

**Envy amongst psychotherapists in a  
psychotherapeutic community:  
A hermeneutic inquiry**

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*A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Health Science at the Auckland  
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I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Crea M. Land (candidate)

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## **Abstract**

My research explores the lived experience of envy amongst psychotherapists and between psychotherapists in a psychotherapeutic community in New Zealand. It focuses on bringing the experience of envy out of hiddenness and into language.

It then explores the understandings and the possibilities of meanings that these experiences have. Previous literature on envy has for the most part discussed the clients' envy for the psychotherapist, and very little has been written about the therapists' envy for the client. My research turns the focus to the psychotherapist as it looks at their envy for each other.

As I was interested in the therapists' lived experiences of envy, I chose hermeneutic phenomenology as the methodology to explore these. I drew on the philosophical underpinnings offered by Heidegger, Gadamer and van Manen.

What arose from my in-depth conversations with psychotherapists is that while envy is an experienced phenomenon that is for the most part not spoken, the powerful feelings that it evokes have great impact on both those who envy and those who are envied. Envy showed up as arising in a relational context, with perception, time and anxiety as contextual determinants. These, along with the findings of the lived experience of envy as a binding between self and other, as threatening to self and other and as a means of connecting with self and other, are some of the essential points discussed in my thesis.

This study provides a starting point for a further exploration of the experience of envy amongst psychotherapists as well as envy's impact on who we are in ourselves and how we are with each other, both personally and professionally.

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Chapter 1--Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
“To take out of hiddenness” .....	1
Why this particular research?.....	2
My biases and presuppositions.....	3
A guiding force .....	5
Context of my research .....	7
A map to the whole of my thesis.....	8
My intention.....	9
<b>Chapter 2--Literature Review .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Chapter 3--Methodology .....</b>	<b>28</b>
Rigour.....	36
<i>Credibility</i> .....	36
<i>Fittingness</i> .....	37
<i>Auditability</i> .....	37
Ethical Considerations .....	38
<i>Beneficence</i> .....	38
<i>Principle of Respect for human dignity</i> .....	39
<i>Principle of Justice</i> .....	40
Method .....	40
<i>Sampling</i> .....	41
<i>Data Collection</i> .....	42
<i>Analysing of the Data</i> .....	43
Summary .....	45
<b>Chapter 4--The contexts in which envy takes place.....</b>	<b>46</b>
Comparison driven by desire leading to envy.....	47
Comparing, desire to belong, coupled with time as contextual determinants of envy .....	52
Perception and Distance.....	53

Transposing of experience .....	58
Anxiety as a contextual determinant .....	65
Summary .....	66
<b>Chapter 5--Envy showing itself as powerful feelings towards others .....</b>	<b>68</b>
Envy as Devaluing and Contempt of other .....	68
Envy as Angry and Nasty leading to wishes of destruction of other .....	74
Envy as Resentment (Envy as anger turned into resentment).....	78
Summary .....	83
<b>Chapter 6--Envy as evoking powerful feelings towards self .....</b>	<b>84</b>
Envy as painful--Devaluing of self; judgment of self.....	84
Envy as shameful .....	88
Envy as threatening.....	90
Envy as anxiety provoking.....	94
Summary .....	101
<b>Chapter 7--Living with Envy or Being-with envy.....</b>	<b>102</b>
By “Equalising” .....	102
Equalise or balance through neutralising .....	105
Balancing or neutralising envy through “accommodating” .....	107
Equalising or balancing through transforming.....	108
Widening of perception—an accommodation .....	109
Acceptance .....	110
Acceptance and resignation .....	118
Distancing from or avoiding of envy .....	120
Deleting experience in order to avoid pain of envy .....	121
Summary .....	124
<b>Chapter 8--Discussion.....</b>	<b>126</b>
My findings and the previous literature interface .....	127
Envy as lived experience.....	131
Envy as uncovering core experience.....	131
Envy as not spoken .....	132
Keeping envy conscious, or not .....	134
Anxiety and fear of overwhelm.....	135
Envy as relational.....	136

Envy as felt experience .....	142
Understanding envy in ourselves .....	145
Implications for Practice .....	146
Implications for Education.....	147
On-going research .....	147
Limitations of my study .....	148
Strengths of my study .....	148
Conclusion .....	150
<b>References.....</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>Appendix A--Ethics Approval .....</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>Appendix B--Consent to Participation in Research.....</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Appendix C--Participant Information Sheet.....</b>	<b>160</b>

## Chapter 1--Introduction

### “To take out of hiddenness”

This thesis is a phenomenological hermeneutic study which explores the experience of envy amongst psychotherapists, investigating the possibilities of meaning derived through interpretation of the themes it uncovers. It will offer an interpretation of the experiences of 6 psychotherapists practicing in the community of New Zealand. My major focus has been to bring the experience of envy out of hiddenness.

In A Heidegger dictionary (Inwood, 1999) there is a discussion about the meaning of truth. What is truth? The word *Aletheia* is Greek for “truth: truthfulness, frankness, sincerity”. There is also a verb, *aletheuein*, which means “to speak truly”. These words are related to an older form *lethein* meaning “to escape notice, to be unseen, to be unnoticed”. So *aletheia* has the meaning, “that which is not hidden or forgotten”, or “one who does not hide or forget”. Heidegger says that *aletheuein* is “to take out of hiddenness, to uncover” (p. 13). This etymological definition of “truth” opens the meaning of truth to many possibilities. My lived experience in doing this research has been about discovering that there are multiple possibilities of meanings to each and every lived experience.

The pocket Oxford dictionary (1978) defines envy as “bitter or longing contemplation (*of* a more fortunate person; *of, at*, his advantages etc.)”. The Merriam-Webster dictionary (1993) defines envy as “painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage”. The etymology includes Middle English *envie*, from Old French; from Latin *invidia*, from *invidus* envious, from *invidere* “to look askance at”. These definitions are a small start, as thus far I have seen envy as a most complex phenomenon which the dictionary definitions only begin to name.

## **Why this particular research?**

The beginnings of my conscious interest in envy began during my own therapy and my exploration of the experience of envy in myself, particularly in relation to other psychotherapists. As I allowed myself to investigate this phenomenon inside of me, I became increasingly aware of its impact on me, and in a moment of “this is too much”, I imagined and very much hoped that I was not the only one struggling with this phenomenon. As I looked outward to the community of psychotherapists in which I live, I began to see what I thought were different manifestations of envy, though I was not certain about what I was seeing.

Trying to make more sense of this mysterious phenomenon of envy, I started reading Melanie Klein (1957/1975). I was both inspired and deeply repelled by what she had to say. I thought to myself, “This is madness what she is suggesting, that an infant can envy!” and then I thought, “This is fascinating the way she is going inside the experience of this child and mother.” I felt very stirred up by her writings on a kinaesthetic, emotional, psychic and spiritual level. Throughout my research I have reflected on and discovered insights from Klein’s writings. As I read Klein again and again, I am continuously struck by the depth of her understanding, and by how much I have had to go deep within myself in order to understand and feel what she is saying.

I decided to do a Specialist Readings paper towards obtaining my Masters, and chose to examine and write about the literature on envy. I thought that I would see how I managed to be with envy over the course of writing that paper, and then make a decision about whether I could bear to stay with the topic of envy for my thesis.

Writing the literature review, I had moments of feeling paralysed as I allowed my experiences of envy to move from my unconscious to my conscious mind. A range of intense feelings arose in me as I recalled feelings of envy throughout my life, beginning in childhood. I was periodically overwhelmed with a sense of futility as feelings of inadequacy, of internal poisoning and of painful sadness wracked my being.

I reached a place of hopelessness. The thought of never being able to work through these feelings of envy and come to some resolution within myself plagued me and blocked my ability to even think or write any further. Each time I sat down to write, I couldn't. I welcomed any distraction.

Thankfully something happened. I had a vivid dream about my own envy which helped me to keep trying to make sense of envy rather than pushing it away. This seemed to free my creative self and restored my hope that I would find a way through.

### **My biases and presuppositions**

There are a number of biases and presuppositions that I hold in entering this research study. First, I believe that it is essential for us as therapists to examine our own envy in order to be able to more fully understand and be with the envy of our clients. I believe that the more I face into and know my own self, the more likely it is that I will be able to be with my clients facing into their journeys.

I also believe that as one of about 450 psychotherapists in this psychotherapeutic community here in New Zealand, I accept a kind of responsibility of finding ways for we psychotherapists to come together as human beings with each other. Looking at envy can be a very humanising experience, or rather, a humbling experience. It can lead to a recognition that we all experience envy, and that we all throw out our discomforts at each other, sometimes overtly, and often silently.

Being trained in psychodynamic psychotherapy, I hold the presupposition that most current experiences reflect, contain and are often influenced by our past experiences. I am also aware that in this thesis I am not looking at the difference or distinction between female and male psychotherapists. Whilst women and men may have different experiences of envy, this is not a line of enquiry I have decided to follow. I have in some cases altered gender for the purpose of maintaining anonymity, considering the smallness of the community of psychotherapists in New Zealand. My

thesis rather seeks to explore the experience of envy amongst human beings who are psychotherapists in this country. I have chosen this particular group because this is the group of which I am a part.

My idea is that the more we examine our own envy, the more we understand it in ourselves, the less likely will be our need to throw it out at anyone, and the more likely that we can find ways to transform it, and to use it as a tool to go into ourselves even deeper. Envy lets me know that I am not settled in myself, I am not fully accepting of who I am.

I am a Jewish woman of Lithuanian and Latvian descent. My paternal and maternal grandparents were forced to leave their homes in the early 1900's and migrate to Virginia in the United States, where my parents and then my siblings and I were born. I wonder about the Jewish people being envied for their perceived wealth, and the impact of this envy on them as individuals, and the many moves to destroy Jewish people over the centuries. Added to this, are my own mixed experiences of envy growing up as a Jewish child in a predominantly gentile school. I believe in trans-generational envy, and this may be part of my drivenness to make sense of envy, for myself, and for those who came before me.

I believe that envy can be both paralysing and motivating, and I also believe that the experience of envy is very alive within psychotherapists in the psychotherapeutic community here in New Zealand. There is need for this research because envy amongst psychotherapists is a subject that is rarely voiced, and the silence leaves room for unspoken feelings to remain in the dark and to mushroom into even greater proportions. It seems to me that it is particularly important for psychotherapists to explore envy because we hold powerful positions in relation to our clients. Holding this responsibility makes it essential for us to know our emotional selves as much as we possibly can. I see this enquiry into envy as the beginnings of making space for dialogue, new insights and possibly new alliances amongst many psychotherapists.

I will be exploring the dynamics of envy and will be trying to make sense of why it is

hidden and unspoken. I will attempt to speak about envy in such a way that enables more languaging for the purpose of bringing it into our spoken world as therapists.

My hope is that in speaking about envy in this thesis from many different angles, the toxicity of envy will be lessened. I also imagine that making conscious the unconscious impact of envy that plays amongst us all will eventually have a freeing effect and result in a creative and more supportive and spontaneous therapeutic community environment. I believe that in allowing ourselves to be with our envy, our compassion and creativeness within ourselves and for ourselves and others can grow.

In the exploration and understanding of their own envy, the participants may develop a deeper understanding of themselves which will assist them in their personal and professional lives. It may also benefit those who will read the research both personally and professionally by increasing their awareness of their experiences of envy, by assisting them to identify envy in its various forms and by helping them to language it.

### **A guiding force**

One of the main sources of inspiration for me on this journey was reading the writings of Heidegger himself. The way that he writes, his use of language, exploring into the original meanings of words, and the ongoing questioning nature of his thinking, embodies the methodology of phenomenological hermeneutics.

In the initial stages of my writing, I found Krell's (1977/1993) interpretations and quoting of Heidegger to be a great help in opening my mind and my self to "being-there" with what was being spoken in the writings, as well as to being open to what the therapists in my research were offering to me about their experiences of envy.

Heidegger (Krell, 1977/1993) conjures the notion of thinking as "an image that combines the linearity of the way with the flexure of renewed inquiry" (p. 34). He wrote a collection of essays in the 1930's and 1940's entitled *Holzwege*, meaning "timber tracks" or "woodpaths". Krell (1977/1993) tells us that Heidegger explains the word "woodpath" as "a path in a forest" that winds its way until it reaches an

impenetrable thicket. He says that each path goes its own way, and though they seem identical if one were to travel down them, they are not identical...it only seems so. There is a German expression which is translated as “to be on a woodpath”, and means “to be on the wrong track or in a cul-de-sac”, or “to be confused and lost”. The French translation is “ways that lead nowhere”. Krell says this is not exactly correct, because every path actually leads somewhere, but that “where they lead cannot be predicted or controlled” (p. 34-5).

This manner of thinking naturally leads to this methodology, because it is the “being on the woodpath”, or the being in the confusion and lostness, that allows something new and unknown and possibly more original to emerge. Krell (1977/1993) says that “being on the woodpaths” forces us to plunge into unknown territory and often to retrace our steps. This describes well the way that I experienced my interviewing of the therapists about their experience of envy. We continually plunged into unknown territory, hidden territory, territory that has been previously without words, and together we wended our way down these paths that are unique to each participant. Krell says, “the coming to and departing from presence, or to and from the clearing of unconcealment, occur at each turn of the path” (p.35). There is something very revealing about this coming out of hiding in the woods, and the emerging of the previously concealed and unknown.

I have also been guided by the idea both in hermeneutic phenomenology, and in psychotherapy, to trust the process. Isn't “trusting the process” another way of speaking about surrender? The word “surrender” has rarely been used in the world of psychoanalysis, while it is often used in the spiritual world, though recently Benjamin (2004) spoke of submission and surrender, and quoted Ghent (1990) who explored these concepts in relation to psychoanalysis quite fully. He spoke of the fundamental need of people for the expansion and liberation of the self, through the letting down of defensive barriers and the resultant dismantling of the false self. Whilst for many the notion of surrendering has frightening connotations of loss, it seems to me that the act of surrender can mean an immense or immeasurable receiving, a receiving beyond intellectual grasp. There is a grand leap involved,

which I believe is a leap of faith, a leap of surrender, a trusting the process enough to know that something new and original will emerge out of this place of unknowing. This sense of being-in and being-with surrender, or trusting the process, has been my deepest and most profound guiding light, taking me into the darkness and then out again, and back in and then out again, like going into the depths of the sea and then emerging, into the light of day.

### **Context of my research**

The literature in the area of envy is rich with clinical descriptions of clients' experiences from the perspective of the therapist or analyst. The focus in the previous literature has been on the clinician's experience and their observations of their clients and themselves. The only research I could find on the topic was a quantitative study on the experience of envy. I did not find any research on the actual lived experience of envy, looking, as this research does, at several therapists' experiences and pointing to the experience itself and exploring the possibilities of meanings that the experience presents.

The most likely reason that there has been little to no research of this kind is that the experience of envy is not an acceptable phenomenon, not only to psychotherapists themselves, but also to the general population. Talking about the experience of envy is a disclosing experience and an exposing experience. As psychotherapists we often do not wish to disclose or expose ourselves too widely. There is an unwritten rule and unspoken rule about being a kind of example to others in our positions as psychotherapists. This does not create an environment of revealing some of the apparently unsavoury aspects of ourselves.

Another possible reason is that although the experience of envy is with us in everyday life, it is an enigma that most people do not talk about, therefore the languaging of envy is for the most part unformed and difficult to find. It is for the most part not spoken and often unconscious, or out of our awareness. Stern (2004) speaks to our difficulties in finding language for experience. He suggests that even as we speak, the momentary experience about which we are speaking has already been

relegated to the immediate past. What this means is that whatever we may say about an experience, our statement is already a reflection on the moment before we speak. So there is already a gap between our experience and our meaning making of it.

The psychotherapy community of New Zealand is the context in which my research is taking place. Most of the therapists in New Zealand are not only seeing clients, but many are also often being seen as clients by other psychotherapists either in supervision or in their own therapy. The multiple relationships that we have amongst each other can make for a certain degree of platonic incestuous relating. Looking at our envy may help to unravel some of the inevitable blind spots.

### **A map to the whole of my thesis**

In this paper I will show and write about the lived experiences of the psychotherapists who participated in my research. Throughout my thesis, I will be referring to my participants as “the therapist” or “the therapists”. In all cases I am meaning “psychotherapists”.

My study is presented in the following chapters starting with the literature review. In the literature review I have given an overview of the literature that has already been written about envy, as well as showing the need for this particular research that I have undertaken. While the literature is mostly from the perspective of the therapist writing about the clients’ experiences of envy towards the therapist, there is one article which is about therapists’ envy of their clients. There is also one article which details the findings of a quantitative research about envy amongst nurses. In all of these there is an examination of envy in that particular context.

Chapter 3 is a description of the theoretical underpinnings of the methodology, as well being an account of the methods which I have used in this phenomenological hermeneutic research. I describe my understanding of this methodology and show how it is in alignment with my own worldview. I show the fit between my research question and phenomenological hermeneutics. I further discuss the methods that I used to gather information, and the questions that I held in mind to guide me.

Chapters 4 through 7 are my data chapters which show excerpts from my interviews, extracted from my in-depth conversations with the psychotherapists in my research, and my analysis of the possible meanings of these excerpts. As my research is about the experience of envy amongst psychotherapists, these chapters show the lived experience of the therapists themselves.

Chapter 4 shows and explores the contextual elements of desire, of perception, of time and of anxiety as factors which create fertile ground for experiences of envy to arise or emerge. Chapter 5 shows envy in its multiplicity of forms as powerful feelings towards others. These feelings include envy as devaluing, as contempt, as anger, as nasty, as resentment and as desire to destroy the other. Chapter 6 shows the powerful feelings evoked by envy in relation to the impact on the self. This includes envy as painful, as feeling inferior, as shameful, as guilt, as hidden, as threatening, and as anxiety and fear provoking. Chapter 7 describes the ways in which the therapists in my research live with or alongside envy when it emerges into their conscious awareness. It discusses how the therapists manage envy, deal with envy, soothe envy, protect themselves from or distance themselves from envy, as well as work through and with envy.

My final chapter, Chapter 8, is a gathering of all that I have said in the entire thesis, bringing it all together into a cohesive whole. It is a discussion of the salient ideas and concepts named and explored in all of the previous chapters. It is a thorough explanation of where I have reached in my understandings about envy, based on the lived experience of the therapists who have participated in my research. I conclude with the main points that have emerged in my study and offer implications for practice and education, as well as possibilities for ongoing research.

### **My intention**

Krell (1977/1993) offers the Greek sense of the word “thesis” as, “to let lie forth in its shining and presencing” (p. 208). I hope that my thesis which you are about to read, does just this.

## Chapter 2--Literature Review

In this chapter I am identifying the literature that has been written about envy. I begin with naming some of the ways in which envy has been depicted in religion and spirituality, mythology, art and other literature. I will move forward in time to the psychoanalytic theorists and clinicians, and include summaries of their original thinking as well as their critiquing of themselves and each other. I will also give my responses and critique of their work.

The literature of Chaucer, Spencer, Milton, Dante and Shakespeare in part reflect early Christian views on envy. Chaucer speaks of envy unconsciously felt as the greatest of the deadly sins, because it spoils and harms the good object which is the source of life. In "The Parsons Tale" he says: "It is certain that envy is the worst sin that is; for all other sins are sins only against one virtue, whereas envy is against all virtue and against all goodness" (Klein, p.189).

In Milton's "Paradise Lost" Satan envied God and wanted to spoil Heaven. Foiled in his attempt, Satan gathers other fallen angels and constructs Hell as a rival to Heaven. Dante in his Divine Comedy writes of a soul met in purgatory, a victim of envy who commits suicide in despair, and of another whose envious eyes have been wired shut, the eyes which could not bear to look on the joy of others. Marlowe said "I am Envy...I cannot read and therefore wish all books burn'd...O that there would come a famine over all the world, that all might die and I live alone; then thou should's't see how fat I'd be" (*Doctor Faustus*, Act II sc.2 l.130f) (Ashwin, 1998). This statement is a precursor to Kleinian psychoanalytic thinking about envy as desiring and destructive.

One of the most striking and powerful depictions of envy is in the art of Goya. There is one particular piece in which he has painted a snake-like figure, poised as if to pounce, with one claw like hand held palm outwards, fingers splayed as if attacking, and the other claw-like hand turned palm inwards, fingers splayed, as if attacking the figure itself. I interpret this as the manifestations of envy, on one side an external

lashing out to destroy the envied other, whilst simultaneously self-attacking, causing immense pain to the envier.

In another painting Goya has depicted an intense and wild-looking Cronos the god of fertility, eating one of his own children. According to Greek mythology, Cronos, entreated by his mother Gaia, had castrated his father Uranus. Gaia had requested this as she was exhausted with bearing so many children, as well as being angry with Uranus for imprisoning many of their children. Cronos then overthrew his father as ruler, but did not however, comply with his mother's request to free her imprisoned children. His defiance resulted in Gaia's foretelling that Cronos too would be replaced as king of the gods by one of his children. To avert this, Cronos proceeded to eat each of his children at birth. This is a graphic description of the devouring nature of envy, seen in Cronos' envy of his father, of his siblings and ultimately of his own children. Cronos' plan was foiled by his wife's trickery, when one day she proffered a stone instead of her new-born child. This child lived to become Zeus, and took over as king. This mythological story shows the overlapping of envy and jealousy, as well as greed, which I will later define.

In psychoanalytic literature, Ogden (1984) names one of Freud's most fundamental contributions to psychology as being his conception of the unconscious mind, "the notion that one has thoughts, feelings, motivations, etc. of which one is unaware, but which nonetheless have a powerful role in determining the nature of one's observable thoughts, feelings, and behaviour" (p. 505). Freud and psychoanalytic thinkers who follow on from him offer us many insights into envy.

According to Mollon (2002), Freud referred specifically to envy only in his concept of penis envy, though according to Burke (2000) he also related envy to sibling rivalry, defences against homosexuality, and oedipal rivalry. Mollon cites Torok (1970) saying that the concept of the idealised penis always means: "the thing whatever it is that one doesn't have oneself" (p. 106). Freud (Rosenfeld, 1971) also brought forward the concept of the hidden negative transference which he linked to his theory of the life and death instincts. Abraham (*ibid*, 1971) carried this further,

emphasising that the element of envy was clearly evident in narcissistic patients in their devaluing and depreciating of the analyst.

While Freud and others offered invaluable contributions to psychoanalytic theory, when it comes to envy, according to Ulanov and Ulanov (1983) Klein named envy as evidence for the existence of a death-instinct in human beings. Klein (Rosenfeld, 1971) believed that Freud's theory of life and death instincts made sense of the struggle she observed in young children, between the urge to destroy their objects and a desire to preserve them. According to Ogden (1984), Klein brought the concept of envy as a relational experience to the fore, though he says she did not actually name this at the time. Bion (Ogden, 1984) formalised this concept more in his naming of the container and the contained, with the mother functioning as the container for the infant's anxiety, or the analyst for the client's anxiety, enabling the infant or client to manage their own anxiety.

Klein (1957/1975) agreed with Karl Abraham's (1919, cited in Rosenfeld, 1971) work and his naming of envy as an oral trait. She contradicted his concept that envy and hostility operate at a later period. She was convinced that envy is an oral-sadistic and anal-sadistic expression of destructive impulses, operative from the beginning of life. Whilst Abraham polarised envy with generosity, Klein linked envy with gratitude and love. Klein seemed to give major importance to the work of Abraham and to her own work, as bringing out more fully and deeply the significance of destructive impulses (Klein, p. 176). Klein named many possible defences against envy, including omnipotence, denial, splitting, idealisation, confusion, devaluation of others, devaluation of self, stirring up envy in others, stifling of feelings of love and corresponding intensified feelings of hate, indifference and withdrawal.

In 1932 Riviere described envy in women as the desire to rob the mother of her breasts and to spoil them (Klein, 1957/1975). Klein agreed with Riviere and went further into discussing envy in the therapeutic relationship. Klein said that when envy of a person arises, the feeling of envy from its earliest sources is activated. She said that the degree and the intensity of the feeling of envy, as well as the feeling of omnipotent destruction, vary with the individual.

Several case examples were offered by Klein (1957/1975) where analysis, interpretation by an analyst and understanding and awareness by a client, can all lead to the working through of envy. Primary or primitive envy, according to Klein, is revived in the transference situation, when the envious patient grudges the analyst the success of his or her work. Destructive criticism is evident in paranoid patients who get sadistic pleasure of disparaging the analyst's work, even though it has given them some relief. This is open envious criticism. In others this criticism remains unexpressed and even unconscious, so the patient splits off the envious and hostile part of the self, presenting the more acceptable parts of the self to the analyst. In this way the client avoids criticism.

