for post-event processing, interpretation, and integration.

The context of this study is revealed by Bion's (1961) work with groups. He describes the formation of groups, and the results yielded explain work group functioning, and the emergence of basic assumption (ba) groups. He explains the degree of 'individual distinctiveness' being displaced within ba-groups. While learning is yielded in groups, this may be so swamped in the collective that individual integration of the learning may not happen. The focus of this study therefore aims to bridge the experience of the individual in the group to their post-event experience as a singleton – to gain insight and thus realise individual growth.

To explicate your role in my project, the following is required from those who choose to participate:

1. Before the SAOT (GRE) in May 2012, participants would need to commit to a conversation to explore the individual's 'top-of-mind' personal and / or professional priorities and any (if at all) expectations the individual has of the group event. This conversation will take approximately 30 minutes and not exceed an hour. A structured form will be sent to all participants prior to the conversation in order to allow the individual some time to consider the responses.
2. After the GRE, individual de-briefing sessions will be conducted. Schedules times will be agreed for the follow-up Cybernetics Conversation, which strives to enable individual insight and learning (for the singleton).

I would appreciate your participation in this study. Please indicate, in writing via email, whether you are interested and willing to partake in this study. We would like to conclude the final list of those who are participating in the study by the end of March 2012, in order to initiate communication and scheduling prior to the GRE (SAOT) in May 2012.

Thanking you in anticipation

Sincerely,

**FAYRUZ ABRAHAMS**

084 686 2240

**ANNEXURE B:  
PRE-GRE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW TEMPLATE**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I would appreciate you considering the questions below in preparation for a telecom with me. In the telephone conversation, I shall ask you these questions only. Your responses are confidential and will serve as a baseline for post-GRE debriefing.

**1. My expectations of the event (SAOT Experiential Event 21-24 May 2012):**

**2. Describe the roles you hold (only those you consider significant / important) and then comment on how you evaluate yourself in these roles:**

PROFESSIONAL	Comments	PERSONAL	Comments

**3. Of the top 3 roles, in your opinion, how would others who interact with you, evaluate your performance in these roles?**

**ANNEXURE C:  
POST-GRE FOCUS GROUP ROLE ANALYSIS TEMPLATE**

To provide opportunities to analyse and process your role/s, please record your personal reflections below: This will be used for discussion in the post-GRE focus group.

**NORMATIVE ROLE**

**EXPERIENTIAL ROLE**

**PHENOMENOLOGICAL ROLE**

**COMMENTS**

## **ANNEXURE D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

### **The purpose of the study:**

The study focuses on the extent to which learning from a Group Relations Event (GRE) is integrated into the singleton. The study aims to describe the integration of insights post an experiential event (GRE) from the group into the individual and thus through internalising of insight, enable individual growth and maturation. The research will be utilised for the doctoral studies of the researcher.

### **The process:**

A one-on-one semi-structured pre-GRE interview will be conducted telephonically and will last no more than 20 minutes. The participants will be asked about their roles, and the normative, existential and phenomenological perspectives thereof. After the GRE, a focus group lasting between 1-1.5 hours will be held with all participants. The focus group will be recorded and transcribed. This will be followed by one-on-one qualitative unstructured interviews, which will also be recorded and transcribed. The content of all interviews and focus group will be treated as confidential in that participants names and identifying information will not be published.

The intention is to contribute to the improvement of the post-event processing of participants and to better understand the individual's learning.

The research will be conducted by Fayruz Abrahams who is an Industrial Psychologist in private practice and a doctoral student in Consulting Psychology at UNISA. She can be contacted at 084 686 2240. She is bound by the ethical procedures of UNISA and the Health Professions Council of South Africa. You are encouraged to contact her with any concerns that you might have relating to your participation in the research and may withdraw from the study at any stage without fearing any negative recourse. Your participation is entirely voluntary. A copy of the research findings can be requested from the researcher at the conclusion of the study.

- I Agree to take part in the research as described above
- I Agree to the interviews and focus group being recorded and transcribed and understand that the recordings and transcripts will be treated as confidential and securely stored at all times and that only members of the research team will have access to them. I also understand that part of the recordings could be included in the thesis document but that these will in no manner or form reveal your identity.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without having to provide any reason.

NAME:

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DATE:

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SIGNATURE:

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