Klein (1957/1975) named several factors, including unfulfilled ambition and jealousy which she considered instrumental in stirring up envy. She spoke of jealousy in the oedipal situation and thought that envy could be worked through. She named jealousy as more acceptable than envy, and that jealousy gives rise to much less guilt than primary envy. She in fact found it necessary to clearly distinguish between envy, jealousy and greed and this seems necessary to me as well, as in some instances there is an overlapping of the three. She defined envy as "the angry feeling that another person possesses and enjoys something desirable--the envious impulse being to take it away or to spoil it" (p. 181). This implies the subject's relation to one person only and goes back to the earliest exclusive relation with mother. She describes jealousy as based on envy, but involves a relation to at least two people, in which "the jealous person feels deprived of the loved person by somebody else" (ibid). She explains greed as "a craving which exceeds what the subject needs and what the object is able and willing to give" (ibid). Its unconscious aim is to suck dry and devour the breast, and she calls this "destructive introjection" (p. 181).

According to Klein (1957/1975), whilst envy seeks to rob in the way that greed does, envy also wants to put badness, bad excrements and bad parts of self, into the mother, in order to spoil and destroy her. In the deepest sense, this means destroying her creativeness. I wonder if this attack is to destroy that which the infant perceives

she cannot have. Or is it an attack on the self? Can envy then become an attack on one's own creativeness?

Klein (1957/1975) believed that the effects of envy impact on a person's capacity for gratitude and happiness. She thought that envy itself contributes to the infant's difficulties in building up a good internalised object--that the infant feels that the "gratification of which he/she was deprived has been kept for itself by the breast that frustrated him/her" (p.180). Klein said that in analysis she had found that her patients' imbued the breast with desires and phantasies, and that in its good aspect the breast represents goodness, patience, generosity, and creativeness.

Whilst Klein (1957/1975) acknowledges the mother being seen as omnipotent and the preventer of all internal and external pain, both by the infant and by the adult as well, she also very strongly states that frustration which is not excessive is a stimulus for adaptation to the outside world. In fact she says that frustration followed by gratification can give the infant the sense that they are able to cope with their anxiety. She therefore concludes that conflict, and the need to overcome it, is a fundamental element in creativeness. Klein is possibly suggesting that there is an experience of creativity that may arise out of the working through of envy. For indeed, the sense of envy within the envier is an enormous conflict, resulting in both an internal and an external struggle.

Whilst many writers and analysts after Klein have been critical of various aspects of her work, most of them give great recognition to her seminal writings on envy, and seem to use her understandings as a springboard from which to discuss envy and at times to launch their own theories.

Burke (2000) argues that there are many alternative accounts of envy, in which envy is seen as a responsive or defensive phenomenon, rather than a primary one as Klein named. Speaking of the analytic situation, she utilised Winnicott's concurrence with Klein and possible reworking of Freud's writings, to suggest that all impingements, or offerings by the analyst, are originally "bad", as seen through the eyes of the

client, and are therefore met by an envious attack of destructive impulses from the client.

Envy, Burke (2000) suggests, therefore arises and is reinforced due to a series of disruptions in the transition from an existence within the sphere of omnipotence to a capacity to recognise a world separate from the self. Envy might be viewed as an inevitable result of early trauma, trauma being defined as a continuum of disruptions ranging from catastrophic assault to a lack of “goodness of fit” between the child and her or his caretaker (p. 501). She thus describes envy as a sudden confrontation with helplessness, a sense of something overwhelming and capable of inducing primitive shame, from which protection is painfully felt to be lacking.

McWilliams (1994) describes narcissistically organised personalities as characterised by a sense of shame and envy. She says that analysts used to work with interpreting guilt in the experiences of the envious. In more recent times the work is in interpreting shame, for it is the concern about *being seen as* bad or wrong that preoccupies the envious, it is not a sense of guilt. McWilliams says: “Guilt carries with it a sense of an active potential for evil, whereas shame has connotations of helplessness, ugliness, and impotence” (p. 172).

I think that envy gives rise to both guilt and shame. If we follow McWilliams’ idea that there is an active potential for evil involved, I believe that guilt can be an aspect of envy manifest. I agree that the person who envies is concerned with being seen as bad. Possibly the guilt arises after the sense of shame has been felt. Mollon (2002) offers Lynd’s (1958) idea, that “feelings of weakness, helplessness and passivity—associated with shame—can lead to a wish to turn the tables and triumph over the other, giving rise then to feelings of guilt” (p. 29). The shifting from a state of helplessness to a more powerful position is often what occurs for the envious.

Kohut (1971) suggests that envy arises from neglect, rather than being a symptom of a pathological core. He says that the envious failed to get adequate empathic relating from their parents and as a result developed an envious style of perceiving self and others.

Hiles (2002) explores unconscious or primary envy as described by Klein, and agrees with Likierman's idea that in fact Klein is offering two theories of envy. One theory describes envy as a gratuitous aggression towards anything that is good, whilst the other, which seems to link with Kohut's idea about neglect, describes envy as the fragile infant ego responding to deprivation of some kind, which in many instances may be minimal deprivation.

Based on the second description, Hiles (2002) describes envy as the angry feeling that arises when another (person) possesses, and is withholding, something one desires for oneself. It is the perception of the envier (or the infant, as Klein would say), that by their withholding, the other person who has what is desired is holding it for themselves. This invokes a further aspect of envy which is at first to possess the good object, though when this is found to be impossible, the urge arises to spoil or destroy the goodness of the object, to remove the source of envious feelings. Primary or unconscious envy relates back to the earliest relation with the mother as good object. He agrees with Klein in stating that envy can often stir up jealousy and envy in others.

Whilst jealousy is based on envy, it involves a relation to at least two other people, and is therefore often triangular or oedipal. It aims at the possession of the loved object and removal of the rival. While it is often the rival who is the target of the jealous person's anger or aggression, this may actually be a way of averting the envy that the jealous one feels towards the loved object (Hiles, 2002, p. 7).

Envy, jealousy and greed are, according to Hiles (2002), all expressions of the complex dynamics of love and hate. He strongly asserts that envy is a necessary condition for human growth. He refers to Suttie (1935) who wrote "The Origins of Love and Hate". Though Suttie did not specifically name envy, he did say that hatred owes all its meaning to a demand for love. With this in mind, Hiles says that envy is closely linked to the human experience of love, and that in fact envy involves hating and loving the same object.

From these definitions it seems that the overlapping of envy and jealousy is complex. It also seems that envy is a phenomenon which involves the envier as the culprit, so to speak, though it is so much more complex than this. Orbach (1994) suggests that the most difficult aspect of envy for the envier to acknowledge is the wish to destroy the other. I think that it is not only difficult to acknowledge, but also difficult to accept and to allow oneself to experience. While it seems more acceptable to have the feeling of being jealous, for love triangles are so emotionally fraught as to be blameless, it also seems that the jealous person has the right to be angry because she or he has been disrespected. Putting the theory together with my own experience as a client and as a therapist, it seems to me that in envy it is the perceived sense of withholding that evokes the wish to destroy the other, whilst in jealousy it is at times the perceived sense and often the reality that there is a rival for the loved object's affections.

Hiles (2002) suggests that greed aims at possession of all of the goodness that can be extracted from an object, possibly leading to destruction of the goodness, but, he says, this is incidental or innocent. Klein (1957/1975) asserts that greed is bound up with introjection, while envy is bound up with projection. When greed is intense, it can lead to envy. Greed can exhaust the good object, which then appears to be withholding, and this is the very dynamic wherein envy can arise and thrive. As with envy, greed is commonly denied, both of which cause internal pain. Envy and greed have been interlinked by Nina Coltart (Berke, 1989) so much so that she created the word "grenvy" to represent this overlapping.

McWilliams (1994) believes that the narcissistic person has a certain vulnerability to envy. She describes the envious person as feeling lacking in some way and that they fear that their inadequacies will be exposed, so they envy those who they perceive as content. The envious narcissist may also be highly judgmental towards themselves and others. The use of devaluation and idealisation as defences are identifiable as characteristic of the narcissistically organised personality. McWilliams also suggests that there seems to be a need in the envious person to bring relationships to a place of equilibrium, where the self and the other are equal, and therefore envy does not arise. Yet this equality is the perceived manifestation of the envier, and is created

defensively, serving only as a temporary solution to assuage the pain felt by the one who envies.

A quantitative study of envy in a nursing community (Heikkinen, Nikkonen, & Aavarinne, 1998) found that envy is strongest in relation to an equal. They also found that women coped with envy by being silent while men denied the value of the object of envy. According to Foster (1972, cited in Heikkinen et al.), envy is veiled in symbols instead of being expressed, each person and community having a typical way of veiling envy, coping with envy and avoiding the envy of others. This has me wondering about a cultural component to envy, and raises my curiosity about the way in which envy is veiled in symbols in different cultures.

Maijala, Munnukka, & Nikkonen (2000) describe envy as manifesting itself in both destructiveness and creativity. It can open up new developmental challenges for a person, or it can have indirect manifestations that may lead to a narrowing of existence. Envy may include feelings of disappointment, shame, guilt, grief as well as admiration and hopes for identification. The distinctive feature of envy is that the person does not recognise his or her own real limitations.

The only article I found on therapists' envy for their clients was by Whitman and Bloch (1990). They suggest that when any two individuals are juxtaposed, there are elements of envy toward each other. They point out that the early analysts did not refer to maternal envy of the infant. Cohen (1986) emphasises the envious relationships between mother and daughter. Both indicate the interpersonal comparative nature of envy. Whitman & Bloch also refer to envy at the psychological level as well as the social level, describing envy as a two-way street that can poison a situation if not brought to light. They suggest that envy is inherent in therapy because of an imbalance, both actual and perceived, of interpersonal power. They also believe that as envy increases awareness of one's separateness from the envied person, it can interfere with empathy.

Burke (2000) makes a case for the domestication or management of envy through the negotiating of a shared reality co-created in the therapy room. It seems to me that a

shared reality must be co-created for the working through of envy and that dependence is a crucial part of this co-creation in the therapeutic relationship. Ashwin (1999) suggests that the fear of dependence is at the heart of the process in the therapy of the envious. Any kind of dependence is hard for the narcissistically structured person. Rosenfeld (1971) says, “In terms of the infantile situation the narcissistic patient wants to believe that he has given life to himself and is able to feed and look after himself” (p. 173). Dependence will be resisted.

Orbach (1994) discusses envy within a social context, identifying envy as a signal of distress about the difficulty one experiences with desire and needing. She gives an excellent example of two senior social work colleagues in managerial positions who had been friends and confidantes about the struggles and dissatisfactions of their work for years. Envy arose within one friend as the other friend one day told of her plans to start a consultancy service in her speciality, childhood sexual abuse. The more concrete she was in her plans, the stronger was the envy of the other. The envying friend felt abandoned, then a sense of loss, an anticipated loss of understanding, then she felt intimidated, resulting in a sense of lacking, and inferiority. The envier masked her deep feelings of wanting to express her own needs and desires entangled in prohibitive feelings. It wasn't actually the plans that she envied, it was envy of the fact that her friend was able to identify and act on her desires.

Orbach (1994) proposes that the envying friend use the signal of envy to explore her own internal conflict about desire--the struggle with fears, uncertainties and anxieties about entitlement to want. This can be accomplished by pulling one's feelings back into the self which have been projected out onto the envied, and then being with one's fears, beginning the process of daring to feel and actualise her own wants.

Joseph (1987) explores the dynamics of projective identification and the way in which the client can use this phenomenon omnipotently, consciously and unconsciously, to avoid feelings of dependence, envy, and jealousy. She developed Klein's ideas, examining the defences used by clients to prevent valuing the object,

or the therapist, and the envy that would arise through such a bonding. She focuses on the immediate effects in the transference relationship.

Spillius (1993) suggests two different manifestations of envy which she calls “ego-dystonic envy” and “impenitent envy”. The person with ego-dystonic envy (which Spillius suggests is the envy about which Klein speaks) directs defences against becoming aware that envy may be the basis of their behaviour, especially the various forms of attacks on good objects. The person with impenitent envy is inclined to see the source of envy as outside of themselves, and that the envied is responsible for the awful feelings experienced by the envier. Rather than acknowledging the sense of envy, the impenitent envier believes their experience is one of legitimate grievance--that in fact the envied deserves to be hated. While Kernberg (1984, cited in Spillius, 1993) describes the impenitent envier as envying without guilt. I would call this envying without responsibility.

Maintaining a sense of grievance, according to Spillius (1993), is a defence against experiencing the pain of loss of not having the good object which one so desperately desires. “Feeling perpetual grievance and blame, however miserable, is less painful than mourning the loss of the relationships one wishes one had had” (p.1203). I believe that it is by experiencing the sense of loss, by the grieving, and by the bearing of the grieving, that the internal sense of self is gradually strengthened. This strengthening might then build the internal sense of self which is essential for connection with self and other.

On my reading of Spillius (1993), I was aware of her pointing out that Klein does not assert, as is often thought, that envy is entirely constitutional. Klein’s (1957/1975) statement was that “the capacity both for love and for destructive impulses is, *to some extent*, constitutional, though varying in strength and interacting from the beginning with external conditions” (p. 180). This concurs with Klein’s belief that envy can be mediated through analysis.

Spillius (1993) also referred to the multitude of attacks on Klein’s ideas. Many in the British Psycho-Analytical Society thought it ridiculous to regard such pernicious

attacks on goodness as inherent in human nature. Some thought the death instinct was not a viable concept. Klein had adopted this concept from Freud and had then related it to destructive impulses, including envy (Rosenfeld, 1975). They thought that envy was a complex feeling, not derived from instinct as they suggested Klein said. It seems to me that Klein was acutely aware of the complexities of the experience of envy, whilst linking it to instinct, though not exclusively, as stated above where she acknowledges external influences.

One of the underlying characteristics of the envious as mentioned previously is the fear of dependence. Klein (1957/1975) first reflected upon this aspect in her clinical examples. She referred many times to the client who, fearing dependency upon the therapist, would be unable to acknowledge the value of the therapist, and the fact that the interpretation given or the therapeutic relationship itself mattered and was valuable to the client.

Schwartz-Salant (1982) details the many variations over the years of the story of Narcissus. He points out the striking fear of intimacy and of any feeling of need with which Narcissus is portrayed, the fear being that dependency would surely evoke envy. If there is no need, no wanting, no desire, there is no envy. What is also lost is the opportunity for intimacy and true closeness and love. According to Schwartz-Salant, Segal (1983) described narcissism as a defence against envy. When one is absorbed in the self, one convinces oneself or simply believes that there is no need for the other--so again, envy is not evoked. The feeling sense of envy is such an unwanted experience.

Etchegoyen and Nemas (2003) describe the subject of envy as an unending issue. They discuss the dilemma of Salieri, who was immortalised in the poetry of the Russian Pushkin in 1830. According to the story, Salieri, a great musician of his time who intensely envied Mozart's musical genius, assassinated Mozart. Etchegoyen and Nemas point out that the capacity to acknowledge the good qualities of the object cannot be accepted as a valuable part of the acknowledging self, and that in fact what occurs is that this experience is transformed, translated, or interpreted by the self as a confirmation of the self's inferiority. Thus it was that Salieri was unable to value

himself for his depth of understanding of Mozart's brilliance, rather he was overwhelmed with envy. The irony of this dynamic was that in his deep appreciation of Mozart, Salieri was a key in others' recognising Mozart's greatness.

Etchegoyen and Nemas (2003) give clear clinical examples typifying the traits of the envious--a sense of lacking in the self as a result of comparison to another, a sense of dissatisfaction with one's accomplishments, degrading the self, and negative thinking about the self. In exploring the dynamics in the analyst-analysand dyad, Etchegoyen and Nemas suggest appreciation as a counterpoint to envy rather than gratefulness or admiration. The latter places too much emphasis on the object, and there is a sense of idealisation. The former, that is appreciation, implies an acknowledging of the capacity of the subject to perceive the merits of the object. When the subject, or the one who envies, is able to acknowledge his or her own capacities and capabilities, the virtues of the object or the envied become more tolerable, even enjoyable by the envier. Klein (1957/1975) said that nothing interferes more with enjoyment than envy.

Etchegoyen and Nemas (2003) stress the importance of acknowledging both the virtues and the defects of the other and the self. They suggest that keeping this awareness "in an integrated way in the mind without splits and automatic projections of the undesired aspects, both good or bad, is by itself a stable and loving bond. The internal bond with a total object implies the identification with an object that is capable of loving, but also of feeling loved by the other" (p. 54). They believe that the ongoing experience of envy impoverishes the self, as the self loses the link with the good object and at the same time loses the projected valuable aspects of itself.

I believe this is what Etchegoyen and Nemas (2003) refer to when they speak of the necessity of creating a bond of dependence in therapy which is not attacked, and that it is essential for the self to maintain *inside* the virtue of being able to value the object. Through this process there is a growing of internal goodness which is a creative outcome of the exploration of the fear of dependence as a defence against feeling envy. The result is the ability to acknowledge both the good and the bad.

The above concept connects to Bion's (1959) ideas around linking, and the attacks on linking. Bion sees the linking function as a couple, and he sees primary envy as directed towards the creative aspects that link objects. He also comments on the infant's or patient's need for projective identification and the envy and hostility that arises when the mother or therapist is able to introject the attack without damage to themselves. Bion further says that the denying of projective identification, either by the mother refusing to be a receptacle, or by the patient's hatred and envy not allowing the mother to provide this function, can lead to the link in the couple being destroyed. This can then lead to "a severe disorder of the impulse to be curious on which all learning depends" (p. 98).

Groom (1991) says that "when we project our destructiveness outwardly onto others, we in some vital way are in a state of loss in our psyche in that we have disowned the rich, vivid, stimulating, exciting and potentially creative and transforming aggressive parts of ourselves; the compost heap of psychic prima materia is in danger of being lost" (p. 383). It may be due to this loss that the perceived sense of lack is felt.

According to Etchegoyen and Nemas (2003), Segal (1981) believes that the analysis of envy brings in a possibility of hope in the subject. This occurs as the latent appreciation of the good object is mobilised in order to play a role in the fight between love, gratitude and envy.

In more recent works, says Burke (2000), O'Shaughnessy (1999) and Britton (1998) have made suggestions on the role of envy and its effect on creativity. They have shown the need for a relation to an object that not only does not block its criticisms when adequate, but that is also caring and compassionate in its judgments, to alleviate the fear that envy might become unbearable.

In speaking of malignant envy (as seen in Salieri's case), Shengold (1994) offers a beautiful example of its direct opposite, in the story of Rilke who wrote about the essence of Cezanne's art. Rather than having a malignant narcissism, as it seems Salieri possessed, Rilke has a healthy narcissism which enables him to grow by

having an empathic identificatory relationship with Cezanne through his art. What Rilke takes in, he then projects outward to enlarge in turn the image of Cezanne.

The result of this process of transforming envy is the enhancement of both Rilke and Cezanne and their work. Shengold (1994) calls this admiration. For Klein (1957/1975) this transformation of envy can occur due to the capacity for gratitude.

Etchegoyen and Nemas (2003) call this capacity appreciation. Transforming malignant envy through empathic identification, admiration, gratitude and/or appreciation could be seen as derivatives of love, and thus might be in agreement with Klein (1957/1975) when she said, “The urge to make reparation, as a means of counteracting envy, ultimately involves counteracting destructive impulses by mobilising feelings of love” (p.220).

Dependency may imply a sense of inequality, which could be fertile ground for envy to germinate and grow. Eichenbaum and Orbach (1983) who suggest that behind the feelings of envy are feelings of longing and wanting. “Envy keeps the focus on the other, on what *they* have rather than what one needs” (p.145).

Speaking about dependence, Lewis, Amini and Lannon (2000) said that “if patient and therapist are to proceed together down a curative path, they must allow limbic regulation and its companion moon, dependence, to make their revolutionary magic” (p. 171). He suggests that psychotherapy changes people because one mammal can restructure the limbic brain of another.

Mitrani (1993) suggests that we must be alert to our own envy towards the patient so that we do not project our own unbearable state of “unknowing” into the patient. She calls forth Bion’s (1967) idea of allowing ourselves “to see the patient with eyes unclouded by yesterday’s vision and to listen with innocent ears” (p. 693). Mitrani seems to be saying that we as analysts need to explore and then know our own envy in order that we do not project it unconsciously out onto our patients.

Symington (1993) speaks of the *life-giver* as a psychological reality between two people, like friendship, which can be a source of creative emotional action that calls forth a free response. Similar to the infant seeking the mother's breast as an object, in later stages the self is seeking an object, the other, to which it can turn and take in. If one accepts the *lifegiver*, then this is acceptance of the gift of life; if one rejects the *lifegiver*, then one remains a prisoner to the internal saboteur (p.xiv). I am wondering if envy may be experienced as a *life-giver*, as a psychological reality between two which can ultimately call forth a free response.

In a more recent writing Symington (2001) presents what he calls "a psychological analysis of envy through building up a picture of envy as revealed by psychoanalytic investigation" (p. 183). His idea is that greed, envy and jealousy act in concert with one another, and with omnipotence. He states that the first stage of envy is the idealisation of the other, defining this as an act of "getting rid of my own good qualities, pushing them onto the other person which obscures the bad qualities or the deficits in the figure that I am looking at" (p. 49). According to Symington, Klein's description of the process of envy, in which the person thrusts out the bad things inside them into the object, is actually the second stage of envy. He says this projection occurs because the inner worthlessness, arising from the presence within of envy, greed, jealousy, and omnipotence, is loathed, so it must be thrust out. "Paranoia is the hatred for the inner entity now existing outside" (p. 187).

Symington (2001) emphatically states that "each of the elements in the psychological structure of envy needs to be kept in mind, understood and interpreted firmly and clearly" (p. 189). The purpose of my research is to uncover each of the elements of the structure of envy through languaging of the lived experience of my participants.

Stern (1985) speaks of "the clinical infant" and "the observed infant". The clinical infant is a particular construct, made up of memories, present re-enactments in the transference, and theoretically guided interpretations, and is jointly created in the therapy room by the patient and the therapist. Real-life-as-experienced becomes a product of the narrative that is created, rather than the other way around. The story or narrative of the patient is discovered and altered both by the teller and the listener.

The observed infant is another type of construct, a description of capacities that can be observed directly.

According to Stern (1985) however, these observations reveal little about what the “felt quality of the lived social experience” is actually like (p. 17). He suggests that as soon as we try to make inferences about the actual experiences of the real infant, it is not possible without relying on our own subjective experience. It seems to me that in using our own experience we would then be distorting the actual lived experience and the understanding gleaned from that. This is where the significance of my thesis becomes apparent, in that I am hermeneutically investigating the real-life-as-experienced in the here and now of the therapists in my research.

In the literature on envy that I have been able to find, therapists or analysts are writing about themselves as therapists, and their clients’ envy of them. I could find only the one article by Whitman and Bloch (1990) about the experience of the therapists’ envy.

In my thesis I have interviewed psychotherapists about their experiences of envy, within themselves and with and amongst each other. Zeddies (2000) encourages us to “bring out of the darkness of inarticulacy the old, familiar, and (ultimately) constraining patterns they (unconsciously) enact”. In this way he suggests that we can enhance our experiencing of the world through being “grounded in language and by extension, in dialogue and relationship” (p. 477). It is a speaking about the unspoken.

I have in this chapter laid out the literature previously written about envy, as well as naming art which has depicted aspects of the phenomenon of envy. In naming the earlier portrayals of literature and art I have shown the context within which envy emerged and was then given a psychological framing through psychoanalytic literature. With Klein as my major theorist carrying on from the thinking of Freud, I have discussed her theories based on her clinical work with infants and children. I have named other key theorists who at times agree and at times refute or add to

Klein's ideas. I have then explained the necessity of my research for furthering an understanding of the phenomenon of envy amongst psychotherapists.

In the following chapter, Chapter 3, I am describing and explicating the methodology and the methods that I used throughout my research. Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 following chapter 3 will be a giving voice to the therapists in my study through naming and interpreting the themes that emerged.

## **Chapter 3--Methodology**

In reviewing the literature in the previous chapter, it became apparent that to date, the here and now experience of envy has not been addressed. Hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology, the methodology I have chosen for my thesis, is aimed at understanding the way people interpret their lives and make meaning of what they experience. This chapter is about the methodology and the methods that I have used in aligning my research with the theoretical underpinnings of phenomenological hermeneutics.

In 2004 I participated in a workshop with Nancy and John Diekelmann (2004) who are immersed in the Heideggerian philosophy and its application to everyday life. One of the experiential concepts they spoke of was “drop down thinking”, dropping down, through questioning, into deeper layers and levels of wonderings about a chosen phenomenon. Van Manen (1997) calls this reflexivity, and he says that we are able to be reflexive because of our being in the world, of the world, and with the world. Heidegger (Smythe, personal communication, Interpretive phenomenology class, 2003) describes human existence or Dasein, as “the clearing in which Being manifests”. It seems to me that in the method of questioning this is what occurs, i.e., Being manifests in the clearing of human being, in the openness of “being there”. It is like a discovering of what is essential through questioning, through the languaging of questions (Zeddies, 2002). My question for my thesis is a question of being, about what is the experience of envy, what is the experience of envy amongst psychotherapists.

My research is an inquiry into the experience of envy amongst psychotherapists. I chose this methodology because of the excellent fit with my research. Based on the writings of Heidegger and Gadamer, this methodology focuses on the description of lived experience coupled with the interpretation or the meaning of that described lived experience. It is about uncovering previously hidden meaning. Whilst I originally brought to the data my own psychoanalytic thinking, I have increasingly expanded my own horizons of understanding to include interpretive

phenomenological thinking. This has enabled me to expand my ability to see the multiple possibilities of meanings.

This particular methodology has not only matched my research question, but it has also matched my own holistic philosophy of life. Leonard (1989) says it is essential that the researcher's own view of what it means to be a human being fits with the philosophical underpinnings of the methodology. She speaks of Heidegger's concern as being with the ontological question, "what does it mean to be a person and how is the world intelligible to us at all?" This question fits well with my basic question, "what is it like and what does it mean to be a psychotherapist who experiences envy".

The Heideggerian concept of person as discussed by Leonard (1989) gives a clear picture of the methodology's philosophical underpinnings. The notions are "the person as having a world", "the person as a being for whom things have significance and value", "the person as self-interpreting", "the person as embodied" and "the person in time". These concepts are similar to the existentials as discussed by another interpreter of Heidegger and Gadamer, an educationalist named Van Manen (1997). His concepts are relationality or lived relation, spatiality or lived space, corporeality or lived body, and temporality or lived time. Whilst I found van Manen's existentials of great use in the immediate analysis, holding Leonard's concepts alongside his existentials in the writing and re-writing of chapters is enabling a deeper reflection of the data material.

This concept of deeper reflection is one of the experiences I have been able to language more precisely through understanding more about hermeneutic phenomenology. There is a notion about understanding that we bring our own knowing to an experience. These prejudgments or preconceptions are our own horizons. When we open ourselves to the newness of an experience, "to the things themselves", and engage in an interplay between our own knowing and the knowing from the new experience, there is a "fusion of horizons" that occurs which enlarges and deepens our original understanding. Smythe (1997) offers Reeder's comment:

“It is essential to recognise that the hermeneutic phenomenon encompasses both the alien that we strive to understand and the familiar that we already understand.” (p. 222).

Overall, each of the notions described by Leonard (1989) provides alternative and at times overlapping views of the data. I will note each here and give a brief summation of why each fits with my research.

The first view of person (Leonard, 1989) is encapsulated in “the person as having a world”, which means centring on the relationship of the person to the world. Heidegger’s notion of “world” is “the meaningful set of relationships, practices, and language that we have by virtue of being born into a culture”. “World” is described as “always already there”. He says that we are “thrown” into a particular cultural, historical, and familial world, and that human existence is involved in the working out of the possibilities that exist for us by virtue of this “thrownness”. According to Taylor (1985), Heidegger describes lived relation with the world as “situated freedom”. I have used this notion of thrownness as a lens to view the data, as I open each of the excerpts within the themes to the multiple possibilities of meanings that exist.

I have also used the text of psychoanalysts who have been locating the links between phenomenological enquiry and psychoanalytic enquiry. These analysts have referred to Gadamer (Stolorow, Atwood & Orange, 2002).and his notion that “interpretation of text can only be from a perspective embedded in the historical matrix of the interpreter’s own traditions” (p. 75). They have thus described themselves as taking a “perspectival stance” in which “one’s reality is *always* [emphasis in original] codetermined by features of the surround and the personal perspective from which these are viewed” (ibid). Therefore our understanding of anything is always from a perspective shaped and limited by the historicity of our own organising principles.

Smythe (1996) offers a link between understanding and phenomenon. She says that Heidegger (1927/1962) describes a “phenomenon” as “what lies in the light of day or can be brought to the light” (p. 51).

He speaks of phenomenon as being hidden in the taken-for-granted understanding of everyday life. We all have an understanding of envy...or do we? Smythe (1996) suggests that Heidegger invites us to take the phenomenon to our phenomenological inquiry in order to let it show itself through uncovering and bringing it to light. She suggests that uncovering the phenomenon itself is an on-going journey, and that in the uncovering and the showing of the phenomenon, we will not be reaching an undisputed truth, but rather we will have achieved “more understanding” (p. 7). My research is about bringing the multiple aspects of the phenomenon of envy into the light of day, and exploring the possibilities of understanding.

A second view of person described by Leonard (1989) is that “a person is a being for whom things have significance and value”. She quotes Heidegger (1975):

[Dasein] *finds itself* primarily and constantly *in things* because, tending them, distressed by them, it always in some way or other rests in things. Each one of us is what we pursue and care for. We understand ourselves and our existence by way of the activities we pursue and the things we take care of. (p. 158)

Leonard (1989) refers to Dreyfus (1987): “It is a basic characteristic of Dasein that things show up as mattering—as threatening, or attractive, or stubborn, or useful, and so forth, and this mattering is the background for more reflective desiring or evaluating” (p. 264). I have used aspects of this concept by reflectively being aware of what matters to me and what matters to my participants. By seeing what matters through the languaging of their experiences of envy, I am more attuned to what each therapists pursues and cares for, and thus more aware of who they are, and what matters to them in relation to envy and themselves.

A third view of the concept of person is “the person as self-interpreting”. Leonard (1989) says that we are beings who are engaged in and constituted by our interpretive understanding. She says that Heidegger claims that our interpretations about “who we are” are not generated in individual consciousness but rather are given in our linguistic and cultural traditions and make sense only in a background of

significance. She speaks of Caudill and Weinstein's (1969) study in which it was found that American and Japanese babies had, by the age of 4 months, already become distinctly Japanese or American. Thus by the age of 4 months, human beings are already interpreting themselves in light of their background.

Taylor (1985) speaks of the self "as having an identity which is defined in terms of certain essential evaluations which provide the horizon or foundation for other evaluations one makes". It is these deepest evaluations "which are closest to what I am as a subject, in the sense that shorn of them I would break down as a person, which are among the hardest for me to be clear about" (p. 39-40). Taylor suggests that we radically re-evaluate and question our most basic formulations of ourselves and our interpretations. In this evaluating "we are striving for conceptual innovations which will allow us to illuminate some matter, say an area of human experience, which would otherwise remain dark and confused" (p. 41). This thinking is aligned with psychoanalytic thinking which can enable an exploration, "in a stance of openness", of the phenomenon of the experience of envy, for the purpose of reaching something deeper.

The epistemology of this inquiry is constructionist, as it reflects the belief that knowledge is socially constructed and contextualised, and that meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. The ontology of this inquiry is realism, as meanings do not exist independent of our awareness.

As part of my data analysis, I have been identifying my own biases, assumptions and preconceptions and have brought them to the research experience, as encouraged by Draucker (1999), Koch (1996), van Manen (1997) and Geanellos (1998). Van Manen (1997) suggests orienting oneself to the question of meaning of the research topic. He says that the meaning needs to be *found* in the experience, because "if presuppositions are suspended the experience is all that remains" (p. 51).

As the methodology of phenomenology aims at being presuppositionless, it tries not to have a predetermined set of fixed procedures that govern the research project.

Whilst there are no fixed signposts, van Manen (1997) suggests the pursuit of human science research may be seen as a dynamic interplay among six research activities (p. 30-31):

1. “Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world.”

Van Manen(1997) speaks of the practice of “thoughtfulness, of a fullness of thinking”, which enables a deep questioning of and making sense of a certain aspect of human existence. My thesis is about making sense of the experience of envy through describing and interpreting the lived experience of my participating therapists, coupled with the awareness that what I write is from the perspective of me as researcher.

Van Manen (1997) describes the researcher’s task as being “to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence—in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful (p. 36). The text of phenomenological research is meant to evoke the lived experience of a reader. The more that I as researcher “dwell with” the experience of the phenomenon of envy, the more I experience that phenomenon as committing or orienting me to the world. Reflecting thus hermeneutically involves me experiencing the experience rather than being an outside observer, which can enable the grasping of the experience.

2. “Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualise it.”

Van Manen (1997) refers to Merleau-Ponty (1962) who described turning to the phenomena of lived experience as “re-learning to look at the world by re-awakening the basic experience of the world” (p. viii), or in other words, as originally named by Husserl (1911/80), a turning “to the things themselves” (p. 116). What this requires of the researcher is to be in the fullness of life as well as to explore lived experience in its fullness.

In the interviewing itself, I was continuously aware of being with my participant from moment to moment, inquiring with deeper questioning and simultaneously

giving them space and time to explore and to bring to language their essential experiences. In the actual analysis of the data I was encouraged by my supervisor to stay close to the lived experience.

3. “Reflecting on the essential themes which characterise the phenomenon.”

Phenomenological research, according to van Manen (1997), “consists of reflectively bringing into nearness that which tends to be obscure”. It is about reflectively holding the question: “What is it that constitutes the nature of this lived experience?” (p. 32). This reflecting was a long and involved process for me, as I found themes and began linking them together, only to find that the essential themes were still being obscured somewhat. I then would throw every one of the themes up in the air again and reflect more, which resulted in finding deeper themes and more explicit connections. I will later in this chapter discuss theme analysis.

4. “Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting.”

Van Manen (1997) says that doing phenomenological research is already and immediately and always a bringing to speech of something. He says that writing is closely fused into the research activity and reflection itself. According to Sartre (van Manen, 1997), the writer is the product of his own product. “To write is to measure the depth of things, as well as to come to a sense of one’s own depth.” (ibid, p. 127). I experienced this many times in my writing, as I wrote and re-wrote and re-wrote yet again, in attempting to distil the essence of each experience.

5. “Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon”.

Van Manen (1997) gives specific suggestions for gathering and analysing the data of lived experience. He first suggests that the phenomenologist use their own personal experience as a starting point in order to show that they recognise “both that one’s experiences are the possible experiences of others and also that the experiences of others are possibly the experiences of oneself” (p.57-8). Phenomenological descriptions thus have a universal character.

Draucker (1999) speaks of the presuppositions researchers bring to the research experience are examined and explicated rather than suspended. She refers to Koch

(1996) who stressed that in hermeneutical enquiry “data generated by the participant is fused with the experience of the researcher and placed in context” (p.176). Koch called this the “co-constitution” of data. This process has created depth in the activity of maintaining a strong relation to the phenomenon of envy. According to Merleau-Ponty (1968), “Depth is the means the things have to remain distinct, to remain things, while not being what I look at at present.” (ibid, p. 152). It is this depth of meaning which I have been exploring in being oriented to the phenomenon of envy.

6. “Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole”.

According to Gadamer (Smythe, 1997), “The whole must be understood in terms of its parts and the parts in terms of the whole” (p. 6). As I have worked with the data in its parts and made some sense of the material, I have also been aware of stepping back in order to be with the whole of each experience of envy and all experiences of envy named by the therapists in my research, and then again returning to the parts. This to-ing and fro-ing from parts to whole and whole to parts is one of the methods I used in order to uncover the themes and continue to think openly about what I was writing.

Smythe (1996) further offers the following statement from Gadamer (1960/1982) in describing the notion of the hermeneutic circle: “Every experience is taken out of the continuity of life and at the same time related to the whole of one’s life.” (p. 62).

As I worked with the data of my research I was aware of having my own preconceptions about envy. Through the process of having myself interviewed, as well as through my own reflection and journal writing along the way, I was able to recognise these. These were my own horizons. As I have explored the data and been with the experiences of the therapists in this process, my understanding of the phenomenon of envy has in this way also moved from whole to parts and parts to whole. Also, during the research interviews I was aware of keeping my responses or reactions to a minimum while with the participant in order to allow them to continue to fully express their experience in an environment of openness.

## **Rigour**

In determining rigour in phenomenological research Koch and Harrington (1998) cite Beck's (1993) use of the terms "credibility, fittingness and auditability" as the means to establish rigour (p. 885). Trustworthiness or rigour, suggests Koch and Harrington, is to be established through inclusion of reflexivity by the researcher, which is characterised by ongoing self-critique and self-appraisal. They argue for an expanded conceptualising of rigour which encourages the researcher to incorporate their social self into the research project. The researcher is thus encouraged, as Gadamer suggests, to continually ask the question, "what is going on" while researching (p. 886). They call on the researcher to bring to the research product the following: data generated; a range of literature; a positioning of this literature; a positioning of oneself; and moral socio-political contexts. Krefting (1991) cites Ruby (1980) who explains reflexivity as ongoing "assessment of the influence of the investigator's own background, perceptions, and interests on the qualitative research process" (p. 218). I have held and utilised these assertions as I have been doing my research.

## *Credibility*

Credibility refers to vividness and faithfulness to the description of the phenomena. According to Koch and Harrington (1998), Bhavnani (1993) believes that credibility of research findings should be judged on the usefulness of the research product. Krefting (1991) cites Miles and Huberman (1984) who say that the essence of the credibility issue is the unique authority of the researcher, the "I was there" element. Referring to the researcher as a human measuring tool, they suggest four characteristics to assess the trustworthiness of the researcher: (a) the degree of familiarity with the phenomenon and the setting under study, (b) a strong interest in conceptual or theoretical knowledge and the ability to conceptualise large amounts of qualitative data, (c) the ability to take a multidisciplinary approach, to look at the subject under investigation from a number of different theoretical perspectives, and (d) good investigative skills (p. 220). I have needed to grow into these characteristics over time, and as I have done so the credibility of my research has thus increased.

### *Fittingness*

Fittingness or transferability is when data can fit into a context other than the one in which they were generated. Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Krefting, 1991) note that “transferability is more the responsibility of the person wanting to transfer the findings to another population other than that of the researcher of the study, suggesting that as long as the original researcher presents sufficient descriptive data to allow comparison, he or she has addressed the problem of applicability” (p. 216) Van Manen (1997) says that “a good phenomenological description is something that we can nod to, recognising it as an experience that we have had or could have had. This is sometimes called the ‘validating circle of inquiry’” (p. 27).

### *Auditability*

Auditability refers to the decisions made by the researcher at every stage of the research process. Koch (1996) says that credibility or trustworthiness can be established if the reader is able to audit the events, influences and actions of the researcher (p. 178). One of my actions has been to keep in my awareness, as Aamodt (1982, cited in Koch and Harrington, 1998) noted, that the qualitative approach is reflexive in that as the researcher, I am part of the research, not separate from it. It is necessary then for me to continuously reflect on my own characteristics and examine how they might be influencing the data. I was vigilant about this, and was consistently relaying my thoughts, processes and understandings that I was journaling to my supervisor who in this way helped me to maintain my clarity.

Overall, Koch and Harrington (1998) suggest that the plausibility of the research product may depend upon “the intrinsic (or internal) coherence of the study with reflexive exploration of the entire research process” (p. 887). They finally make the claim that if the research product is well signposted, the readers will be able to travel easily through the worlds of the participants and the researcher, and will be able to decide for themselves if the text is believable or plausible.

## **Ethical Considerations**

I have adhered to the following principles from Polit, Beck and Hungler (2001) throughout my research:

### *Beneficence*

One of the most fundamental ethical principles in research is the principle of beneficence, which basically means, doing no harm. This principle includes the following:

1. Freedom from harm. As the experience of envy amongst psychotherapists is a sensitive issue, I was aware of paying close attention to the psychological distress experienced at times by my participants, and in each instance I sensitively inquired if they needed a break or were they able to continue. In all cases they chose to continue. There were also times when I did not delve as deep as I might have, when I could see subtle observable cues of distress. I was careful to tactfully phrase any questions. The participant information sheet (Appendix C) originally provided stated that the participant was not obliged to answer any questions they felt uncomfortable answering. It also invited the participant to discuss with their supervisor any psychological discomfort they might have experienced due to self-reflection.
2. Freedom from exploitation. The relationship between the participants and the researcher is a special relationship that must not be exploited. In my original information form that I sent to participants, I proposed that my method of data collection was to have one audio-taped 60 minute conversation with each participant. It could have been considered exploitative if I had requested a second conversation.
3. Risk/Benefit Ratio. The risk/benefit ratio can best be determined by the researcher through considering how comfortable he or she would feel for a family member or for her or himself to participate in the research. Polit, Beck and Hungler (2001) suggest a list of potential benefits and risks, or costs, of the research to the participants. The potential benefits for my research were increased knowledge about themselves through having the opportunity for

self-reflection or introspection, and possibly a satisfaction that the information they provided may help others. The potential risks were psychological or emotional distress resulting from self-disclosure, introspection, fear or embarrassment at the type of questions being asked, and possible loss of privacy. The risk should never exceed the potential benefits of the knowledge gained.

### *Principle of Respect for human dignity*

Respect for human dignity is the second ethical principle. This principle includes:

1. Right to self-determination. This principle means that the participants have the right to decide voluntarily whether to participate in a research study. It also means that participants have the right to ask questions, to refuse to give information, or to terminate their participation. My participants were definitely given the right to participate or not in my research. In the information form it also stated that they could terminate their participation at any time.
2. Right to full disclosure. The participants were fully informed by me regarding the nature of the study, their right to refuse participation, my responsibilities, and the likely risks and benefits that would be incurred through the information form provided prior to the interviews. They also had ample opportunity to question all of this.
3. Informed consent. Informed consent means that the participants have adequate information regarding the research, that they comprehend this information, and that they have the power of free choice which enable them to consent voluntarily to participate in the research, or to decline participation. I documented informed consent by having each of my participants sign a consent form (Appendix B).
4. Issues relating to the principle of respect. This was not applicable to my research because my participants were able to give truly informed consent. There was also no issue of deception or concealment in my research.

## *Principle of Justice*

The principle of justice is the third ethical principle. This principle includes:

1. Right to fair treatment. This means that the participants have the right to fair and equitable treatment before, during and after their participation in the study. Fair treatment includes fair and non-discriminatory selection of participants based on the research requirements; non-prejudicial treatment of those who choose not to participate or of those who withdraw; honouring of all agreements between researcher and participant; participants' access to the researcher at any point in the study, to clarify information; participants' access to appropriate professional assistance if there is any psychological distress; and courteous and tactful treatment of participants at all times.
2. Right to privacy. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the research is not more intrusive than it needs to be and that the participants' privacy is maintained throughout the study. Any data provided must be kept in strictest confidence. I ensured confidentiality through transcribing the interviews myself as well as ensuring that I would not divulge what I have heard or transcribed. The tapes and transcripts will be kept securely according to the recommendations of the AUT Ethics Committee, and will be destroyed after being held for the required 6 years. Participants' names have not been used, and any identifying information has been changed and modified to protect the participants from identification in any account of the research. I have interviewed nationally as a way of dispersing the potential for recognition of the participants.

I have not included Maori participants because there was no Maori psychotherapist one who came forward to participate.

## **Method**

Heidegger (van Manen, 1997) talked about phenomenological reflection as following certain paths, "woodpaths," towards a "clearing" where something could be shown,

revealed, or clarified in its essential nature. These paths, or methods, need to be discovered or invented as a response to the question at hand. I have selected methods, techniques and procedures from suggestions proposed by van Manen which are appropriate for my research question.

### *Sampling*

I used purposive or purposeful sampling, as according to Beanland (1999) it is necessary to “choose participants who are experiencing the circumstances and selected events and incidents related to the social process under investigation” (p. 250). I searched for currently practicing psychotherapists who I thought had previously considered and possibly explored some of their own experiences of envy, as it seemed their prior thinking about envy might assist them in describing their experiences in depth and detail. One of the criteria was that they had been practising for more than 4 years, as it seemed important that they had been practising long enough to be aware of theirs or others’ envy in the context of the psychotherapeutic community.

There were more therapists who offered to participate in my research than I needed to interview, because according to phenomenological hermeneutics, more than enough data is obtained using six to eight participants. I interviewed six psychotherapists from the psychotherapeutic community of New Zealand. All but one volunteered through seeing my advertising in the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists’ Newsletter or through having learned of my research by word of mouth. The one who did not volunteer was approached first by my supervisor, and then by me after agreeing to be interviewed. In order to measure the suitability of participants I maintained ongoing discussions with my supervisor.

I have included females and males, over the age of 35, who have identified envy in their own experience, either as the envier, the envied and/or both, and who are willing to speak of their experiences in relation to other psychotherapists. There is no

representation from non-European descended cultures. This would have raised many more issues which are beyond the scope of my research. Further study of envy within other cultures as well as a cross-cultural study could prove valuable in the future.

### *Data Collection*

My first step was to send the participating therapists an information sheet (Appendix C) explaining the purpose of my thesis. I also sent a consent form (Appendix B) which detailed information about the way in which confidentiality would be addressed. On meeting with each participant, we discussed these issues prior to beginning the interviewing. The interviews were held at an agreed place that was convenient for each participant. I conducted one interview with each participant, as the nature of the in-depth conversations made the one hour comprehensive. According to Polit, Beck and Hungler (2001), “through in-depth conversations, the researcher strives to gain entrance into the informants’ world, to have full access to their experiences as lived” (p. 215). Each interview lasted between 1-1 ¼ hours and was audio taped. Data was collected through unstructured conversational interviews, in order to allow the participants to speak of their experiences of envy, including their feelings and attitudes, as openly and freely as possible.

According to van Manen (1997) the interview in hermeneutic phenomenological human science serves two very specific purposes. Firstly, the interview may be used “as a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon”; and a secondly the interview may be used “as a vehicle to develop a conversational relation with a partner (interviewee) about the meaning of an experience” (p. 66). I was aware of holding these ideas as I interviewed, both gathering and exploring the meaning of their experiential material with the interviewee, as well as guiding the interviewee to my research question when necessary. In interviewing I continually kept in mind Linge’s (1976) statement: “Genuine questioning always involves a laying open and holding open of possibilities that suspend the presumed finality of both the text’s and the reader’s current opinions” (p. xx-xxi).

Smythe (1999) said that it is best to take time between interviews in order to “dwell with” the material in depth. I took at least one month between each interview in order to transcribe each myself, reflect on what was said, and journal my own responses, including my feelings and attitudes about the spoken and unspoken, thus including my own observations. This helped me to keep aware and alert to my own thinking and feeling in order to maintain a stance of openness in subsequent interviewing. When the material was at times overwhelming, I would discuss its impact on me with my supervisor, which enabled me to return to openness. As I continued with interviewing, asking for examples of the therapists’ experiences enabled my gathering of anecdotal information or narrative out of which I was later able to hone a cogent power or point about the phenomenon.

### *Analysing of the Data*

According to Morse and Field (Polit, Beck & Hungler, 2001) data analysis is “a process of fitting data together, of making the invisible obvious, and of linking and attributing consequences to antecedents” (p. 126). I used two of their suggested processes for data analysis. The first is “comprehension”, in which the researcher is making sense of the data to be able to learn “what is going on”. The second is “synthesising”, which involves a sifting of the data and putting pieces together (p. 383).

Van Manen (1998) describes hermeneutic phenomenological analysis as a “reflecting on lived experience” which involves “reflectively analysing the structural or thematic aspects of that experience” (p.78). I also am drawing on Gadamer’s notion that the researcher who seeks to understand must question what lies behind what is said (Smythe, 2000).

It is the nature of the hermeneutic paradigm that the research is the understanding from the prejudiced perspective of the researcher. I utilised Leonard’s (1989) concepts of a person, described in my introductory chapter, as well as the existentials or aspects of lived experience named by van Manen in order to reflect on and analyse

the data. Reflecting on lived time, lived space, lived body, and lived relation or relationality assisted me in uncovering and discovering the essential themes.

Van Manen (1997) describes themes as “the stars that make up the universes of meaning we live through” (p. 90). He says that analysing the text for phenomenological themes is a “free act of seeing meaning” (p. 79). He suggests that we are trying to “unearth something telling, something meaningful, something thematic in the various experiential accounts—we work at mining meaning from them” (p. 86). I utilised the following three approaches described by Van Manen (1997) to uncover the thematic aspects of the phenomenon of envy in my research, as well as to analyse the interviews.

### 1. The holistic or sententious approach

This approach involves attending to the text as a whole in order to capture its fundamental meaning. Throughout my interviewing and analysing of the data and uncovering of the themes I was aware of consistently needing to step back and take in the text as a whole. After each interview I wrote about my experience and what stood out for me, and what I experienced stood out for the participant.

### 2. The selective highlighting approach

In this approach the researcher is listening or reading a text several times, holding the question in mind, “What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?” (p. 93). In my analysis I divided each interview into anecdotal segments, wrote a summary of each and then analysed each by writing and rewriting the essence of what I thought the therapist was describing. I looked across the interviews to see if this theme arose multiple times.

### 3. The detailed line-by-line approach

This approach brought me very close into the data, into the lived experience of each participant. It involved reading each sentence, sentence cluster and phrases within each sentence, very carefully, and asking myself what each cluster seemed to reveal about the nature of the phenomenon of envy. While this was a very

absorbing and at times tedious process, it was effective in uncovering the minutiae possibilities of meanings of the phenomenon.

Uncovering the themes through using all of the above approaches then led me to print out all of the segments I had summarised and analysed, and then literally cut them into pieces, so that I could then place each segment with what I thought was its particular theme. In many cases the segments contained multiple themes. I then began making several mind-maps over time in order to organise and categorise my thinking, and the themes. This was strongly suggested by my supervisor to help me make links from theme to theme. I had to continually let go of my ideas in order to make space for another way of looking at the themes and the ways that they interlinked. I then looked specifically at each segment to determine if this reflected the essence of the theme, holding in mind the question as suggested by van Manen (1997), “Is this phenomenon still this phenomenon if we imaginatively change or delete this theme?” (p. 107).

## **Summary**

In this chapter I have described the methodology I have used for my thesis, as well as the methods I utilised in interviewing and in uncovering themes during my researching. I also detailed my ethical considerations and described how I intended to ensure rigour.

The following four chapters, Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 show the data that emerged out of the in-depth conversations I had with my participants, and my analysis of the data. I have at first in Chapter 4 described and elucidated the context within which envy arises. Chapter 5 shows the powerful feelings that envy evokes towards others. Chapter 6 shows the powerful feelings that envy evokes towards the self. Chapter 7 describes the ways in which the therapists live with, manage and at times work through envy.

## **Chapter 4--The contexts in which envy takes place**

In order to understand any phenomenon, it is essential to identify the context in which it takes place. Whilst in psychotherapy we often delineate between outside and inside in relation to a person, i.e. the internal world as opposed to the external world, there is a growing movement among psychotherapists and psychoanalysts who are utilising philosophers such as Heidegger and Gadamer to step outside of this framework in order to develop more of a relational stance in which outside and inside are not so rigidly defined.

Each therapist in my research described particular circumstances which ignited their experience of envy. These circumstances or conditions showed themselves in the data in a relational context. In my interviewing, envy showed itself as occurring in a context where we desire something, where we can have varying perceptions of the other that shape our experience and where the experience of envy can be transposed from one point in time to another. In this chapter I will be describing and exploring these contextual elements of desire, of perception and of time, each of which factor into creating the fertile conditions for the experience of envy to arise and show itself.

In the following quote Heidegger (Leonard, 1989) describes his notion of “thrownness”, which is for me a description of human existence as being contextual:

We are “thrown” into a particular cultural, historical, and familial world, and human existence is involved in the working out of the possibilities that exist for us by virtue of this “thrownness”. (p. 47)

He says that we are “thrown” into a particular world which is “already there”, already constituted by culture, history and family. The therapists in my research have been thrown into their “already there” world, and this includes particularly the “already there” world of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis.

Zeddies (2000) a psychoanalyst locating the links between psychoanalysis and phenomenology, says that in relational processes “there is no strict division between

inside and outside, here-and-now and then-and-there, fantasy and reality, intrapsychic and interpersonal” (p. 470). This thinking also seems to be aligned with Heidegger’s notion of world as described above. Zeddies also refers to Mitchell (1988b) and his idea of the “relational matrix” in which he says that the intrapsychic and interpersonal overlap and are interdependent.

According to Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005):

We are in intimate relationship with the world in all our moments. The give-and-take of that relationality is continually shaping our lives. It also shapes and defines the very world in which we live and in which our experiences unfold. Have you noticed that we often act as if there were a significant separation between out there and in here, when our experience tells us that it is the thinnest of membranes, really no separation at all? (p. 3)

He suggests that the way we shape our world and the way the world shapes us are interdependent and reciprocal symbiotic dances (p. 3). In this relational way, the seeds of envy within us germinate and grow, finding their way out of concealment into manifestation, in the fertile ground of our ongoing experiences in the world and in relation to others.

### **Comparison driven by desire leading to envy**

Comparing ourselves to others, and the underlying desire that seems to fuel the comparing, are elemental conditions that play a part in the experiential emergence of envy. Ongoing comparing can result in envy staying alive in the experience between two. At times this comparing is known to the other, and at times it is not. Whether known to both parties or not, here I am calling this a relational experience. The underlying desire that sits beneath the comparing is the desire to be or to have what the other is perceived as having or being.

In the following excerpt the therapist is recognising her experience of comparison leading to her envying. The desire becomes apparent in the analysis.

*I think my envy is often around when I compare myself with others' stability. It's definitely about comparison. Other people seem more stable. They seem more able to get their life together, they have more clients, they're able to get more referrals, and yet I also know that's not how it is, but that's how it feels, when I'm comparing myself to others... they've got it easy, and I've got it hard; it's a struggle for me, and it's easy for them. It also feels like other people in general have it easier, but that's just from me looking on the outside, and making a judgment...that's probably completely untrue because I think everybody struggles.*

It seems to me that this therapist, in the process of comparing herself to others, is to-ing and fro-ing between what she experiences, and what she thinks to be so. This is one aspect of comparing here, that there is a feeling sense and a thinking sense about the one experience. There also is a back and forthness between the two ways of perceiving, in an attempt to arrive at understanding or some semblance of truth. It seems to me that both experiences are portions of the truth of her whole experience. One aspect of this truth is her internal feeling sense, and the other aspect is an external viewing of herself as looking on the outside.

Spinelli (2001), an analyst bridging psychoanalysis and phenomenology, explores the dilemma that arises when there is a conflict between one's beliefs about who one is (one's epistemological stance) and one's experience of being (one's phenomenological experience). He brings forward the idea of a divided consciousness, refuting in detail Freud's widely accepted concept of the unconscious.

As this therapist speaks of others having it easy and she having it hard, she is engaged in a comparison which implies a better than and less than dynamic. There is also an implicit sense of not fairness as she describes her life as hard, and others' lives as easy. Underlying the experience of comparing is the desire to be stable, the desire to have an easier life that she perceives other therapists having. She then explains that this perception of hers is possibly not accurate, as she is looking from the outside of their world and from this perspective she is judging.

As I reflect on this therapist telling her experience of *looking on the outside*, I think about phenomenological theory and the ways in which inside and outside are described. According to Spinelli (1989) phenomenological theory describes each of

us as “being-in-the-world”, in that we all share an intentionally derived conscious experience of the world and ourselves. Therefore though this therapist says she is “looking on the outside”, phenomenologists would say it is not possible to look from the outside, because we as beings are in and of the world. According to Spinelli her looking is still a part of her immediate reflective experience.

In a similar vein, according to Stolorow, Atwood and Orange (2002), “We inhabit our experiential worlds even as they inhabit us” (p. 32). What they and phenomenologists suggest is that we in the world are context-dependent and context sensitive, which means that as we live in the world, we are constituted by the world we live in and it is constituted by us.

Another example of desire leading to envy is seen in the following excerpt in which desire is more explicitly evident in the context of comparing self to other. This therapist describes his envying another therapist as his desire to belong emerges. The therapist tells of a colleague who had joined NZAP (New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists) years ago and how he felt small in comparison to this colleague. When contemplating about his own possibility of belonging or not to NZAP, he had this to say:

*I was thinking about that other therapist and I thought to myself, ‘I’m not going to belong to that club. I’m not going to be made of the right stuff, and you are.’ And that’s what I envy: that that person, in my mind, had all of these obvious qualities that I didn’t have...and I couldn’t get them either... somehow they weren’t in me. Quite a profound sense of lack fed that. There will be some specific qualities of the other person that trigger my envy, which seems to constellate around somebody who looks like they just know they belong. It’s like she just knows the world wants her. I don’t have that feeling, that spirit...I never have, and I never will...but I would love it. I feel envious of those qualities and I want to have that sort of confidence in me, so I wouldn’t feel anxious or doubtful or inadequate... and probably that person of course had all those feelings as well, but in the moment that’s not what I see...I only see that person as confident.*

This therapist is describing his experiential response to feeling small in the face of the other therapist becoming a member of NZAP. The sense of comparison and feeling of less than and desire to belong seems to manifest here in relation to his

colleague *who looks like* [my italics] they know they belong. As he sees the one who knows he belongs as being made of the “right stuff”, he does not see the total picture of the other, though as he reflects more he imagines that person might be feeling anxious and inadequate as well. It seems to me that his immediate perception in that moment, as he has recalled to me in the interview, is the one of seeing only a tunnel-visioned other, or a piece of the other, or a slice of the other. On reflection, however, he is able to see more of the fullness of who the other actually is. I will be discussing more about perception in the next part of this chapter.

Is it that the immediate moment does not allow for reflection? Stern (2004) speaks of the present moment as already having passed the moment it is spoken, and he suggests that in speaking we are then already in the next present moment. Is our ability to reflect then able to occur because we have spoken aloud the experience, or at least in some way acknowledged that moment to ourselves, aloud or not, it has advanced or jumped outside of our inner thinking, and so our reflection can occur?

Another aspect of this experience is the sense of lack, the sense of not being made of the right stuff. What is the right stuff? Is there a right stuff? This therapist speaks of wanting what the other has that he tells himself he doesn't have. This expression of wanting or of desire fully shows itself, when he says he doesn't have that spirit, that knowing that the world wants him; that in fact he has never had that feeling and he never will have it, *but he would love it*. The yearning, the desire, is palpable in this personal admission.

As I think about the word “wanting”, I think of one of its synonyms being “lacking”, while another synonym is “desiring”. Does the sense of wanting or desiring arise out of a sense of lacking? Is the sense of lack already present, though unacknowledged, and the wanting or desire is more comfortable to acknowledge? Is this wanting a longing? Is this a longing or a wanting to be or to have what his colleague appears to him to have? There seems to be a sense of incompleteness in himself that has him wanting, and imagining that he will feel better about himself if he has it.

Desire seems to emerge from a sense of incompleteness. Is it in the acknowledging of the wanting or longing that the sense of incompleteness rears its head? Or is there the inherent sense of incompleteness in each and every human being which then manifests in various forms, which can then ignite desire or longing?

According to Howard (2000), Heidegger says that the self is ever-changing, moving, seeking and having a sense of being endlessly incomplete. It seems to be this sense of incompleteness that has us always seeking to move forward into the next part of our life experience. I wonder if this sense of incompleteness may be a part of the reason for this tendency, or is it a natural inclination, to compare ourselves to others or to see ourselves reflected? Or is it a natural inclination or desire to find a way to connect with others?

Desire, according to Mitchell (1988) is experienced in the context of relatedness. It seems in the above excerpt that the desire is to have what he sees his colleague having, which is the sense of “just knowing” he belongs. The meaning he makes of this is that if he knew he belonged, he would then be confident, and not anxious or doubtful—and hopefully, more complete? Is it then in the context of this perceptual relating that this therapist develops desire, or is it more an *awareness* of his desire that is already there that develops in relatedness.

Klein (1957/1975) speaks of the child desiring the mother, loving her and hating her, loving the breast and hating the breast, wanting fulfilment in her feeding (a sense of completion?), and hating the fact that the mother has control over this feeding. Klein describes envy as being constitutional. If desire is an essential aspect of envy, then maybe desire is also constitutional. Is then the desire to have or to be what the other is perceived as having or being more about the underlying desire to be complete in oneself?

Envy of the sense of belonging or the desire to belong, implies envy of the sense of relatedness or the desire to relate. Belonging is about experiencing connection with, or feeling a part of. As this therapist views his colleague as knowing he belongs, he seems to be seeing confidence as an extension of this sense of belonging.

*I want to have that sort of confidence in me, so I wouldn't feel anxious or doubtful or inadequate.*

He seems to be imagining that if he had that sense of belonging, he would feel confident. He would not feel anxious. His sense of anxiety seems to arise out of his sense of not belonging. Possibly there is an underlying anxiety that exists prior to his experience of not belonging and desiring to belong, and out of this state of anxiety arises a sense of disconnection, with a resultant desire to connect through belonging. Envy as anxiety provoking will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

### **Comparing, desire to belong, coupled with time as contextual determinants of envy**

The therapist in the previous excerpt continues to speak of growing up in New Zealand with his immigrant family and the struggles of not belonging. The following excerpt was in response to my query about whether the feeling of smallness and not belonging was something familiar to him. While the following excerpt continues with the themes of comparing and desire, it also shows another contextual determinant of envy, that of time:

*My parents would try and compensate by talking about New Zealanders as being uneducated Philistines, to try and bolster their own self-esteem. I very much envied all the other kids, and it seems like all the rest of New Zealanders, who seemed to fit, who seemed to belong...they seemed to have a different rule book that they were all familiar with. I felt small, and inadequate, and regrettable. I remember going to friends' places and always feeling like I was a bit grubby or something...we had secret friends in the neighbourhood and it almost seemed like we were being smuggled into the house so we could play together. Back then we were the dregs...the absolute dregs!*

This therapist speaks of growing up as an immigrant with parents who experienced a sense of not belonging. He heard his parents trying to compensate by denigrating New Zealanders, in an attempt as he perceived it, to build their own self-esteem. He envied the other kids and other New Zealanders who all seemed to fit, and belong. He felt small, inadequate, and regrettable. He remembers the sense of being smuggled into the houses and feeling dirty.

Here there is embedded comparison and the desire to belong that seems to have been a part of the cultural context within which this therapist grew up. This shows the surround external environment impacting in such a way that seems to have been a part of creating a sense of not belonging in his present life as a therapist, and in creating his sense of envy and desire to belong.

There is a sense here of this therapist having to almost make himself small in order to survive, and then found himself in a place of not belonging. There is also a strong sense of “them and us” apparent in the comparison, as well as those who belong being “better than” and he and his family who are “less than”. Embedded in this story is the way in which envy is transferred across time. This concept of time will be discussed later in this chapter.

### **Perception and Distance**

Another condition or element which determines the emergence of envy is about the varying ways of perception. Most of the therapists experienced an imagining or perception of some quality or way of being, possessed by the envied other, or in other words a “making up” of the other, and there was at times a resultant distance created between the two. The following is an example:

*The therapist I envy the most is very contained, and not that easily accessible, as a person...So it's sort of easier to turn him into something that's not quite real... it's like I make him up you know I think, for me. It feels more like an impediment...in my relationship with him... it's this block. Actually calling it a block seems to make it a bit too big. There's this thing that can get in the way for me... and I'm quite uncomfortable with that, particularly because I like and respect him. I think this thing in the way is much less present when I'm actually with him, and in relationship with him... I suppose I feel like it turns him into something...it sort of dehumanises him in a way, and it also disempowers me...He has said that at times he feels on some covert level I attack him...it wouldn't surprise me if it leaks out at times. It's uncomfortable having these sorts of feelings towards people you like. I feel a little sad as I say that. And I think too, that envy, creates distance. Like I can get envious of another colleague, but that's quite a fleeting thing, because I really have no desire to live the way he lives or do what he does.*

This therapist experiences herself as envying a colleague who she perceives as very contained, and not that accessible as a person. She finds it easier to turn him into something not quite real. She experiences an impediment in the relationship. She at first calls it “a block” and that seems too big. She settles with calling it “a thing” that gets in the way, and makes her uncomfortable, which is less present when she is actually with him, and relating with him. She is aware of envy dehumanising him, and disempowering her, and then it creates distance. She is aware of her envy for another colleague, though she experiences this as being more fleeting, as she doesn’t desire to live like him or do what he does.

There at first seems to be an admiring on the part of this therapist, as she describes the therapist she envies as very contained. What does turning him into something not quite real mean? Is this imagined other than purely the imagination of the therapist, or does it link in to something about the one being envied? Does the experience between the therapist who envies and the one who is envied alter due to the presence or the absence of the envied other? Her experience is that the impediment lessens when she is actually with the one she envies.

What is it about accessibility that alters the relation? Synonyms for accessibility are ease of access, ease of understanding, or openness. It seems to me that perceived inaccessibility in the above excerpt has resulted in imagining, desiring, idealising, devaluing and distancing. Is this “perceived” inaccessibility part of the experience between two that can occur, according to who the two are, then that will alter perceptions? I think that possibly envy is co-created in this instance, particularly as the experience of envy has been partially discussed between the two.

In the excerpt the therapist says that the one she envies has suggested that at times he has felt a covert attack from this therapist. This was the felt perception of the one being envied. It seems likely to me that with the envied one feeling attacked, he might then make himself to appear more inaccessible in order to keep a distance from the attack. This would then be perceived by the one who envies as a further distancing and a further sense of inaccessibility.

Zeddies (2000) speaks of the relational unconscious as an experience that is co-created. He says that unconscious experience is not only determined by an individual's mental processes, but it is also considered to be an inalienable property of interpersonal relationships and dialogue. Zeddies then challenges the notion of the unconscious, supporting Ogden's thesis that the unconscious is "an aspect of the indivisible totality of consciousness" (p.9). He further says that unconscious experience and meanings are... "unformulated experience" in need of articulation.

In this case, the therapist is in relation with and responding to the perceived inaccessibility of the colleague she envies. Though the relating is in the imagination of the envier, it seems that in the imagining, there is still an experience between two, and a resultant felt sense of distance created. The impediment, or the thing in the way, creates a distance between who the person is and who the other imagines that person to be. There seems also to be a moment of idealising the other and devaluing the self, as well as devaluing the other, which creates a greater chasm yet again.

Symington (2001) defines idealisation as "an illusion in which the excellent virtues of a person are exaggerated and their vices or deficits are minimised" (p.184). He speaks of illusion as being "defective perception". A phenomenologist would say that perception is not defective; rather there are multitudes of possible ways of perceiving. With this in mind, I would say that idealisation is a perception of the other in which certain qualities are exaggerated and other qualities are minimised.

I called this idealising aspect or the "making up" aspect of the phenomenon of envy an imagining. I think it is more about the meaning that someone makes of what they think they see, of what they perceive. And what they perceive is coloured by the context within which they are seeing, that context including past experiences and everything that has occurred in the surround of that person's life.

Stolorow, Atwood and Orange (2002) suggest that "horizons of awareness are fluid and ever-shifting, products both of the person's unique intersubjective history and of what is or is not allowed to be known within the intersubjective fields that constitute his or her current living" (p. 47). They further concur with Donnel Stern (1997) and

her linking with Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as she states that "it is the relational field that structures the possibilities of knowing—the potential for what we can say and think and what we cannot" (p. 47).

I agree that our perception is determined and influenced by the relational field in which we live, have lived and will live. The Oxford dictionary of etymology (1996) defines "perceive" as "to apprehend with the mind", or "to apprehend with the senses". "Apprehend" means "to seize", so "to seize with the mind or the senses". "Perception" is defined as "taking cognizance of or being aware of something".

Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) a Buddhist monk and poet speaks of perception as "the coming into existence of the perceiver and the perceived" (p. 53). Whatever we perceive is part of our consciousness. He tells us that in Chinese writing, the upper part of the character for perception is "mark", "sign", or "appearance", and the lower part is "mind" or "spirit". According to this, Nhat Hanh suggests that perceptions always have a "mark", and in many cases that mark is illusory—we therefore need to look deeply at our perceptions.

This therapist perceives her colleague as inaccessible, and she reads this or makes meaning of this as something distancing. She experiences an impediment, or a thing in the way, and this is uncomfortable, especially because she likes and respects her colleague. There are two experiences here, one of liking and respecting, and another of uncomfortable distance.

In the beginning of this excerpt the therapist is in a place of admiring the sense of containment. As the perceived inaccessibility becomes languaged and then felt, it seems to shift the admiring to an impediment, a stumbling block. It seems to me that she has chosen to see the sense of containment that she perceives as inaccessible. Could she choose another perception? What if she rather read her perception of inaccessibility as a protection on the part of her colleague, and was able to reflect on this? As a result of this different perception, she might experience a different response which would not be an impediment. This example shows that perception shapes experience.

Another therapist explains her own perception of her experience of envying and comparing as not being realistic:

*I think it's not comparing realistically...some of it [perception of other] is true, but not all of it...part of it is transferential, I think part of it is about my mother, and my sister, having an ease in the adult world that I didn't have.*

Her reference to “not comparing realistically” is a type of imagining of who the other is. She says it is a comparison that is not realistic in that it is not in the reality of the moment. She says that some of her perception is true, but not all of it. She then describes her experience as partly transferential, thinking that part of her current perception is coloured by her earlier life, perceiving her mother and her sister as having an ease in the adult world that she didn't have.

The sense of not being realistic is another indication of the imagining that occurs, and this therapist is attributing the transferential element to her unrealistic perception. Stern (2004) speaks of the phenomenological perspective as saying that “the content of a present moment is simple—it is what is on the mental stage now” (p. 32). Therefore the past perception of her mother as having an ease in the adult world, and envying this, was on her mental stage in the above excerpt. So in this case it seems that her entire perception included what happened then and what was happening now. Further exploring of time will be in the next part of this chapter, under “transposing”.

Another imagining aspect of envy was named in the following way from a different perspective, that of the therapist being envied. She describes her experience of feeling invisibilised by the perception of the therapist envying her:

*I'm also aware, and I'm ashamed to admit it, that when I was in a more hateful mode, I would occasionally deliver something very enviable. I think I was wanting to hurt her. Maybe because I was being seen by her as an embodiment of something, but not as a person. I think the most difficult and most painful thing for me was that I was being envied for some things, and the whole time I felt invisible as a person.*

Here this therapist describes her wanting to hurt her colleague who was envying her, as she felt invisible as a person, and this was both difficult and painful for her. There is in here a sense of the exaggerated excellence named by Symington (2002) as she experiences being envied for some things. She experiences the whole of her as a person not being perceived, that she is being rendered invisible. This creates a disturbance in this therapist, indicated by her experiencing pain, which then seems to turn into hate. It seems that the experience of envy here begs the question, “who is hurting whom?” It does seem that both are experiencing feeling hurt by the other.

### **Transposing of experience**

This section will be showing the ways in which the therapists’ present experiences of envy relate to and are often connected with experiences that occurred in the earlier life of each therapist. The experiences are transferred as a whole, into and onto present time. This is another contextual determinant of envy. Whilst in psychodynamic language this might be called transference material, I am expanding this concept of transference to include more than a one person to one person veil, as often the stories told by the interviewed therapists are about entire experiences being transferred which in a sense are more contextual. I will call this “transposing of experience”, a concept spoken about by Teresa von Sommaruga Howard (2004) in her talk about “The Nutshell of society”. The term “transposing” is from de Mare (1972) cited by Pines (2000), who defines “transposition” as “a process of complete replication of a previous life experience in a new setting” (p. 139).

Stern’s (2004) notion of “the alive past” has a similar flavour to this concept of transposing. He describes this “alive past” as “a phenomenological combination of past and present, where the past is felt to be acting now, although it is still recognised as a past.” (p. 206). It is like two times being brought together, the remembered past and the existential present.

In the following excerpt the therapist describes a particular situation which occurred recently, where she experienced a recreation of an earlier sibling dynamic:

*There's one situation which I don't want to get into...probably what's most striking about that situation was that some people were giving me a hard time, and I was thinking, 'I think there's more to it...I think there's envy involved here'...but not really knowing it. These were psychotherapists. It also feels like it was not being envied for some external thing. It does feel on a more primitive or more unconscious level. It also feels like a replication of that family situation, with me as the youngest child, envied by my siblings, and beaten up by my brother. It was as if the entire situation of envy in my family was being recreated, some of the same stuff. It was quite scary for me. I actually think on some level I expect to be beaten up.*

The therapist begins by being reluctant to tell her more recent adult experience, and proceeds by speaking of the situation as best she can. She experienced being given a hard time by some psychotherapists, and felt like envy was involved. She names the feeling of the experience as primitive and unconscious. She then tells that it feels like a recreation of her family of origin situation, where she experienced being envied by her siblings and beaten up by her brother. She felt frightened and thought that on some level she expects to be harmed.

This naming of the adult situation as being a recreation of the sibling envy in her family speaks to the idea of transposing of experience from past to present. It is as if the idea of siblings and envy in the past has been picked up and plonked down right in the middle of her adult life. As she speaks of some therapists giving her a hard time, she says that she was thinking there was envy involved, but she wasn't really knowing it. There is a sense here that envy couldn't fully be thought about...it was something primitive, something unconscious. It was not being envied for some external thing. Was she then being envied for some internal thing that she did not understand and could find no words to express?

There is something about time being stretched across. The word "transpose", when etymologically broken down means "to change the pose of" or "to change the position of", or is it "to change the posture of" across time? Heidegger (Inwood, 1997) had a great deal to say about time. One of his notions was encapsulated in his idea about what of the past is already here, or what has already come before us. One of the existentials that van Manen (1997) refers to in his writing about Heidegger's notions is the concept of temporality or lived time or lived experience of time. Dostal

(1993) refers to Husserl a predecessor of Heidegger, who spoke of a three-dimensional view of time, where the present is “thick” to the extent that, within the present, we find both the past and the future. In the above excerpt the sense of the past being recreated seems that the past is being contained within the present experience.

In a similar vein to Husserl, Heidegger (Dostal, 1993) says that the present moment goes beyond, or “transcends” the merely present in the way that it, as present, is at the same time future and past (p. 156-7). Transcend means “to climb over” or “to climb across”. How does this transcending occur? How does this transposing occur? Is it through the notion of the present as “thick” with the past and the future, and as a result of this the events of time slide across time and space? Is it as the object relations theory says, that we carry the imprint of our interrelational dynamics of past objects/others as a kind of template within? Do life events and situations with others call forth our templates, or do we invite the events according to our wish to altar the damaged templates?

What is important to note is that in this excerpt the past experience has impacted to create an environment in which envy arises in present time. If envy featured large in childhood, will it feature large in adulthood?

Most of the therapists interviewed tell their experiences of childhood with significant memories of an awareness of envy embedded in their stories. The following excerpt shows another experience of sibling envy:

*The image that always comes to me about my brother is the times when my father gave me a responsibility for him that I didn't want. I remember him having all of his sort of innocent reliance on me...I hated him for it... he didn't seem to worry, so I had to carry all the worry, and I think I've always resented him for that, and rejected him for it...oh, now I see my envy of him...he was relatively carefree...I would have preferred to have been the small one and have someone else have to carry the worry. And in relationships in my life, it has been really hard to claim myself first...to not give myself away, to not sacrifice myself...I now know that doesn't work for anybody.*

In speaking about her experience of hating and resenting her brother, she suddenly becomes aware that she was actually envious of his being carefree, which left her having to be the responsible one. She may also have felt resentment towards her father for giving her the responsibility in the first place, yet it was safer to be angry and resentful towards her brother. Possibly she was jealous of the care that her father showed for her brother, and was resentful about this also, as well as wanting some care for her own *small one and (to) have someone else to carry the worry*. She has recognised the resultant struggles in her present relationships, and has just begun to understand that sacrificing herself, as she felt bound to do in her family, hasn't worked.

Hating and rejecting could also indicate her wish that her brother didn't actually exist, because if he didn't exist, maybe she wouldn't have to be grown up as a child, or envious of her brother's carefreeness. In this excerpt the difficulties arising out of early sibling envy as well as jealousy in the family is transposed into present time relationships.

In the following excerpt the therapist is aware of envying other colleagues who experience the psychotherapeutic community almost as their family:

*I think I've often envied colleagues' experience of the psychotherapeutic community as their family almost. They get a different experience of their professional community than I do. When we came over from Europe, my family spoke with a very strong accent. I was only very little, but I remember being teased at school...and feeling small and inadequate...And now...when there are events and things happening, I go out of a sense of 'ah, I really should go'. And of course when I go to these things I always enjoy myself because I love seeing everybody, but I never have that anticipation, so I don't get involved in things like that either. I think it's probably because deep down maybe I do feel like 'well no one would really want to see me anyway', you know, I think it is that childhood thing...it's a bit pathetic...and I am quite socially shy, though I have a certain social persona that masks that, but I am quite shy. I think a large majority of psychotherapists are shy.*

This therapist recalls being teased in her childhood and feeling small and inadequate. She also links this past experience to her present sense of not feeling wanted. Though

she recognises that in present time she can enjoy herself loving seeing everybody, she says that she never has that anticipation, and that still the sense of not being wanted pervades her present life.

There is a sense of timelessness in this therapist's talking, as she moves across time from present to past and back again. Sabbadini (1990) speaks of the paradoxical analytic situation in which there is ongoing reference to the present in order to remember and understand the past, whilst constructions and reconstructions of the past are used in order to make some sense of the present. He says that "the sense of timelessness in analysis is rooted in what Freud described as the timelessness of the Unconscious itself" (p 31).

What is this sense of timelessness? Is there something about not being bound by the constraints of time, and does this allow for a sense of spaciousness, and if so, in the spaciousness, is there more room for the emerging of possibilities of understandings? The possibility is that the present experience of enjoying herself when she actually does manage to get to group gatherings could be transposed to the past childhood experience in order to alter it, or at least soothe the anxiety attached to the old experience.

Another therapist reflected on the envy and sense of being despised he feels in relation to another therapist. He links this to past envy and despising:

*When I feel envious of another therapist, it's spiteful, and I wish harm on them...the feeling that I get from them is that I am being despised. I don't know if this is all in my imagination or if I really am being despised, but that is the feeling that I get... I had a mother who was continually putting me down, despising me, hurting me, and making my life intolerable in lots of ways. So I suppose that I extrapolate from that...that these other people would be like that... though they actually don't affect my life. I am pretty inconsequential to them. But...but...but there's a little part of me...a little primitive part of me... that would like them to disappear.*

This therapist is aware of his envy as being spiteful. He feels that he is being despised, and is unsure whether or not this is real or his imagination. He then tells of his mother who despised him and put him down, and hesitatingly imagines aloud that

he is extrapolating...that he is taking his experience with his mother and placing it into his current life. He finally acknowledges that still there is a primitive part of him that would like them to disappear.

In my interviewing I enquired further: “So somewhere you imagine that if harm comes to them, you’re going to feel better somehow.”

His response was: *Because I did...with my mother...I felt much better when my mother had died...much better.*

There seems to be a sense of time as unchanging, as if the relief he experiences about his mother being dead transposes over to the idea of relief if harm comes to the therapist he envies. Stern (2004) speaks of “the present moment” as the meeting ground between the past and the present. He says that the past must somehow get *folded into* [my italics] the present experience. Neuroscience studies have shown that the past is brought into or alongside the “present” present almost instantly and many times during the evolution of a present moment (p. 197-9)

As in a previous excerpt, the primitive part is being named. It is almost as if in calling this part “primitive”, there is a partial disowning of the destructive nature of this part.

In the next excerpt the therapist is speaking of the past in her childhood when envy was not allowed to be named. She then speaks of the present and when she did speak it, the repercussions of punishment felt similar:

*If I did voice my envy as a child, I would have been punished, so I had to keep it to myself. I wasn't allowed to be jealous of my sister, so I never ever said anything. I would have been hit, or told off, for not doing something or doing something in relation to her, or complaining about something that I didn't get that she did. I wasn't allowed to make comparisons...I wasn't allowed to voice my envy. And I guess what I'm doing now is voicing it, and I'm thinking well where does that get me? I end up losing a friendship that I don't particularly want to lose, so it takes me back to that place, is it better to say nothing, to hold on to these things?...With my friend I was speaking about before, I just got to a point where I couldn't hold it*

*any longer. I often have felt like I was just there as a convenience for my friend, and not a priority. When I was growing up, the priority was with my sister, and not me. Maybe that is my envy and my destructiveness, and the destructive part of my envy is pulling her away from the male so that I can have her for me, in the way that I could never have my mother for me.*

This therapist was aware of feeling envious or jealous as a child and not being allowed to voice it, because she would have been punished if she did complain or compare. Now in present time when she is voicing it, she is wondering whether that is useful, as it seems to have meant the end of a friendship. It seems she felt almost compelled to speak it aloud as she felt the man as priority, and relates this to her sister as priority to her mother. She wonders if this is her envy, of the sister and mother and the therapist wanting the mother.

The childhood experience of voicing envy led to punishment. The transposition here is that the adult experience of voicing her envy led to a kind of punishment, which was the destruction of the friendship. The transposing of experience across time was the experience with her sister to the experience with her friend.

In the following excerpt the therapist is speaking about her experience of envy through her life often as an observer of others' envy, both past and present:

*My Dad's family of origin was quite poor. He would often talk about not courting envy. About cars and other kinds of things, he would say if you've got flash cars you were just inviting people to envy you. In recent years I have watched this sister of mine looking at another sister of ours, and being envious of what appears to be her opulent lifestyle. She is really unhappy, a lot of the time. I don't see it as an emotion that takes people many good places...I do think of it as quite destructive...and that might be partly because my father sort of foreswore it against us. I also know there was some envy of my mother by her siblings because she married my Dad and they were seen to be in a different bunch and that cut her off from some of her siblings. There was also a nose-to-nose thing my mother had with her immediate older sister. My mother was very talented as a child, and as a little girl she would often sing little numbers at family parties. Years later my mother could never remember having done this, but her sister remembered every line of it...and she would imitate my mother doing those things. It seemed like it really poisoned my*

*mother's sister in terms of how she was in her life, which was very unhappy.*

The therapist is speaking of the messages she received in childhood, from both her father and her mother, about envy, and the resultant impact on her experience of envy in her life. The father's belief about possessions inviting envy was spoken outright. The message from her mother's side was more of a felt sense of being envied, along with the break with her siblings that eventuated. The therapist also names the nose to nose experience of what she was told or what she saw about the envy between her mother and her mother's sister. She thought of her auntie as having been poisoned by being envious.

The "nose to nose" thing is a fascinating visual image of the experience of envy. For me the image conjures a rivalry, or a duel, or a sparring—an adversarial experience. "Nose to nose" is translated as head to head, or a vigorous disagreement. This seems to be an experience of transpositioning as well as a transgenerational experience, and there seems to be a crossing over or overlapping of these two concepts.

### **Anxiety as a contextual determinant**

In this next section I will be speaking about and showing another aspect of the lived experiences of the therapists in my research, in which anxiety plays a key role as a factor present in creating an environment in which envy arises and exists. The following excerpt bridges the last section about transposing and carries on to include the underlying experience of anxiety:

*It feels quite scary to name so directly and openly this therapist that I envy. I'm quite scared that I'm going to get in big trouble...My parents were very powerful people, and I was in trouble pretty much all of the time (laughing). I was told all the time to keep my mouth shut...there's that atmosphere of, "don't talk outside".*

The therapist here describes his experience of feeling frightened as he talks with me and names, so directly and openly, the therapist he envies. He feels scared he is

going to get into trouble. He then tells of his childhood experience of being in trouble all of the time with his powerful parents. He says he was forever told to keep his mouth shut and that there was/is an atmosphere of “don’t talk outside”.

Here there is a sense of past and present, mingled with a sense of anxiety about the possible or probable fear of “getting into trouble” for openly saying who he envies.

Stern (2004) offers the notion of the “present remembering context” as a notion widely accepted in thinking about memory (Damasio, 1999, 2000; Edelman, 1990). He explains that in this notion, memory is viewed as a collection of fragments of experiences which get turned into a whole remembered experience through a particular process. The present remembering context is whatever is happening on the mental stage in the present moment, which may include smells, sounds, internal feeling states, bodily feelings. It may also include more ongoing experiences such as preoccupying thoughts or feelings.

Also in the above two quotes is an implicit experience of anxiety, the anxiety about the fear of getting into trouble. Stern (2004) speaks to this concept of focusing at the local level of present moments in order to become more aware of small events, especially non-verbal and implicit events. He suggests that along with the explicit agenda of what is being talked about is an accompanying parallel implicit agenda. He further suggests that we as psychotherapists need to become attuned to both the explicit verbal agenda as well as the implicit experience agenda, simultaneously (p. 223). Through this attuning, the entirety of the experience can be gathered.

The implicit experience for this therapist is the underlying experience of fear and anxiety, which has called forth the past experience of fear and anxiety about the similar issue of getting into trouble if he speaks.

## **Summary**

In this chapter I have described and explored some of the contextual determinants of the experience of envy. These have included desire, perception, and time. I have in

the last excerpt briefly shown anxiety as a contextual determinant. While this excerpt touches into anxiety as a felt experience, chapter six will further show anxiety as one of the powerful feelings evoked by envy. The next chapter will delve deeper into envy as constituted by and evoking of several different powerful feelings.

## **Chapter 5--Envy showing itself as powerful feelings towards others**

The previous chapter showed envy arising in the fertile ground of particular contexts, including that of relation, desire, perception, time and anxiety. Within these contexts the therapists in my research spoke their experiences of envy. One therapist described envy as “a roller coaster of feelings”, whilst another called it a “cocktail”. This chapter is about envy showing itself in its multiplicity of forms as powerful feelings towards others.

### **Envy as Devaluing and Contempt of other**

One therapist spoke about the way in which he saw his envy first emerge as a child. In reflecting back he told the following story of putting down his friend:

*I remember going to the home of this guy I went to school with, and his mother giving him this warm cuddle...I think I just looked on in utter...envy...but also, I can see now, that already what I did, in a way that I suppose was self-protective, is that I put him down for it...because there wasn't anywhere for the feelings to go...I couldn't have his mother...*

This therapist recalls visiting a schoolmate, and watching his mother cuddle him. He says he *looked on in utter envy*. As he thinks about it now, he is aware of having put down his friend as a self-protection. He says he did this because he there wasn't anywhere for the feelings to go, and that he couldn't have his schoolmate's mother.

This is an experience of longing for what he felt he couldn't have. The “looking on” suggests already a sense of separation from his own feelings of pain at not having what he sees his schoolmate having. His self-protection then arose in the form of putting down or devaluing his friend's experience.

There was a great depth of feeling expressed by this therapist as he told me this experience. It seemed he was allowing himself to experience the pain as he spoke with me. Why self-protect? From what? From his painful feeling of not having what his friend has, the warmth and comfort of his mother's cuddle? Striking out rather

than feeling the pain is the nature of this theme. Feeling the pain manifest as anger and then sending it out through putting down. The pattern that emerges out of this is putting down others who seem to have what he believes that he can't have.

He continued with the following story in which he describes his experience of putting down others turning into contempt:

*I used to go fishing when I was a child. On this particular day, my friends and I took off our clothes down to our underpants and went for a swim...my friend used the word "undies", and I just saw myself sort of go "ughh", and it wasn't until years later that I realised that "undies" was a relatively tender sort of word? I already had toughened myself up against anything that was tender because the feelings were just too...just too much...(bit tearful). There was nowhere for them to go...I started learning something in the way of contempt... because the alternative was wishing for something that I didn't see any way of having...I've only just put that together in a slightly new sort of way just now.*

Fishing with friends as a child, this therapist found himself rejecting of his friend's tender use of the word "undies". He says he had already toughened himself against anything tender, because the feelings were overwhelming. He says he learned contempt, and the only alternative he could see was to wish for something he couldn't see any way of having.

It seems that in the above two quotes, this therapist is masking his experience of envy with his contempt, as a way of not feeling the "too much-ness" of not having, as well as not feeling the pain of having nowhere for the feelings to go. Williams (2004) spoke of masks as sitting between sensation and meaning. The sensation is the overwhelming pain, the mask is the contempt, and the meaning is the experience of wishing for something he didn't see any way of having. While Williams was describing literal masks, metaphorically I imagined him speaking of the masks that we place between ourselves and others as protections or defences against experiencing painful feelings.

Further talk of contempt led this same therapist to another insight:

*I just thought, 'My God, that's my mother!' She suffered rejection from the local church people on the basis of being a working class man's wife. This was incredibly painful for her, and I think she dealt with it through a sort of haughty contempt. I see now that I learned how to be impervious to pain. I separated out a "tough" side from a "weak or vulnerable" side. I think the thought of a more weak open side to me was so sort of vulnerable. I just came to hate that aspect of myself, because that's where I could be hurt.*

Here this therapist is shocked as he suddenly becomes aware of his being like his mother. He names her pain and his own learning to be impervious to pain. He says he separated out a tough side from a weak or vulnerable side, and that he came to hate that vulnerable aspect of himself, as he believed that's where he could be harmed.

The above three quotes show the gradual development of this therapist's experience of contempt, from putting down, to contempt as protection and then the awareness of learning to be impervious. The putting down and becoming contemptuous and impervious seemed to be a way of covering his longing or yearning for tenderness.

He then goes on to describe the following more current situation:

*There's one therapist I'm thinking about who is seeing many clients... half are paying a lower fee and the other half pay a high fee...I want it, and I don't have it, and I hate him for it...I say I hate him for it...but I can actually feel it in me as contempt of him...when I'm contemptuous I can see all the problems that other therapists have, I can see the narcissistic way in which he lets his clients slip by with all sorts of things and gets paid a high fee for it.*

The therapist is here describing his hate, and feeling it as contempt, for another therapist who has many clients and is financially in a position that he wants for himself. In comparing himself to the other therapist, he shifts into a position of contempt, or better than-ness, and sees the problems that other therapists have, including this particular therapist's narcissistic way of letting his clients slip by and still getting paid a high fee.

As he looks at his intense sense of hate he recognises that it is his contempt. He places himself in a better than position by focusing on the inadequacies that other

therapists have. The word contempt is formed from the past participle of “contemnere” which is “contemn”. “Contemn” means “to despise”. It seems that the intensity of his despising parallels the intensity of his yearning for tenderness, as well as his fear of the pain of not having and not being able to have.

Morrison and Lansky (Mollon, 2002) spoke of the way in which envy, contempt, and shame are all concerned with comparison of self to other. They say that in envy the other is exalted and hated, whilst in contempt the other is despised and lowered in comparison with an exalted self. They see envy and contempt as “expressions of a shame-derived *vision* [their italics] of the “death instinct”, Thanatos—a protective withdrawal from needed figures, and contrasted this with a Kleinian view of envy as a form of primary aggression *emanating* [their italics] from Thanatos” (De Paola, 2001) (p. 107).

Another therapist told her experience of being envied and feeling put down by a colleague:

*Many years ago I was working at a centre where the senior manager was retiring. One of the senior psychotherapists who worked with us was thinking whether they would put themselves forward to be the director, and finally concluded that they may not be in the running. They left, and got a job at another agency. They then said things like the agency they'd gone to was where the “real” work was, with those poor people who didn't have many options in life. I thought that it was a way of putting down the work our centre did. I think that what it's meant for our relationship is that though we used to see quite a bit of each other, we don't see much of each other now. I think there was a big me, little you, while they were really senior to me, it was easy for us to have some contact... but when they moved aside and I moved on into the bigger role...it wasn't easy anymore...and I have some sadness about that. I also think that they could have done what I did...I didn't sleepwalk into my position.*

This therapist describes her experience of feeling put down by a colleague. Prior to her colleague shifting agencies, they had seen each other quite a bit. She experienced this as a “big me, little you”. As she took on the bigger role, their relating was no longer easy and she has some sadness about this. She thinks that her colleague could

have done further study as she herself had done, and that in fact she didn't sleepwalk into her position.

Here the therapist is describing an entire context around the experience of “big me, little you”, and how the reversal of these roles resulted in the senior therapist putting down her and her agency. It also resulted in the relating between them being no longer easy. While she feels sad about this, she also seems to be expressing some anger and resentment as she says she didn't sleepwalk into her position. This is also another example of distance creating more distance [as discussed in the last chapter].

The following excerpt is another example of the devaluing of the other:

*There is a dynamic of envy between myself and a colleague I studied with at psychotherapy school. Envy is about wanting to destroy somebody, isn't it...something kind of murderous? I don't feel that destructive towards him, I don't know if I felt murderous, but I did feel jealous about him having his schooling paid for, while here I was cleaning houses, struggling my way through. I felt it was unfair... and I suppose there was, and there still is now, some destructiveness in my wanting to devalue what I saw as his always contacting the right people in the therapeutic community and making sure he climbed...and I think what happens for me is that I withdraw, so I don't become destructive...I don't know why this happens with this particular person...though I know he reminds me of my brother.*

This therapist describes envy as the experience between herself and her colleague at psychotherapy school. She is thinking of envy as something murderously destructive. She decides to use the word “jealousy” as this does not seem to have that extreme connotation for her. She names what she experiences as an unfairness that she had to struggle while she perceived her colleague didn't. She then supposes that there was, and still is, a measure of destructiveness in her devaluing her colleague for making sure he climbed in the therapeutic community. She thinks that she then withdraws so that she doesn't become destructive. She wonders about this experience happening with this particular person, and is aware that he reminds her of her brother.

It is useful here to talk about the difference between jealousy and envy. Melanie Klein (1957) made one distinction by saying that envy is between two, a dyadic

experience, whilst jealousy is between three, a triadic experience. In the Oxford etymological dictionary (1996) jealousy is defined as “suspiciously vigilant”. Envy is defined as “looking maliciously upon”, derived from the Latin “in” meaning “upon” or “against”, and “videre” meaning “to see”. In the Oxford pocket dictionary (1978) “jealous” is defined as “afraid, suspicious, resentful, of rivalry in love or affection”. It is also defined as “envious (of person, his advantages)”. In the same dictionary, “envy” is “bitter or longing contemplation (of more fortunate person; of, at, his advantages etc.)”.

From these basic definitions there is a similar intensity in both words. Friday (1986) explores both jealousy and envy. She describes one experience of interviewing a woman named Susan who was the partner of Friday’s close colleague. Susan said that she had been jealous of the intellectual rapport and easy companionship that she saw between her husband and Nancy Friday, who were colleagues. Susan ended this statement with, “Or am I talking about envy?” Friday replied, “A jealous situation, with all kinds of envious components flying around inside...envy of me, envy of him.” (p. 538-9) Friday then wonders if it is the easy companionship Susan wants, or is it the perceived position of power held by Friday that she envies.

In the above excerpt, the therapist describes her wanting to devalue, and possibly destroy what she sees as the other therapist climbing in the therapeutic community. Is she then envying this perceived powerful position? The contacting of the right people and the climbing suggest the existence of a top down, bottom up hierarchical system. I will explore this more in my discussion chapter.

The experiences of devaluing, contempt and ultimately a wish to destroy are shown in the excerpts above as some of the ways in which the therapists in my research experienced their envy.

The following section shows anger and nastiness, leading to thoughts of destruction, as another way in which envy is experienced by the participating therapists.

## **Envy as Angry and Nasty leading to wishes of destruction of other**

In this section an aspect of the experience of envy is shown as being angry and nasty, and leading to destruction. The therapist in the following excerpt first names “the admiring place” and then describes her different experience of envy as more angry:

*The admiring place is different from the envying place. The admiring place is a very positive thing...very appreciative of a person, or of their strengths. The envious place is more angry. It's almost like, in that envious place, if I could, I'd steal what she [the person envied] has. It feels like a nasty feeling. I suppose if I could steal, it would destroy the colleague I envy, but it would also destroy me. Because it wouldn't be me...it would be some stolen something, or someone.'*

This therapist describes the admiring place as positive, an appreciating of a person or their strengths. She then names envy as a more angry place, and says that if she could, she would steal what her envied colleague has. She describes this experience as nasty. She imagines if she could steal, the stealing would destroy her colleague, and it would also destroy her, because she would then be a stolen something or someone.

Wanting to steal the quality of the other was named by several of the therapists. Stealing is about desire to have what the other has. To take through stealing implies a not being able to acquire something for oneself. The anger seems to be expressed through the fantasied wish to steal. Is it because she doesn't perceive herself as having, or is it because she sees what she wants in the other and the only way to get it is to steal. The notion that if she steals what her colleague has, and that colleague would be destroyed, brings to mind the Ulanov and Ulanov (1983) treatise on Cinderella and her sisters. They suggest that in the experience of envy, we focus neither on a specific goodness in another's being, nor on the actual desire evoked in us that might activate the developing of a matching goodness in ourselves. Rather, they say, “we focus on a missing quality—the absence in ourselves of what we spy in our neighbour—or we concentrate on our wish to obliterate that same quality in our neighbour to make the something that is there into nothing” (p. 95). They further say, “We fall away from spontaneous admiration to ruminate on what does not exist or on how we can extinguish what does exist.”

This focus on a missing quality, or the absence in ourselves, brings to mind Heidegger's (Guignon, 1993) notion of presencing and absencing. He said that for something "to be" means for it to disclose or to present itself. "For this presencing or self-manifesting to occur, there must be a clearing, an opening, an emptiness, a nothingness, an absencing" (p. 243) For Heidegger, artwork was important for its experiential depiction of presencing and absencing shown right before our eyes.

Heidegger (Guignon, 1993) says that when something is revealed, there is always something still concealed. He says that "concealment inevitably accompanies every emerging-into-presence" (p. 19). He suggested that unconcealment is the result of an event within being, a sense of "owning" or "appropriation"; it is not something that humans "do".

The idea of spying and wanting to steal a missing quality experienced as absent in ourselves, yet present in the other, could be seen as a way of presencing what is perceived as absent. Yet according to Heidegger's notion, an alternative to this would be "to be" the openness ourselves in which that quality could presence, or manifest itself.

As this therapist thinks further, she imagines that if she could steal the quality, her colleague, as well as herself, would be destroyed, because she would be some stolen something, not herself. As Ulanov and Ulanov (1983) theorised, the data here shows the movement from admiration, to the stealing, that is, what does not exist, to destruction or extinguishing.

In the following excerpt another therapist expresses his anger through his wish to destroy:

*I want to bury the superior and the contemptuous psychotherapists in the sand and I want them to get their comeuppance. There's a little part of me, a little primitive part of me that would like them to disappear.*

There is a sense of revenge and a wish to destroy as he speaks of wanting to bury those superior and contemptuous therapists. Does he imagine that if they

disappeared, life would somehow be better for him? Is this wish to destroy out of a sense of feeling threatened? The sense of feeling threatened will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The concept “primitive part” is named here as the part that could think these harmful things towards another. I think of synonyms of primitive: primal, primeval, primordial or ancient. A synonym for “primal” is “original”. Is therefore a harmful thought “original”, as in originally in us, as in by nature, by birth, something primitive in us that enables the ability to wish to destroy the other, imagining that this could mean freedom for ourselves. And is this not an easier way out, to destroy the other, rather than to look at and work through the pain of our own internal demons and destroy, or rather integrate them?

The therapist who spoke the previous excerpt was thinking of the various therapists he knows. He said that he experiences some therapists as very deserving of their position, and he is admiring of them. There were others he thought did not deserve acclaim.

Another experience of the therapists was the sense of anger towards the one who is envying, and that turning into hostility. One therapist told about a dynamic of starting a practice some years ago. She said that one of her colleagues was experiencing her as “having everything”.

*There was an ill feeling between us. I started to feel too angry to even talk about it. This colleague had said that he needed more clients to begin with than I did because I didn't need the money. I felt enraged, and really hurt as well...couldn't he see I had needs too?...And so I lost my temper, and became quite hostile.*

This therapist first describes the ill feeling between herself and her colleague who was envying her. She then describes herself as feeling too angry to talk about it. She said that the colleague said he needed more clients than she did because she didn't need the money. She felt enraged, as well as hurt that he could not see that she had needs. She says she lost her temper and became quite hostile.

This excerpt shows a mutual ill feeling occurring between the colleague envying and the therapist being envied. Her experience of him not seeing she had needs resulted in her feeling so angry that she did not know how to find words. The mix of rage and hurt led to her becoming hostile.

Symington (2001) says that the envier projects their anger onto the one they envy. It seems that the colleague envying showed his anger through wanting to take or destroy the work of the therapist he perceived as “having everything”. The therapist felt hostility in return. Is there a kind of mirroring occurring here? There seems to be an experience between the two that sets up this dance, a kind of fit that happens between the envier and the envied, and vice versa. There seems to be a sense of not-seen-ness on both sides which brings the anger, hurt, hostility and ill feeling.

Another therapist spoke of envy as nasty:

*When I feel envious of someone, it's nasty and spiteful and wishing evil on that person...somehow feeling that I would be happy if harm came to them...which is horrible! I still feel uneasy about feeling the way that I do...part of me thinks I shouldn't really be feeling that...it's not very nice of me...and a part of me thinks that's just me being human...I think when envy goes underground it's far more destructive than if it's brought out in the open.'*

This therapist is naming her experience of feeling envious as nasty, spiteful and wishing evil on the envied other. She has a feeling that if harm came to them she would be happy. She immediately follows this statement with naming this experience as horrible, saying that she feels uneasy about her feelings. She then says that part of her thinks she shouldn't be feeling that, because it's not very nice of her, whilst another part of her thinks that's just being human.

The on-line thesaurus shows synonyms of nasty as mean, malicious, vicious, cruel, malevolent. It is no wonder it is difficult to admit one's envy to oneself when the experience of envy is that it is nasty.

What is she describing as horrible? Is it her feeling of pleasure at the demise of the envied other? Or is she describing the horribleness of the feeling she experiences as she speaks with me in the present moment about wishing evil and being happy about harm to another colleague. Possibly she is saying both experiences are horrible.

Spitefulness and wishing evil express the desire to destroy. Barrows (2002) says that destructive envy is perhaps the feeling that is hardest for us to let ourselves know about. She thinks this is so because it seems to be the only emotion that attacks goodness because it is good. She also believes it is so hard to face into the destructive aspect of one's envy because "the effect of envy is to undermine one's own goodness and capacities, as well as those of the envied person" (p. 7). There seems to be a sense of guilt emerging here also as this therapist says she feels uneasy about feeling so intensely towards the therapist she envies.

As this therapist names envy as *far more destructive when it goes underground*, Heidegger's (Inwood, 1997) notion of concealment and unconcealment comes to my mind. The underground as concealed and the out in the open as unconcealed, or revealed. To "bring out in the open" could mean out in the open to oneself, or out in the open to others, or both. "More destructive if underground" could mean that greater destruction is likely to arise from the sense of concealment. If concealed then who can know how, when or where the envy will leak out?

This section has shown that forms of envy can lead to thoughts of destruction of the other. The following section will show envy as resentment.

### **Envy as Resentment (Envy as anger turned into resentment)**

The Oxford etymological dictionary (1996) says that the word "resent" originally meant "to feel deeply or painfully", or "to feel oneself injured by or show displeasure at". It is formed from the French *resentir*, "re" means "again", and "sentir" means "to feel". The pocket Oxford dictionary (1978) defines "resent" as "to show or feel indignation at" or "retain bitter feelings about an insult or injury sustained". This

definition gives a sense of resentment as feelings retained through a continuing experience of bitterness.

In the following excerpt the therapist begins with her awareness of staying away from the feelings, and this assists her to move into her experience:

*I think I'm probably staying away from the feelings about my envy. I'm talking kind of rationally about it...I can certainly feel all the difficulty of my recent life just sitting there...ah...see?... 'others have an easier life' ...it's both kind of hurt and angry, that's a really core thing...this furious wounded child just hating everybody and hating her own hurt...*

Here the therapist is at first aware of talking rationally about envy, and as she speaks of the difficulty of her recent life sitting there with her, she touches into her felt experience of “others have an easier life”. She names this experience as both hurt and angry, as well as hating of everybody and hating her own hurt also.

In the last chapter the experience of envy as being difficult to think about was named. Similarly here, there is the sense of envy being an experience with which it is difficult to allow an ongoing felt connection. Yet the nature of resentment is that it is an ongoing and seemingly never-ending core bitterness— *this furious wounded child hating everybody and hating her own hurt*.

One of the themes that arises here is the experience of several of the therapists, in which there is an awareness of themselves staying away from the feelings of envy. This will be discussed further in chapter 7.

Another therapist, in the position of being envied, refers to this movement from difficulty to resentment.

*It became more difficult when things started to be not spoken about...resentment arose. I was feeling resentful towards this colleague. I'm not quite sure why I didn't say it, or why the other person didn't say it...things started to go underground...and fester. It was quite a long while before envy was named.*

The therapist is here describing his experience of envy not being spoken, and the situation becoming worse, with resentment arising. He felt resentment towards his colleague, and is unsure why neither of them said anything. Things started going underground and then began to fester. Envy was named after a long while.

In the above excerpt the not naming of envy and the resultant silence led to resentment, and then a festering. Helmut Schoeck (Friday, 1985) the German sociologist said that it is very seldom when different languages permit someone to say directly, "Don't do that, it will make me envious". Rather he says that we say something or other is intolerable or unfair, or we relapse into sour and bitter silence (p. 105).

As the therapist says *I'm not quite sure why I didn't say anything*, he seems to be relapsing into sour and bitter silence. What stopped him or his colleague from speaking about their difficult experience? Possibly a fear that the situation might have become worse through the naming of resentment. Resentment linked to envy is an unknown quantity, so that even the naming of it might head us into deeper and darker waters. He continues by saying, *things started to go underground...and fester*. The word "fester" is defined, in relation to grief or resentment, as "putrefy", "rankle" or "rot". It is derived from the Latin word "fistula", which means "a pipe-like ulcer". There is the sense of envy being held underground, in the dark, no space to breathe, and festering like a wound unexposed to the air.

The not naming of resentment and envy by both the envier and the envied is another aspect of envy. Several therapists spoke of a mix of anger and resentment towards the person they envied, and that they had these thoughts inside that they didn't express aloud.

One therapist spoke of another psychotherapist who had attained NZAP membership before she had.

*The other therapist had all of these obvious qualities that I didn't have...And inside I'm thinking, "How come you get away with it?" or "How come you got so lucky?"*

Here the therapist is noticing the qualities of the other that she herself doesn't have. Inside she is angry and this shows in her resentful and bitter thoughts, "well how come you got so lucky?" She is angry with the other therapist for having what she doesn't have and this comes out in the form of resentment.

Another therapist said similarly:

*The therapist I'm talking about has this ease in the grown up world which I don't always feel. She's not much older than me, and I think to myself, "Damn, why should she have all that?"*

This therapist is envying a colleague's ease in the adult world. There being little age difference, she wonders with anger and resentment why her colleague has this ease. As she thinks *why should she have all that*, she seems to mean the ease and possibly the kudos that goes along with that ease. There is a sense of not-fairness that arises here.

Another therapist spoke of being on the edge of separating from her partner. In the following excerpt she speaks of her therapist of years ago who she perceived as affluent and who she was envying at the time:

*There was something about thinking that this woman was kind of cocooned in her life...which was something enviable. I thought to myself, "You can't have any idea what I'm having to think about giving up here. You don't have to think about leaving this financial security!"*

The therapist is thinking about envying her past therapist who she saw as being *kind of cocooned* in her life. There seems to be a sense of her envying of the cocooned life...a possible longing to have that cocooned life for herself? Cocooned as insulated, protected, cushioned...a desire to be held and cared for.

Whilst there is an additional obvious transference element here due to this excerpt of envy being about her relation to her therapist, there is still evident the experience as expressed by many of the therapists in my research about resenting something

about perceived financial security of colleagues, and the resentment arising out of this experience.

In the following excerpt the therapist describes her experience of being resented by other therapists:

*There are some clinical things that other therapists might like to do but don't get to do, and I got to do. I think this has created some resentment at times amongst some of my psychotherapy colleagues. My response to that was to think to myself, "well I didn't sleepwalk into this...I worked hard for this...you've made your life choices and I've made mine". I also think "you could do this too!"*

The therapist here describes her experience of getting to do certain clinical things that other therapists might like to do, but don't get to do. She thinks that this has created some resentment amongst some of her colleagues. She has internally responded with saying to herself that she has worked hard for where she is, and that they have made their life choices and she has made hers. She further thinks to herself that they could do what she has done.

Tolle (1999) writes: "Where there is anger, there is always pain underneath." (p. 32). He suggests that each and every emotional pain that we experience leaves behind a residue of pain. He says that this residue merges with the pain of the past which was already there, becomes lodged in the mind and body like an invisible entity. He suggests that we carry around this pain-body which lies dormant or active, depending upon the person. It is however ready to be activated by any life circumstance (p. 30-1).

In the above excerpt, as in a number of the excerpts in this chapter, there is a response that is thought about, but not spoken. This is not to say that speaking the anger and resentment would necessarily be useful, however speaking the pain might.

Van Manen (2002) quotes Freud's (1973) writing about speaking:

Do speak to me, Auntie! I'm frightened!" "Why, what good would that do? You can't see me." To this the child replied: "If someone speaks, it gets lighter." (p. 407)

This little quote gives meaning and value to the speaking. The simple reply of the child says to me that if someone dares to speak in the darkness, the experience is lighter and the experience of the one speaking, as well as the one spoken to, can get lighter, and possibly freer.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I have described and explored envy as constituted by and evoking of powerful feelings towards others. While a number of the therapists went into talking about what they thought about what they felt, the strong feelings towards others such as devaluing, contempt, anger, nastiness, resentment and a desire to destroy still showed up as very powerful, threatening and possibly dangerous. These extreme feelings are indicative of the degree of suffering felt by the therapists. The following chapter shows and explores powerful feelings associated with envy which turn towards the self, and are also experienced as threatening, disturbing and painful.

## **Chapter 6--Envy as evoking powerful feelings towards self**

While the previous chapter showed the powerful feelings towards others experienced by the therapists in my research, this chapter shows the powerful feelings evoked by envy in relation to the impact on the self. This will include envy as painful, as feeling inferior, as shameful, as guilt, as hidden, as threatening, and as anxiety and fear provoking.

One therapist had the following to say:

*When I see other therapists who have more, I feel something more subtle than anger...something difficult to language...with elements of cynicism, of bitterness, of judgment...something not as simple as anger...something like angst.*

This therapist is struggling towards bringing into language her experience of envying other therapists. She names various forms of envy and then arrives at “something like angst”. The Oxford dictionary (1978) defines “angst” as “feeling of guilt”. The internet thesaurus defines “angst” as “anguish; torment; anxiety; trouble; sorry; worry; fear”. Its antonym is “calm”. This definition of angst covers many of the powerful feelings about envy that I am exploring in this chapter.

### **Envy as painful--Devaluing of self; judgment of self**

*I am decidedly envious about what other psychotherapists have and what I don't have. When I want something that I feel like I can never have...the place I go feels like...I can't live...it's just too painful to live with this...being this pathetic...this lacking in anything that's worthwhile.....I saw myself working with a client, and I was aware of struggling to not see the client as part of my narcissistic constellation, and I thought, “I should be better than this...other therapists would not be doing something like this...they'd be better than me”.*

This therapist says that she is extremely envious about what other psychotherapists have and what she doesn't have. She says that when she experiences wanting something she feels she can never have, she goes to a place in herself where it feels like she can't live, because the pain feels too painful. She describes herself in these

moments as pathetic, and lacking in anything worthwhile. Recently observing herself in her own practice, she thought to herself that other therapists would be better than her.

There is a judgment that she places on herself as she says “being this pathetic”. This sense of being pathetic seems to lead her to feel lacking, not worthwhile, that she has no worth. As if the sense of no worth can mean a sense of no value, or no meaning in living. There is only pain in those moments. There is an implied sense of no connection with other...a sense of aloneness.

As she says *I can't live* there seems to be an imagining that if she wasn't living, she wouldn't feel the pain of her experience of longing for something she feels she can never have. Can desire be deleted? Is it true that she can never have what she desires, or is she already engaging in self-defeat or self-limiting before she even tries to get what she wants, by telling herself she can't have it.

There is an implied death wish arising as she says, “it's just too painful to live with”. Does this wish arise out of her fear of being annihilated by her own pain, so she considers annihilating herself? It seems to be a kind of self-annihilation to see others as better than her.

Heidegger (Inwood, 1997) says that Dasein, or human existence, as it runs ahead into the future and back into the past, is always ahead of itself, always poised before possibilities yet unrealised. As this therapist experiences her pain of envying as she speaks with me, she recalls in the present moment her overwhelming feeling of the pain of feeling worthless in the face of her desire to have. This overwhelming sense brings her to say *like I can't live*. Death is one of the possibilities that she, at least in this moment, gives herself. Heidegger says that there is for Dasein a final possibility, as the possibility to end all possibilities, namely death. Heidegger further says that “the authentic person has the constant awareness of the possibility of his own death; he is anxious, though not fearful, in the face of it” (p. 68-9).

*Lacking in anything that's worthwhile* shows envy as a feeling of inferiority. Friday (1986) quotes Foster: "In recognising envy in oneself, a person is acknowledging inferiority with respect to another; he measures himself against someone else and finds himself wanting. It is this implied admission of inferiority, rather than the admission of envy, that is so difficult for us to accept" (p. 114).

There is desire and then a sense of not good enough. Out of this sense of not good enough or sense of inferiority arises a sense of anxiety. Anxiety about not being able to have what she desires, and anxiety about whether she can bear the overwhelming pain. Anxiety will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

In the following excerpt another therapist speaks of the pain of envying:

*So at the worst level, I would wish them bad luck. And that feels horrible...I mean, I hate that part of me...it feels malignant...that I would wish that on somebody, to make myself feel better...but it's there, it's part of me. Wishing them bad luck is painful to me in two ways. One is, to feel envious of someone is painful because it brings me directly in touch with my lack, with what I don't have, or what I imagine I don't have. The other part is the knowing that there is this hostile part of me that wants to diminish the other person...this mean, pathetic part that somehow wants to re-balance the first part, and to do that I would wish ill on someone else. It is very painful to experience myself like that, to know that that's a part of me. I'd like to just expunge it, and just be big-hearted. Wishing to diminish the other feels like an internal diminishing. At the source of all that is poor self-esteem, in some area on some level. Maybe that's just part of the human condition, I don't know, maybe it's just me, I don't know, it's just there. I think it is part of the human condition, but it's really a part I don't like, about myself... I'd like to be able to kind of rise above?*

This therapist describes her being envious as wishing bad luck on the one she envies. She says this feels horrible, malignant, and it's a part of her that she hates. She then talks about envying being painful: one, because it brings her directly in touch with her lack; and two, because she sees the hostile part of her that wants to diminish the other...the part of her that is mean and malignant and wants to balance out the first part. It is very painful for her to know this is a part of her. She would like to expunge

it and be big-hearted instead. When she wishes to diminish the other, it feels like a diminishing of herself.

In this excerpt the therapist says she hates that part of herself that could wish bad luck on who she envies. She then says, *but it's there, it's part of me*. Symington (2001) offers the following: “The paradox is that an element disowned becomes destructive of the personality, whereas if owned and welcomed, it becomes a source of strength. When I hate an element in myself, I cannot integrate it into my personhood” (p. 196). While at first this therapist is speaking her hate for a part of herself, i.e. disowning it, she then immediately follows that statement with a statement of ownership. I am not sure whether she has reached the point of welcoming this element of herself, though she is certainly naming it and possibly owning it as part of her.

The idea of wishing to diminish the other feeling like a diminishment of the self makes a great deal of sense phenomenologically, because according to Heidegger (Inwood, 1997) we are in and of the world. “The world of Dasein (human existence) is a *with-world*. Being-in is Being-with Others” (p. 54). With this notion in mind, the experience this therapist has is linked and interconnected with the experience of the one she envies.

Does the being hostile or the wishing bad luck on the one being envied actually make the pain better, or re-balance it? This idea rests on the wish that if she harms the other then the other will become lacking as well, so she will not feel so lacking. This is the malignancy, the cancer, the spreading of dis-ease, from the self to the other. This seems to create more of an entrenchment in the experience of envy. What would it be like to stay in touch with the sense of lack, or is that possibly a black hole from which one cannot be retrieved, or retrieve oneself? Again the fear of annihilation, of dis-integration arises.

## **Envy as shameful**

In the following excerpt the therapist speaks of his envy, and the possible pain and hate he might experience leading to sadness, and possibly shame:

*If I would go to where it is so painful that there is more hate involved, I could come to hate him, and then it could destroy the relationship. It would almost need a little psychotic piece.....I feel quite sad just now...it's to do with, although it was a fantasy of that hate destroying the relationship, it's as if I touched a part of me that could go there. It's quite sad...that there's part of me that could be so hateful. I can get that hateful with my brother, but not to the point of wanting to destroy him...though if I were to hear bad news about him, I might feel a bit vindicated.*

This therapist is fantasising what it might be like if he let himself experience some of the pain and hate he says he could feel towards his colleague. He says it would almost need a little psychotic piece. He then felt sad in the moment as he touched into a part of himself that could be so hateful. He then linked this to his hate for his brother, and imagines that if he heard bad news about him, he might feel a bit vindicated.

Though this therapist began speaking of a fantasy, as he allows himself to embody his fantasy it seems to become his immediate present moment experience...an experience of sadness. It seems that as he became part of his present moment, he felt and then became aware of his potential for hate. While he didn't name shame as something he was feeling at the time, my experience as he spoke about his hatred for his brother was that this was very difficult to admit this to himself and to me. It seemed like he was feeling shame.

Symington offers the following definition of shame: "Shame is the emotion we experience when we are aware of the parts of ourselves that are not integrated" (p. 26). It seems that as this therapist spoke with me and allowed himself to fantasise and then embody his experience, he became aware of this hate as not integrated, and his internal response to this was one of shame. Though as he then spoke of his brother, it seems that he shifted again into a vindicated state, or a state of revenge.

In the following excerpt another therapist speaks of a sense of shame in relation to his experience of envy:

*Envy is something that I feel slightly ashamed of, and um uh... and I think I feel it, I felt it particularly recently, moving to a new area, and feeling quite lost, and being in a completely new environment, new community, having to get my practice up and going...and I felt like I had to not show my envy...*

This therapist describes envy as something he feels slightly ashamed of. He felt it recently in particular, moving to a new area and feeling quite lost in a new environment, having to get his practice going. He felt like he had to hide, or not show his envy.

The Oxford dictionary (1978) defines shame as “humiliated or distressed feeling caused by consciousness of one’s guilt, shortcomings, offensiveness, or folly”. In this case shame arises out of a distressed and/or possibly humiliated feeling caused by awareness of his felt shortcoming in relation to other therapists. He felt “quite lost”.

McWilliams (1994) describes narcissistically organised personalities as characterised by a sense of shame and envy. She says that analysts used to work with interpreting guilt in the experiences of the envious. In more recent times the work is in interpreting shame, for it is now considered that it is the concern about being seen as bad or wrong that preoccupies the envious, rather than a sense of guilt. This concern with being seen as bad was implied through language and through the demeanour of a number of therapists in this study.

In the following excerpt the therapist is directly naming her shame:

*I had the experience in the last few days of incredible shame...in myself, in my relationships, in relationship with my partner...shame relates to envy in the sense of lacking...I felt like others have things that I can't have... others have what they need.*

Here the therapist is tearful as she links her sense of shame to envy through the experience of the sense of lacking...a sense that others have what they need, and she doesn't. This sense of lacking is a common experience shared by the therapists in the research.

Envy and shame seem to have a strong connection, explored here through ideas of a lack of integration of parts of the self, such as the capacity to hate, along with the concern of being seen by others as bad.

### **Envy as threatening**

In the following excerpt the therapist is speaking about her sense of feeling vulnerable in the face of another therapist who she perceives as being in a position of authority and as having a reputation as “beyond the rest of us”:

*Her reputation is beyond the rest of us...the rest of us, our reputation is very vulnerable...we are very vulnerable to each other. If one therapist says to another: would you refer a client to such and such person, and you go “mm? mm?”, then “bang”, that person doesn't get work...and if lots of people are doing that “mm?” we're out of work. Our whole living is about our reputation, and we don't know what goes on in anybody's room. You can't judge on not knowing. What gets to me about that therapist is that she is so entrenched in this position as the authority and as the power...I feel diminished by it. I also have quite a lot of hatred towards her...and anger...it's like you can't touch her. I've felt like saying to her, “Look, what makes you think you're so far above everybody else?”... I never actually said that, I was always scrupulously polite, because of her position.*

In this excerpt the therapist speaks with both fear and anger of her experience of feeling vulnerable as a therapist, both in terms of her own vulnerability, and also in terms of the vulnerability that she believes other therapists experience. She also says that the reputation of the therapist she most envies is “beyond the rest of us”, entrenched in a position of authority and power. She says she feels vulnerable, diminished by the other's power, a great deal of hatred and anger, and silenced because of the position of this therapist she envies.

There is a sense of this therapist feeling threatened as she says it is not fair or right that she herself and other therapists are vulnerable reputation-wise, whereas this therapist, as she perceives her, is not. She sees her as powerful, feels diminished by this, and then names her hatred. There seems to be a sense of underlying fear embedded in her talking about being vulnerable. There is a fear of not getting work as a therapist if other therapists question your capability as a therapist.

The sense of diminishment and the sense of hatred go hand in hand here. Schwartz-Salant (1982) wrote of a “poor me” attitude which he described as one major form that envy takes. He speaks of the splitting off from rage, so that the rage, or the felt desire to spoil the withholding object, is turned back on the self.

There is an issue of perception here as well. Does the sense of diminishment arise out of this therapist seeing the perceived entrenchment in power of the one she envies? Or does she feel diminished by the perceived *can't be touched* or invulnerability of the one she envies? Is there a part of her that would she like to be close to this therapist she envies, or would she like to be her?

Friday (1986) spoke about the relation between envy and power. She told of Klein's thinking, that as much as we loved and needed mother, we also resented and hated her for being the stronger one, the supplier of our needs....In Klein's words, we were envious...the mother had power over us, the power to give or to not give. It seems that the therapist is speaking of her sense of powerlessness as she speaks of her vulnerability and that of others. Friday (1986) says that the feeling of powerlessness is a breeding ground for envy (p. 123). See chapter 8 for further discussion of envy and power in a hierarchical context.

Power and powerlessness can also be silencing. As in the previous excerpt, the therapist here is having resentful thoughts and yet not saying them. She explains that she never said these thoughts because of the envied therapist's position. It seems to be safer to hide.

What is it about position that silences? Are there positions? “Position” is defined as “a place or location occupied; rank” (Sykes, 1978). This naming of position suggests a ranking system, a pecking order that helps to set up this situation, where there are some who are not challenged because their position presupposes that possibility? Does the anger begin as just a thought, and becomes more intense anger and then turns into resentment because there is no forum to speak?

The data in Chapter 4 showed that therapists had the experience in childhood of having no space to speak their envy. There was a sense of threat that kept them silent, and resulted in envy being hidden. Does it then go underground, unspoken, unseen, unrecognised, and unprocessed, only to arise and turn toxic at a later age?

Another example of the sense of hiddenness was named by a therapist at the end of the interview. She said the following:

*It's been quite a confessional.*

It seems that envy is from such a deep place inside that saying something about it is like a confessional. Confessional implies something usually hidden—something private—something personal—maybe something shameful--maybe bad—like something you’ve done that needs absolution, so it becomes like a confession—something only spoken behind closed doors—a secret to hide—like you’re the only one who could do such a thing, be envious. There is an implied shame and fear about what others might think if they knew you felt envy.

Another therapist had this to say:

*When you're young you kind of don't have any way to talk about envy,  
it's just a feeling you have...*

Here the therapist is reflecting on her childhood, recognising that envy was a feeling she had, and that therefore there was no way to talk about it. The implication is that she learned that keeping envy hidden was what one does.

Another example of feeling threatened was expressed by a therapist being envied. She spoke of a time when she and the colleague envying her had their experience of envy mediated:

*My colleague fully owned her tremendous envy. I felt hugely relieved, and much safer. I was also able to show how vulnerable I felt. I had actually felt really threatened by my colleague, and threatened by my own hostility. I had had extreme and intense up and down feelings towards her. I'd think, "I hate you...you're dangerous!" and then the next moment we'd really enjoy each other's company, and I'd think, "This is great!" This was very confusing...at times we'd get on "like a house on fire". The sense of closeness kind of heightened my feeling hurt and angry... I guess we also have a very similar sense of humour, and when we get into that mode, it's almost like we're twins or something, quite an enmeshed thing really...that mode is a similar sort of thing with some of my siblings...I feel really sad about the whole thing.*

This therapist describes her experience of feeling threatened by her colleague, and by her own hostility. She says she felt very relieved, and safer, when her colleague was able to own her envy, and she was able to show her vulnerability. She describes her extreme up and down feelings towards her colleague, from the threat of danger to the enjoying of each other's company. She found this confusing. There were times when they'd get on "like a house on fire". She says the closeness heightened her feeling hurt and angry. She says that she and her colleague have a similar humour, and it is almost like they are twins when they get in that mode. There is something enmeshed about it, and something similar occurs with some of her siblings. She feels very sad about the whole thing.

The experience of feeling threatened is something about being pressured, and implies something ominous according to the Oxford etymological dictionary (1996). The Oxford dictionary (1978) defines "threat" as "intimidatory declaration of intention to punish or hurt". That this therapist felt threatened implies that she had a sense of danger or a sense of something ominous. The threat seems to have lessened as they found a way, with help, to talk about it. She continues however to talk about the confusion at the extreme feelings she experienced, from danger to closeness.

What was it about the closeness that heightened her sense of hurt and anger? It might be that in the closeness there is a degree of vulnerability between two, and the unexpectedness of the emergence of danger shocks across the openness. There is also a vulnerability that exists in similar humour.

The metaphor of getting on “like a house on fire”, brings images of sparks flying wild and out of control—which can be joyous, but also when playing with fire it can be dangerous. Envy as reaching a point where it is out of control could be a frightening experience.

The experience of *quite an enmeshed thing*, and *almost like twins* invites a curious relational image, particularly linking this to her siblings. It brings in the idea of the linking between the envier and the envied. Friday (1985) tells a story of her admiration for a fellow author which did not develop into envy because her relationship to her is marginal. However, she says, in relationship to a friend, is another matter. Envy “derives” as Klein says, from structures and unconscious memories of the earliest familial experiences. If it did not, Friday suggests, we would not recognise enough mutual emotions and resonances in each other to have become such good friends.

### **Envy as anxiety provoking**

Anxiety in relation to envy as threatening, as fear, as shame, and as hidden arises in varying circumstances.

One therapist had this to say at the beginning of the interview:

*One of the things that's been with me in the last two or three days, as we've been getting ready to have this conversation, is that I was aware of feeling quite nervous about it, quite unsure, wondering "what are we going to find to talk about for a whole hour?"*

This therapist names her experience of feeling nervous and unsure as she was anticipating the interview. Was she nervous about talking with me, a relative stranger, about such a topic as envy? Or possibly she was nervous as she anticipated

talking about her experience of envy. Or was the anxiety related to the hiddenness of envy?

Is it that there is such an unknownness about envy that anxiety arises about what might be revealed? Is it that we keep such a rein on our envy that the prospect of talking about it evokes nervousness in relation to what is concealed and what is revealed? Heidegger's (Inwood, 1997) notion about concealing and revealing comes to mind, in which he says that every concealing is a revealing, and vice versa. There may be the concern seen here as nervousness, that in the conversation between myself as interviewer and the therapist as interviewee, there lies the possibility that an unconcealing will naturally happen in the process of our talking.

Unconcealing for Heidegger (Inwood, 1997) is a bringing forth, or an uncovering of the concealed. "Without concealment...everything, the past, the present and the future would be wholly transparent to us, leaving no hidden depths to things, and no scope for choices with uncertain outcomes" (p. 120). This concept opens up new meaning to the notion of concealment, presenting it as essential for the exploration of hidden depths.

Another therapist had this to say:

*Envy has me feel anxious, and competitive and insecure, and also in some way gives me a kind of edge, like it stops me from stagnating maybe, so it also has that drive to it, which is probably not such a bad thing.*

This therapist experiences envy as having her feel anxious, competitive and insecure, giving envy an edge or drive. She wonders about this stopping her from being static, and in this way envy may not be a bad thing.

In saying that envy "has her feel anxious", is this therapist personifying envy as an active agent upon her? In this way envy develops almost a life of its own, which allows it to be unconscious and out of control. Or is she saying that the effect of envy upon her is to experience feeling anxious, as well as competitive and insecure. She seems to be considering the driven aspect of envy that can keep her from stagnating

as *not a bad thing*. It stops her from stagnancy and in a sense drives her, or moves her forward. The moving forward aspect of envy will be discussed in the next chapter. She may also be implying that the other aspects of envy are bad, those which evoke her insecurity, competitiveness and sense of anxiety.

The sense of anxiety named in both of the excerpts above speaks of the anxiety that is felt in relation to envy. The etymological dictionary gives the root of anxious as being formed on the past participle stem “anx” of the Latin word “angere” which means “to choke or to oppress”. The suffix “ious” is a compound suffix meaning “characterised by” or “full of”. Therefore anxious has in its original meaning a direct connection with the concept of being “full of, or characterised by choking or oppression”.

With this etymological definition in mind the experience of being anxious can be described as a form of attacking of the self. Guignon (1993) tells us that Heidegger spoke of our tendency to move away from anxiety. He said, “Anxiety is such a disquieting mood that we spend most of our lives trying to keep it from overtaking us” (p. 244). If we move away from our lived experience of anxiety, are we shutting the door to the possibility of further knowledge gained through the experience of being anxious? This further knowledge might also assist in making sense of envy.

This seems to be a kind of paradox in that staying with the unwanted experience of being anxious is the very thing that we attempt to avoid, whilst on the other hand, being with the anxious experience might enable and even create the space for us to experience and own being anxious, and as a result of this we might gain a fuller sense of ourselves. According to Zeddies (2000), Heidegger claimed that if we submit resolutely to what the mood of anxiety wants to reveal to us, we become authentic in the sense of “owning” our mortal existence (p. 245).

What does this mean? Heidegger is saying that our anxiety is wanting to reveal something to us, and he suggests that what it wants to reveal is our own authenticity, which leads us to owning our mortal existence. According to Hall (Guignon,1993) Heidegger says that we are always choosing from among the cultural possibilities

and against the cultural background of intelligibility into which we have been thrown. That is, we are always understanding [“taking a stand on”] our being on the basis of our “thrownness” or “facticity”. Heidegger suggests that we choose, frequently without realising we are choosing, to do “what one does” because it is either the “right” or the comfortable thing to do. He calls this “falling into the inauthentic way of being” (p. 137). He suggests that we adopt or adapt to certain ways of being according to what we learn in the culture we grow up in.

His explanation of inauthenticity is “that into which we flee or fall to avoid anxiety and its unsettling revelations” (p. 138). Being authentic would then be to allow oneself to be in anxiety, to let oneself know about that experience. Is anxiety an underlying mood or state of being that sits beneath or within conscious and unconscious envy? Is the experience of anxiety more available or more accessible to us than our experience of envy? Based on the conversations with the therapists in this research, it seems to me that if one feels envious it is highly likely that a part of the underlying experience is that of feeling anxious.

During one of the interviews, I became aware of the therapist feeling uncomfortable, or possibly anxious, after having shared with me about some of his envy towards other therapists. On my enquiry he had the following response:

*I don't talk about this sort of thing to anybody. I don't have much contact with you...I don't really have any worry about your holding what I say...I do have some anxiety about my peer's [name deleted for anonymity] response, but I don't have any anxiety about you chatting to anyone...I trust that you won't.*

The anxiety is palpable here as this therapist speaks of not talking about envy to anybody. He says he doesn't worry about me holding what he says, because he doesn't have much contact with me. He doesn't have anxiety about me telling anyone. He clearly names his anxiety about a particular peer knowing his envy...this peer is his friend as well as his colleague.

There is a sense of wanting to keep the envy hidden as he says he doesn't talk about this sort of thing, i.e. his envy, to anybody. What is it that has him more worried

about a close friend knowing, whilst trusting that I won't tell anyone? Possibly he is trusting I won't tell anyone because he knows that I am ethically bound as a researcher to keep the confidence of my participants. Maybe he is not actually trusting me as a person, but trusting the fact that I am ethically bound.

The idea of hiddenness leads me to think about the Johari window (Loft, 1970), a tool that was developed in 1969 and has been used since then for many different purposes. The window presents a way of looking at, learning about and understanding who we are in relation to ourselves, as well as in relation to others. The idea is that there are certain things we know about ourselves which correspond to the things others know about us, and this area is named as the open or free arena area. Then there are things we know about ourselves that are not known to others. This is named as the hidden or façade area. Then there are things we don't know about ourselves that others know about us, and this is called the blind area or blind spot. Finally there are things we don't know about ourselves that others don't know about us, and this is called the unknown area. The "things we know about ourselves" area can be expanded through self-awareness and through responses from others. How much are we willing to let others know about us, and how much are we willing to explore ourselves to let ourselves know about our conscious and unconscious worlds? The Johari window as a tool for self-awareness challenges us to expand the area known to us and known to others through self-disclosure.

The therapist speaking the above excerpt continues:

*I find myself thinking, "who would want to do research on this topic?" (laughing) It's the most uncomfortable thing for people to talk about...and you've set yourself up for people to talk to you about it.*

Here we can see the anxiety moving from being named to turning the tables to focus on me as interviewer, for the moment, and on the fact of the uncomfortableness of talking about his experience of envy. He also then extends his experience to others, imagining that talking about envy is uncomfortable for anyone. Maybe he was hoping to have my company in his uncomfortableness about talking about envy, to

not feel so alone with it. Davey (2004) spoke of wanting company or not wanting to be alone in one's anxiety and envy.

As one therapist considered the prospect of facing the NZAP panels, he spoke of his envy for his colleague who had easily passed, and about himself he said the following:

*I'm better to just really hide away...they'll find out I'm a fraud.*

Rather than face the possibility of being seen as a fraud, this therapist is voicing his wish to hide. It seems that his experience is a mix of shame, and feeling anxiety about his shame. The safest option seems to be to hide. What is he hiding from? Is it from other psychotherapists, is it from himself and his own sense of inadequacy?

Another way that anxiety presents itself is in what is not said. During the course of several of the interviews, I was aware of moments when the therapist would have a little chuckle about what they had just said, or sometimes even a bigger laugh, as in the above excerpt. Many times this indicated to me a sense of nervousness or anxiety about what the therapist had just said out loud, sometimes about themselves, or sometimes about another colleague. It was a sense of having revealed themselves or having been revealed by the conversing between us. In such cases anxiety showed itself in laughter, and at other times in tears. The possible purpose was to soften the impact of what had been revealed, or to release anxiety, or both.

One therapist had the following to say:

*There are two therapists I am extremely envious of...I get so hateful towards them that sometimes I could tear them up with my nails!*

The therapist follows this statement with a big laugh. Is he laughing out of anxiety and embarrassment for having such hateful thoughts and is attempting to lighten it with laughter? Or/and is there some sense of pleasure in having voiced this awful wish? Or is there a sense of shame that arises as the awfulness towards self or other emerges? Does the shame mixed with anxiety then manifest in laughter?

Could this be another example of envy having a life of its own? Does envy gather a life of its own because we are reluctant to own it, so it leaks out, having no proper container? If we were able or willing to own our experience of envy more, and experience it as anxiety or as a lacking in self or as fear or as grief, possibly envy would then not be given the opportunity to leak out as attacking of the other through hate or resentment or destruction of other. I will explore this further in my discussion chapter.

Another powerful feeling of anxiety that arose for most of the therapists was their bodily experience as they spoke of their experiences of envy. Prior to the following quote, the therapist had been telling me a story about a very painful experience of envy. He expressed himself:

*Just now I feel my heart going...I haven't talked about this experience for years and years...*

This therapist suddenly seemed to become aware of his heart going after he had related a very fraught experience of envy. The words and the feelings that his experience evoked in him seemed to locate in his body, specifically in his heart. There seems to be a present moment sense of disturbance that occurs in his body as he recalls and relates his memory of envy.

Stern (2004) speaks of a phenomenological combination of past and present, where the past is felt to be acting now, although it is still recognised as a past. He talks about memory, during which experiences from the past are brought forward into the felt present. He describes this as two senses of time, the remembered past and the existential present, being brought together and superimposed (p. 206)

The following excerpt was told by another therapist:

*Thinking about envy and abandonment takes me to the place of being abandoned...I remember wanting to re-engage in order to get comfort...like seeking out, that masochistic kind of, wanting to connect in with somebody who hurts me...I can't believe I'm saying this, it's a bit scary...but I think on some level that does happen. I*

*notice that I've got this kind of tightness in my throat, talking about it, so I think it's quite deep...quite deep.*

As this therapist thinks about envy and the experience of the other not being there, she recalls the wanting to reconnect for comfort, knowing that this same person has previously hurt her. She surprises herself with this thought, experiences fear, and then becomes aware of her throat being tight. The experience seems deeply embedded in her. I notice she is on the edge of tears and we pause together.

There seems to be a mix of fear and anxiety which then manifests in her physical body. At first there is a tightness in her throat, and as she names the depth of feeling, her experience seems to be more felt as tears begin to well up. In this way the body serves as a container for anxiety that wants or possibly needs to be felt.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I have named and discussed how envy shows itself as powerful feelings towards the self. Judgment and devaluing of the self are painful, while disowning parts of the self can be destructive of the self. Shame can arise in association with envy through a sense of lack, through parts of the self not being integrated or through the idea that others see the self as bad. Envy can be experienced as threatening through feelings of vulnerability, diminishment of the self and powerlessness, particularly in response to a powerful envied other. Powerlessness can keep us silent about envy and the feelings of hate, resentment and anger it can bring. It can also threaten our close relationships where the very attractions to the friendships may undermine it through their resonances to early family experiences. Anxiety and envy seem to move closely hand in hand. While anxiety may contribute to envy, envy may also contribute to anxiety as we struggle more or less consciously with the revealing of this powerful and difficult to accept phenomenon.

In the following chapter I will be naming and discussing the ways in which therapists live with and manage envy.

## Chapter 7--Living with Envy or Being-with envy

In the previous chapter the therapists in my research spoke of the impact of envy upon them, and the resulting powerful experiences evoked for them. In this chapter the therapists describe the ways in which they live with or alongside envy when it arises and becomes present to them in their conscious awareness. The excerpts show how they are “being-with” their experiences of envy through managing it, soothing it, controlling it, transforming it, deleting it and/or protecting themselves by distancing from envy. Some of the therapists were able to find a place of acceptance, recognition and responsibility which led to a sense of hope for themselves in relation to envy and their life.

### By “Equalising”

One therapist tells the following story about soothing her experience of envy through what she calls “equalising”:

*I have been aware of feeling envious towards a therapist who has been in a discussion group with other therapists that I have never been invited to be in. My supervisor is also in that group. I don't envy my supervisor because she is an extremely equalising person—she is a real role model for me. If for example I say to her, “I don't get many referrals from other psychotherapists”, she will say, “I don't either”. She will always equalise like that. She has never made me feel as if she is superior to me. So...if I'm feeling envied, I'll try and talk about it and I'll try to equalise it if I can...I'll try and let them know me, that I am normal, if I know about it.*

This therapist is aware of her envy towards one particular therapist who is in a group of therapists that she has never been invited to be a part of. She says that her own supervisor, who she experiences as a role model, is in that group and that she does not feel envious of her. If ever she herself feels envied, she will try to equalise, as her supervisor does with her. She also says that her supervisor has never made her feel that she's superior, which could imply that the one she is envying does feel superior. She says her way of equalising would be to let the one envying “know her as normal”.

This therapist seems to be appreciative and admiring of the ways in which her own supervisor equalises and doesn't act superior in relation to her. She says she doesn't envy her supervisor *because she is extremely equalising*. Does equalising delete the possibility of envy showing itself, or does envy sit underground? It seems that whether acknowledged or not, envy does exist in some form, and is therefore impacting on the relationship. It may seemingly sit underground, and seemingly be under control, yet its existence and impact are present.

It seems that the therapist finds herself able to feel equal with her supervisor through seeing only a portion or slice of who her supervisor is. It is possible that her supervisor is only showing a slice of herself, her equalising part, or that the therapist is only seeing this part of her.

What about the relation between herself and her supervisor in terms of power imbalance? This seems to be minimised through the supervisor saying *I don't get referrals from other psychotherapists either*. If the supervisor did not equalise, this could be used as a powerful opportunity for the exploration of envy in the supervisory relationship.

When she says that if she knew she was being envied, she'd *try to let the person envying know her as normal*, she may be implying that the therapist she envies is not letting herself be known as normal, but as superior. The internet dictionary defines "normal" as "average", "usual" or "typical". If she lets herself be known as average or typical, then it is possible that the imagining of who the other might be, and the desire to be like that, does not arise...so envy would not have the space to emerge in this instance. She seems to be making a subtle implication that envy is not normal. Does normal for her then mean there is no desire?

I wonder if there is also an element of this therapist feeling excluded, as indicated by her saying that she is aware of feeling envious towards a therapist who has been in a discussion group with other therapists *that I have never been invited to be in*. There is a subtle wish implied here, that she might like to have been invited.

The therapist is making a comparison between the therapist she envies and sees as superior, and her own supervisor. “Equalise” implies “to make equal”. It is interesting that the word “compare”, when broken into its original parts, is composed of “com” which means “with” and “pare” which means “equal”. The etymological dictionary (1996) indicates “peer” as an extension of the word “pare”. The leap I will make here is that comparing is a way of being with equals. Do we compare in order to find equality between or amongst peers? Do we compare out of a need or a desire or a longing to find mirrors that can reflect who we are back to ourselves? Can we then still find ways to link in to those who show difference, i.e. can we accept and even enjoy difference reflected?

I am remembering being in a group process experience facilitated by Teresa von Sommaruga Howard (2004). In the midst of a moment of intense strife, Teresa raised the wondering about how we, in our community of psychotherapists, are with difference. It seems to me that in equalising there is a searching for the sameness beneath or amidst difference, and that there is safety in finding sameness.

Jessica Benjamin (1998) said the following:

Tolerating ambivalence, being able to feel both love and hate towards the same object, does not mean that love and hate are synthesised so that love triumphs over hate. Rather, it means that hate can be borne. Difference, hate, failure of love can be surmounted not because the self is unified, but because it can tolerate being divided. Inclusion of split off feelings or blocked aspirations is motivated not by a compulsion to restore unity but out of a wish to be less resentful and afraid of anger, less terrified of loss, less punishing toward what one desires. (p. 105)

Being able to tolerate divisions and differences within the self might enable the tolerating of difference in others. While it is valuable to separately think about the notion of inclusion of split off feelings or blocked aspirations, and the desire to be less resentful, fearful and punishing, I believe there is an innate compulsion in human beings to restore unity *as well as* to lessen what divides us from others. The restoring of unity is for the self, and for the self with the other. If we can include the multiple

selves that we are, i.e. the split off parts or differing feelings of ourselves, then it is more possible that we can include the split off parts or differences of the other.

It seems that the desire to be equal and finding equality is a more comfortable place, a more safe place, at least temporarily, than experiencing the desire to have or be what the other appears to have or appears to be. The finding of equality can be a linkage, while the experiencing of a punishing desire can be divisive.

### **Equalise or balance through neutralising**

In the following excerpt the therapist is speaking about how and why she neutralises envy:

*As the eldest of several siblings, the thing I remember about growing up is the overwhelming drudgery of it, and the never-ending responsibility. It was a 'horror show'! I don't envy people with small children. I made the decision long ago not to have children. I enjoy my siblings' children. It was never part of my life plan to have children, so it wasn't like I had to give anything up. I think of envy as being very potent, and largely unsaid...it's in the messages on the side, or in the destructive relationships, like the envy of my mother's sister towards my mother, or the things that don't happen...and so there's a pulling away from it, from the whole experience of envy. I have worked very hard to neutralise it, because I've seen what it can do.*

This therapist describes how awful it was for her being the eldest of her many siblings. Not only does she not envy people with small children, but she also made the decision long ago not to have children of her own. She says that she does enjoy her siblings' children, and that since it was never part of her life plan to have children, she says she didn't have anything to give up. She then speaks of envy as being very powerful, and mostly not spoken. Having experienced envy in the messages on the side and in destructive relationships like her mother's sister envying her mother, and in the things that don't happen, she describes herself as pulling away from envy, and working very hard to neutralise it.

“Neutralising” is defined in the internet dictionary as “counterbalancing”, “counteracting”, “defusing”, “deactivating”, or “making safe”. Being neutral implies

not taking sides or occupying a neutral position. It seems that this therapist has needed to counteract the impact of her experience of childhood, being the eldest of many children and experiencing this as a *horror show*. She also had the painful experience of her mother's sister envying her mother. There is something ominous about the last few words in her description, *because I've seen what it can do*, which seems to echo the horror show image.

There is also an issue of choice implied here. This therapist says that she made the decision not to have her own children, and therefore she states that she *didn't have anything to give up*. Is this comment the therapist's own *message on the side*? Possibly she did give up a wish to have children because of the horror and destruction she experienced and observed growing up.

It is also possible that she weighed up and considered her choices in life, whether to have children or have a career, and then she consciously chose the career. It seems that conscious choosing can alleviate or neutralise envy. What is conscious choosing and is this a means of balancing or avoiding experiencing envy? Is conscious choosing actually a euphemism for taking control? It does seem that the choices she made enabled her to have control of her life in such a way that envy could apparently not have a squeak of space to exist.

What does choice mean? Generally the notion of choice implies that we have an option. Heidegger (Guignon, 1993) would say that we are answerable for the choices we make, and that the authentic person "chooses to choose" (p.233). Inwood (1997) interprets Heidegger as saying that in making choices, as with being truthful, "the best one can do is to be *primordial*, to go back as far as one can towards the source, disregarding the current wisdom of the *they*. This involves being resolute, by surveying life as a whole and disclosing a range of possibilities for oneself. There are no objectively correct answers to life's basic problems nor any decision procedure for discerning them" (p. 83).

Whilst Heidegger (Inwood, 1997) suggests that we are answerable for the choices we make, this seems to rely on our ability to survey our life as a whole, contacting

source and disregarding the current wisdom of the “they”. At times there may be a clear sense of what this entails, and at other times, while we think we are disregarding the “they” in its entirety, there may be another “they” influencing our ability to choose. A possible example of this from the above excerpt is the distant “they” of the past, in the form of this therapist’s difficult experiences, impinging on her being able to be “primordial” and to choose about having children.

Taylor (1985) speaks of choices being made on the basis of what is desirable. He speaks of our capacity as humans to evaluate our desires, to regard some as desirable and some as not, and he suggests that there are degrees of desirability (p. 16). He further says that “in our reflecting on choices, the question at issue concerns which is the truer, more authentic, more illusion-free interpretation, and which on the other hand involves a distortion of the meanings things have for us” (p. 27).

This therapist is saying that she didn’t have anything to give up because she made her decision. Is this therapist consciously choosing and therefore in acceptance of her life situation, and does or did her decision enable a steering clear or avoiding of envy? Has she been able to evaluate her situation and come to an illusion-free interpretation?

### **Balancing or neutralising envy through “accommodating”**

Another therapist spoke of a colleague who she knows has envied her for years, and the sadness that though she experiences a link between them, she still would not call her a friend. What she found was a way to “accommodate” envy:

*I came to some accommodation in working with the dynamic between us...that sometimes this is the way it is...we can't figure it all out, and we can't shift the internal furniture always, sufficiently, but we can make some grounds and make an accommodation, which we've both done, and I think that's fine.*

While this therapist says she has made some accommodation in relation to a colleague who envies her, she says that it is not possible to move things around

enough inside to make sense of it all. They have however both made an accommodation and she thinks this is fine.

The word “accommodate” etymologically means, “to make conveniently roomy”. This therapist seems to be making space inside of herself, room enough to make some grounds, to make space for the relationship to continue to exist with the knowing of the presence of envy. “Accommodation” also is defined as “somewhere to live, to stay, a lodging, a space, and an adjustment”. This seems to be an internal adjustment for both to enable a place for this therapist and her colleague to find a place to settle.

Williams (2004) spoke of the importance of the capacity to create space if creativity is to arise. He talked about the mutual primary adjustment of accommodation that occurs in the womb between the baby and mother finding their spaces and places of comfort. He wondered if this ability to accommodate each other could underlie a future capacity of relatedness and of creativity. Maybe the *shifting of the internal furniture* was enough to accommodate the therapist and colleague, though it may not be where they’d hoped to reach.

### **Equalising or balancing through transforming**

Another therapist describes her way of “equalising” when she feels her life is hard in comparison to other therapists:

*When I feel like other therapists have it easier than me, I think what I do is...I transform it...and then I think about the hardships they’ve had and the struggles they’ve had that have been also very real...so what I see is quite possibly not actually the case.*

This therapist describes her experience of feeling other therapists have it easier, and then of transforming this envy by thinking of their hardships. There is an aspect of comparing and imagining of the other as well as an equalising that occurs here.

Allowing herself to think about the hardships others have had seems to enable this therapist to expand her perception of her experience. Is she transforming envy or is she transforming the experience, and this then transforms the envy, equalising herself with another therapist she might envy. She seems to place herself lower than and then equal to, and the experience of envy as uncomfortable seems to diminish in this process of transforming. It seems that what she sees originally, as herself less than and the other more than, *is quite possibly not the case*.

She also seems to find her compassion and empathy for the other and for herself in the way that she makes sense and thinks through this experience, gaining a new understanding by broadening or widening her perception.

This widening of perception was an experience of many of the therapists as shown in the following examples.

### **Widening of perception—an accommodation**

In desiring to ease envy, the following therapist used his imagination to widen his perception, reminding him of the flaws of the therapist he envies most:

*I am aware of noticing my strong envy of one of my peers. There have been times in the past when I have consciously reminded myself of her flaws, trying to remind myself a bit more of the fullness of who she is. I still sort of remind myself of her flaws, to make her less an object of envy.*

This therapist is naming the way in which he works with the envy he experiences towards a colleague. He speaks of the past and the present in which he reminds himself of his peer's flaws in order to make that peer *less of an object of envy*, and he explains this as seeing the other in *more of the fullness of who she is*.

It seems that in his envying experience, this therapist sees the one he envies through a narrow field of vision. Then he seems to consciously expand this vision to include the whole of the person he envies. As this therapist reminds himself of his peer's

flaws, he is then seeing more from a wide angle perspective. There is a sense of more space given to the one who is envied, as well as more space to the one who envies. This sense of creating space is connected to the sense of accommodation achieved in a previous excerpt. This could also mean that there would be less opportunity for “faulty perception” of the other (Symington, 2001).

This concept of broadening our perception is named by Dilthey (Grenz, 1996) when he says that “the understanding of philosophers is limited by their own horizon, by the historical context in which they stand”. According to Smythe (1996), Gadamer said, “...To have a horizon is not to be limited by what is nearest but to be able to see beyond it” (p. 269). The therapist above was able to explore and expand his horizon to reach a new understanding, and therefore a new horizon, in relation to his peer.

This notion of horizons brings to mind the concepts of “experience near” and “experience far” as discussed in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. According to Rowe & MacIsaac (1995), Kohut explained “experience-near” as “an introspective mode of data gathering” or “empathic immersion” into the other’s world, whilst “experience-distant” he described as “an extrospective mode of observation” (p. 16). It seems to me that both of these experiences are essential, the being-with the other’s lived experience and the holding of the awareness of the context in which they are.

## **Acceptance**

Acceptance is another way in which therapists spoke of soothing envy in themselves. One therapist spoke of the struggles he has had with making his place in the psychotherapeutic community, and his childhood experience of not being able to speak about envy:

*When I first moved here, I had to kind of bury or not let be seen all of my envy and my insecurity and my fear of not being accepted, and not fitting in. It was kind of a re-enactment of part of my adolescence...and part of me wanting to force my acceptance. There’s something about being accepted that soothes the envy, that makes the envy go away...it’s almost like somebody else outside of me needs to say “it’s OK for you to be envious”, which is what I didn’t get as a child. I was not allowed to feel that envy. I think that is what I keep on*

*trying to stimulate in others...I want others to say, "It's OK for you to feel envious...it's alright...it's a normal thing".....Mmm...As I say that, I feel like I've just done a bit of my own mothering...(Laughing)... It's like giving myself permission...to have it... This has been like a free therapy session!*

This therapist first names his experience of burying his envy and fear of not being accepted, and not fitting in as a re-enactment of part of his adolescence. He then names his idea that acceptance can soothe envy. He then describes his longing for someone else to accept his feeling envious. As he said aloud he wants others to say it's OK to feel envious, and that it's normal, he had a sense of hearing himself, giving himself permission to have envy, and he called it "mothering" himself.

Initially this therapist was thinking that he wants permission from the outside given to him, which is what he said he had been seeking seemingly as a reaction to not getting this permission in childhood. Was this a remembering of what he already knew about internally, about mothering himself? It seems that through the process of speaking this experience aloud in the present moment, he was able to hear himself and then bring the experience back inside himself, where he could find his own internal carer, the part of him which is accepting and able to be nurturing of self.

Barrows (2002) gives two examples which illustrate two different outcomes when someone is able to speak of their envy, and when someone isn't. She tells a story of a small child who was allowed to name and express his envy to his father who accepted his envy and frustration. The child used his father to help him develop a benign or compassionate conscience, a conscience which sees how we feel but doesn't retaliate and helps the child bear pain and in a sense have compassion and tolerance for his own envy. The other child who was more isolated and unable to tell anyone of her envy developed a punitive conscience which resulted in her being unable to forgive herself for her envious feelings (pp. 12-15).

This therapist seems to have been experiencing his punitive conscience as we spoke, and as we talked further he managed to link in with and awaken his compassionate conscience. He may have used me to help awaken his compassionate conscience, as the child used his father to develop his. In talking the experience through in present

time, he seemed to be able to remember and to access the part of himself which has learned about compassion. It seems that as his self-compassion awoke, his ability to be permission giving towards himself and then accepting of his envious feelings also emerged.

As this therapist speaks of having to *bury or not let be seen all of my envy* it seems he is imagining that it is safer to keep silent in order to fit in. Zeddies (2000) refers to Billig who speaks of the unconscious as “embodying those expressions that endanger one’s connection to the group, as well as the repressed desire and truncated spontaneity associated with the stifling of such expressions. He suggests that the individual represses or splits off aspects of his or her experience that do not elicit or maintain positive responsiveness from others, and that one’s standing in the community could be threatened if the mores of that group aren’t followed” (p. 475). Whilst the therapist links his experience of burying his envy to his childhood, there may be an unspoken “they” in the psychotherapeutic community which deems naming of envy as inappropriate.

Beck (2001) examines the “they” from another aspect, renaming the “they” as “Everybody”. She says that the social nature of being human means that we long to fit into a larger group. She suggests that, as it is difficult to hold the opinions of more than five or six others, the opinions of these “others” become emblazoned on our minds. These “others” thus become our “Everybody”, or “the generalised other”. According to Beck, most of us have a critical Everybody installed in us, composed of the people who raised us as well as a few individuals who at various stages in our lives were very important to us. She suggests exchanging our generalised critical other for a whole new Everybody that supports our essential self.

Heidegger, according to Howard (2000), believes that authenticity and individuality are rarely reached because we become lost in the “they-ness”. He continues with saying that to actually be oneself requires courage, because there is no simple definition of self and identity. Heidegger (Inwood, 1997) also says that “the self of everyday Dasein is the *they-self*, which we distinguish from the authentic self” and Inwood adds that “in so far as I conform to the “they” I am not my own individual

self, but the *they-self*". Dasein is authentic in so far as it makes up its own mind, is its own person, or is true to its own self (p. 27).

It is difficult to determine whether this therapist did not speak about envy because of the "they" saying don't speak about it, or because in saying it there is an inherent sense of self-diminishment as discussed in the last chapter or due to a re-enactment of his adolescence as well as his childhood messages.

Lastly, when the therapist says, *I feel like I've just done a bit of my own mothering*, it seemed to be a spontaneous moment for the therapist to connect with his compassion for himself. Stern (2004) refers to Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) who described the arrival of the present moment as "an upsurge of a fresh present—the all-of-a-suddenness of a memory or a new thought or perception" (p. 25). That arrival of the present moment seemed particularly enlivening for this therapist. There is something special about the recognition of compassion for oneself—it is like a recognition of something deep within the self that is already there, and only in that moment is uncovered, and discovered.

Acceptance and being good enough is arrived at in the following description:

*I'm not good enough...it feels like a little bomb going off in me... lack of worth...maybe through being with it more...in fact, now that I've just been talking about it, it actually has a little less impact now...I can talk about it, I can see that it's not very realistic...it's interesting that we've arrived at the point where you know, some awareness of actually being whole, which in a human level, doesn't mean perfect...it's arriving at being good enough*

In this excerpt the therapist talks his way into his experience of not being good enough, and as he experiences the bomb going off, it seems to shake him into the deep-seatedness of what he is experiencing, and somehow shifts his relation to it, and to himself.

I was recently reading a book by Barbara Kingsolver (2002) called Small Wonder. In the Foreword, she says the following:

I learned a surprising thing in writing this book. It is possible to move away from a vast, unbearable pain by delving into it deeper and deeper—by “diving into the wreck”, to borrow the perfect words from Adrienne Rich. You can look at all the parts of a terrible thing until you see that they’re assemblies of smaller parts, all of which you can name, and some of which you can heal or alter, and finally the terror that seemed unbearable becomes manageable. I suppose what I am describing is the process of grief . (p. xi)

As I read this I related it to the process of envy, in the delving into and the naming of the assemblies of smaller parts, deeper and deeper, until the unbearable becomes not so terrible.

Another therapist spoke of acceptance and her emerging confidence:

*While I can feel envious of a peer who can speak Maori fluently, I reach a point now where I can say to myself, yes, I do want to speak Maori. I can see the way I can limit myself, but I also feel like I do have the choice now. I can imagine, and see myself feeling quite disempowered, and I think in the past I did feel disempowered. I am teaching tomorrow at a new place, and while there is a sense of not having prepared as much as I'd hoped, I am also enjoying the process, and accepting this reality, and still I know I'm going to do a very good job. I have that confidence now which is relatively new to me. While I can get envious of a peer about this or that, I actually now know that I can do some things quite well.*

Here there is a sense of this therapist holding both the struggle which she knows about herself around envying and not feeling confident, alongside a newly emerging confidence. She is aware of self-limiting and feeling disempowered in the past, and has a sense of choice now. She describes herself as going into a new teaching situation where, though she hasn't prepared as much as she'd hoped, she is still enjoying the process. While she is aware of her envy of peers, she seems to counter or balance this with accepting and knowing she can do well.

As this therapist spoke of her growing confidence in herself, I had a felt sense of her pleasure with her own self-recognition and appreciation as she said, *While I can get envious of a peer about this or that, I actually now know that I can do some things quite well.* It seems significant that she speaks of envy and ability in the same

sentence, in that the envy does not have to wipe out her ability. That she can allow herself to know she has envy, as well as allow herself to know she can do some things quite well. It is as if the envy has lost its power, and self-love has grown.

There seems to be a sense of self-responsibility emerging here along with her emerging confidence. She is acknowledging her self-limiting and resultant disempowering of herself in the past, and her recognition of her having choice now.

In the following excerpt the therapist describes his experience of moving from helplessness to hope and self-responsibility:

*Early on in my own therapy, there was a moment that I saw myself and I was as far away as the very distant horizon, and I knew that I hated myself, but it wasn't a bad thing, because knowing that amount of separation...(tearful)...was the beginning of a journey... maybe it was also the beginning of feeling hope, because my hopes and wishes as a child were dashed over and over, so it makes hope a very dangerous thing to have I suppose...along the way in my life I said to myself that at some point I hope I'm desperate enough to begin to attend to myself... and so I deliberately let things fall apart...so I guess that envy comes about as a way of managing hopelessness... and envy can be transformed into hope and wish and reasonable desire... I do end up with self-responsibility in a way that feels a little unbearable...a little too real...though I can feel and bear this more now because I am now more supported in my life, more able to give support and receive support...it means that it is more up to me...*

In her own therapy, this therapist saw herself at a great distance on the horizon, and felt a mix of sadness and hope, feeling distanced from herself, and then hopeful about reaching herself by going there. While she has felt hope as something dangerous, she managed to hope to get to the point where she had to take care of herself. She felt hopeless, envy and then hope. She also recognises that while self-responsibility has been almost unbearable, it is becoming more bearable as she allows herself to be supported in her life.

What is hope? Hope for what? Hope that she will find a way to not hate herself? To not be distant from herself, as well as not distant from others? Is she distant from

herself because long ago she banished the wounded part of herself far away to the horizon because it was too hard or too impossible or too painful or too lonely to be connected with that banished part? There seems to be a hope for connection, with self, with life, and with other.

She said she needed to fall apart, or reach a state of desperation, before she could attend to, or care for, herself. Heidegger spoke about care and related it to anxiety, which I link to this therapist's sense of desperation. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (Krell, 1993) defines "care" as the Being of Dasein, saying:

Most poignantly experienced in the phenomenon of anxiety—which is not fear of anything at hand but awareness of my being in the world as such— "care" describes the sundry ways I get involved in the issue of my birth, life, and death, whether by my projects, inclinations, insights, or illusions. "Care" is the all-inclusive name for my concern for other people, preoccupations with things, and awareness of my proper Being. (p. 223)

It seems that this therapist found her care through her anxiety, and that her sense of desperation manifest as anxiety gave her an awareness of herself in the world, and the need for her to care for herself. Heidegger (Krell, 1993) continued with saying:

Where else does "care" tend but in the direction of bringing man back to his essence? What else does that in turn betoken but that man (homo) become human (humanus)...this is humanism: meditating and caring, that man be human and not inhumane, "inhuman", that is, outside his essence. (p. 224)

Heidegger seems to be inviting our humanness and our care, towards ourselves, and towards others, and it is in "caring", in being human, that we are brought back to our own essence. For this therapist it seems that her finding her way to attend to herself enabled her sense of *hope and reasonable desire* to emerge. She also might be implying here that envy is not reasonable desire, and that she must transform it into reasonable desire in order for it to be more bearable.

The thought of *self-responsibility used to be unbearable*, and now a bit more bearable because she is now in a more supported and supportive place in her life. She sits with the recognition then that what she does or doesn't do is more in her hands. Here she sees herself more clearly and also her adult self becomes more alive and capable. As she says in the end, *it means it is more up to me*.

Benjamin (2004) speaks of responsibility and “recovering our subjectivity”. While she is referring to these subjects in relation to others, I am using her idea in reference to the relation to self and others. She says that an important relational idea for resolving impasses is that the recovery of subjectivity requires the recognition of our own participation in creating through surrendering our resistance to responsibility. She suggests we accept our own contribution thus surrendering to the principle of reciprocal influence in interaction, which makes possible both responsible action and freely given recognition. This action is what allows the outside, different other to come into view (Winnicott, 1971). It opens the space of thirdness, enabling us to negotiate differences and to connect.

It seems that the therapist in the above excerpt has managed to surrender her resistance to self-responsibility. This might mean that she will become more able to be responsibly active, as well as more able to freely give recognition. Allowing the different other to come into view might then enable hope, lessen envy and enable the hoped-for connection.

Another therapist spoke of being more settled and as a result less envious of other therapists who are less “hung up” than her:

*I know there are other therapists not as anxious as me, kind of, less hung up...but it's not something that I would envy now, as I've become more settled in myself I suppose.*

Here this therapist says that she is aware that there are other therapists who are less anxious and hung up, yet it isn't something she would now envy. It seems that this therapist may have previously desired to be less anxious, and she was envious of

others who were. She says the envy around this issue has eased as she herself has become more settled in herself, so envy of this in others has lessened.

*Hung up* is defined in the internet dictionary as “anxious”, “over-anxious”, or “fearful”. A cartoon-like scene comes to mind, of a big character lifting up a little character and hanging him up on a coat hook against the wall, and the little character helplessly flailing his arms about, unable to get down. Being hung up implies a helplessness, a fear, an anxiousness.

What does, to *become more settled in myself* mean? “Settled” is defined in the internet dictionary as “established” or “matured” or “complete”. It is possible that she has become less anxious, or that in her becoming more settled she is now more accepting of the anxiety that she experiences herself feeling.

Is there a sense of completeness or maturity, or is there complacency? When she says she is more settled in herself, this therapist ends her statement with, *I suppose*. This indicates a possible uncertainty, which could be an uncertainty about becoming *more settled* as the reason for her not envying others who are less anxious, or it could be some uncertainty about her becoming more settled, to the degree that she might wish for herself.

### **Acceptance and resignation**

Another therapist spoke about working full-on most of her life and finding that when she heard of a colleague with a terminal illness there was a part of her that felt envious of this colleague for no longer having to make any decisions about life.

She said the following:

*I was feeling that I was actually living without ambition, because I've achieved my ambitions...I have a really good life, but I'm going to have to work forever, and there was a bit of a sense of living forever, and working forever, and some of that's hard. And I was thinking that I don't know how to do it any other way than the way I've done it, which is full on. It wasn't a particularly anxious thing, to envy somebody else...but I suppose what I was envying them was that they actually don't have to make any more decisions, other than how*

*they're going to die... And I thought to myself, "ah, that would be fine". It's not out of a sense of any sort of despair or even any sadness...it's just a sense of OK, we make our own happiness or pathway, and some of it can feel a bit like going around in circles.*

This therapist says that she was experiencing living without ambition, having achieved her ambitions already. While she says she has a very good life, she also says *but I'm going to have to work forever, and that's hard*. She says she hasn't known any other way to live and work in her life but *full on*.

This experience seems like a mix of acceptance and resignation. On one hand she says she had a good life, though on the other hand having to work forever, *some of that is hard*. She says *it wasn't particularly anxious envying someone dying*. Her use of the word particularly seems to imply that there may have been some anxiety. In saying *we make our own happiness or pathway, and some of it can feel a bit like going around in circles*, there seems to be an acceptance of life as making our own happiness and pathway, and then a kind of resignation about that for her it can sometimes feel like going in circles. There is almost an unsaid addendum, "well, what's the point anyway, or is there really a point?" So maybe death doesn't matter that much either.

She has worked *full on* all her life, not knowing another way, and seems to be imagining that it would be a luxury to have no pressure. Is it not having to make any decisions that she envies, or is it not to have any pressure that she envies? Or is it both, or something else? Is envy of someone dying connected with the death instinct that Freud and then Klein spoke about?

Freud (1955) proposed that life contains an instinct to die. He said that Eros, the sustaining and uniting principle of life, is thereby postulated to have a companion force, Thanatos, which seeks to terminate and disintegrate life. Ogden (1984) explains the Kleinian conception of the life and death instincts in the following way: "...the psychological correlates of the life instinct include the loving, sexual, nurturing, attachment-seeking, and generative motivations, while those of the death

instinct include destructive, disintegrative, envious, and hostile motivations” (p. 510). Though this therapist says *there isn't any despair or sadness*, she does speak of life as possibly meaningless in its *circling round and round*.

Klein (1957/1975) further speaks about ambition as one of the experiences that can lead to envying. By *feeling that I was actually living without ambition because I've achieved my ambitions*, this therapist seems to preclude the possibility of envying, at least in relation to ambition.

Another therapist spoke of acceptance and mind control in relation to envy:

*As I've gotten older I've become more accepting of myself and others. Sometimes I haven't been able to do much about feeling envious, other than a bit of mind control really, and just saying, "no, I'm not even going to think about that because it's just going to make me feel worse about myself".*

This therapist speaks of accepting herself and others more, and in this she also seems to be more accepting of her envying. She then talks about using mind control. Is the use of mind control another way of being able to accept the self, or another way of avoiding envy? What is mind control? Controlling the mind to move information out of conscious thought...where does the information go? Where does the envy go? The mind control seems to be another way of not thinking about envy, of moving it over to the side, moving it out of sight...out of sight, out of mind, because if she thinks about envying she seems certain *it's just going to make me feel worse about myself*.

There seems to be both an acceptance of envy as well as an avoidance described by this therapist. Avoidance or distancing from envy was described by most of the therapists in my research as shown in the following section.

### **Distancing from or avoiding of envy**

All of the therapists throughout the interviewing had the experience of in one way or another, avoiding or keeping their distance from envy. One therapist expressed this in the following excerpt:

*There's something very sickening about envy. It's a very difficult thing for me to really get in touch with...I notice I keep avoiding answering how does it feel.*

This therapist seems to be imagining that if she allowed herself to feel envy, she would feel sick and that is not something that she wants to feel. She names her own avoidance of getting in touch with the feeling. Is that about the fear of the possible destructive nature of envy?

### **Deleting experience in order to avoid pain of envy**

The therapist in the following excerpt describes her experience of deleting envy in order to stay away from it:

*My response to my feeling envious tends to be...well, I think in my mind I'll just see the things about them that are pathetic...to defend myself against that...to stay away from the envy, which makes it more bearable...it makes it more bearable by sort of deleting it...more like, don't go there...*

This therapist is clearly using her mind to bring in a diminishing thought about the envied other as a way of deleting the envious feeling. She describes this as making the envy more bearable, though in actual fact it seems that this counterbalancing does delete the feeling. In her mind, she stops herself from *going there*, successfully keeping it at a distance.

Another way in which one therapist keeps her envy at a distance is expressed in the following excerpt:

*Thinking about my experience of envy...it did bring up something I didn't want it to bring up...and I kept deleting it...being at the receiving end of envy, which was a tremendously difficult and painful time...and I just deleted it...and I kind of regretted about agreeing to be interviewed. When I looked at your topic and volunteered, that earlier experience wasn't in my mind at all...I was completely amnesiac in a way...so my volunteering was quite an unconscious motivation...I'm happy to talk about that experience...to get it over and done with really.*

Here the therapist is reflecting on her regret about agreeing to be interviewed, after recalling and attempting to delete a very painful experience of envy she had years ago.

The comment “get it over and done with” was a statement made in various contexts by more than one therapist. There is a sense of not wanting to be with the experience of envy, whether that be as the one who envies, or as the one who is envied.

In the above case the therapist speaks of having kept deleting the difficult experience of being envied years ago. The idea of “kept deleting it” is interesting in that there is a sense that the past experience could not be disappeared by one deletion. There is the sense that it kept arising and so she kept deleting it.

In the Zollikon Seminars (2001) Heidegger speaks about “forgetting something painful” as “not wanting to think about it”. Heidegger says, “Here, *it* (the something painful) does not slip away from me, but *I* let it slip away from me. This letting something slip away from me happens in such a way that I occupy myself more and more with something else so that what is uncomfortable may slip away” (p. 169). Heidegger speaks of this person who forgets something painful as having been, and as still being afflicted by the painful event in her youth, but she doesn’t deal with it, though she knows about it. He says that this is an avoidance of herself as the self who is continuously afflicted by the painful event. His assessment is that she is entirely absorbed in this avoidance in a non-reflective way.

Heidegger seems to be saying that this avoidance of the self afflicted by the painful event creates a separation in the self, between the part or self that is afflicted and the part or self that is “forgetting” the part that is afflicted. There seems to be a conflict going on for this therapist, between one part of her wanting to delete the experience, and possibly another part of her that is calling forth the experience through her having volunteered due to what she calls an *unconscious motivation*.

Reflecting on Heidegger’s notion of the self who is continuously afflicted, avoiding the self in a non-reflective way, I imagine that keeping conscious to one’s envy is less of a continuous affliction than is envy which is held unconsciously.

The sense of “getting it over and done” with is reflected in the following excerpt, where the therapist is recognising and defending against his fear of his overwhelming grief in relation to envy:

*I feel like I've just come to the tip of the iceberg around envy. I still have a long way to go before I can get in touch with all the grief around it...my sense is that it's the grief that stops me...the fear of the overwhelming grief is what has me defend against it...because I think there is lots of grief.*

This therapist is identifying the enormity of the grief just beneath the surface that is sitting within him. He spoke this at the end of the interview, having spoken a great deal about envy and having felt some of his grief. Then suddenly it loomed large.

Grief (Oxford dictionary, 1978) is “deep sorrow”. “To grieve” (Oxford etymological dictionary, 1996) is “to provoke to anger”. The therapist above is recognising his overwhelming grief, his fear of it, and his need to keep envy, grief and possibly anger at bay. It is as if he can only manage the envy by keeping to the tip of the iceberg, because being with the grief seems too much. What is it that he imagines when he thinks that some feeling is too much, or too overwhelming? There seems to be a fear of dis-integrating, of the mind or the self losing its cohesion.

Could this therapist's grief be linked to the sense of longing of what he didn't have, and envying of the other for the perceived having had what he didn't? Grief in relation to envy is about perceived unattainable unsatisfiable longing, or yearning. “Yearning” evokes a sense of deep grief. Derivatives of Old English and Old Norse define “yearn” (Oxford etymological dictionary, 1996) as “eager” and “greedy” respectively. Is envy a signpost to what lies underneath, an underneath unbearable pain of grief, a core yearning? Is envy the piece of sand in the oyster, an irritant to be attended to, leading to a new reclaiming or recreation? Can it lead to the emergence of a pearl? Pearls of wisdom do not just appear, they are wrought from life's experiences.

As I think or feel into what I have just suggested, there is an implied sense of struggle that I seem to be naming. Does the experience of envy need to be a struggle? Or can it be more of an experience that is not a struggle, or an experience that invites an understanding, a standing in our truth of what fits for us inside? Can envy be an experience that draws us into a deeper experience of ourselves, a conduit that tunnels us into our core? I will explore this further in my discussion chapter.

The following and final excerpt in this chapter is from a conversation I was having with a colleague recently (Personal communication, April, 2005). I had told her briefly that I was in the middle of working on my thesis about envy amongst psychotherapists. Her response to me was the following:

*Well, when I feel envious, I think about it for awhile...and then, I just...let it go!*

This therapist says that she lets herself think about envy when she's feeling envious, and then she just lets it go. What does this mean? It seems very open to interpretation. It is either a very wise statement or not well thought through at all. There seems to be a mix of deletion, distancing, and possibly, a kind of freedom, or apparent choice. While on one hand there seems to be an expression of freedom in this statement, on the other hand I wonder if she may be missing a gem in thinking about and possibly living with her envy for a bit longer.

## **Summary**

In this chapter I have explored the multitude of ways that the therapists in my research have experienced living with envy. Envy has been seen in this and the previous chapter to evoke powerful feelings about the self and other. It is therefore not surprising that therapists go to great lengths to avoid feeling envious—forgetting it, deliberate mind control, or minimising it by focusing on the flaws of the other. But what are the costs of these strategies? When we equalise, do we lose a chance to process envy between us or a chance to increase our capacity for tolerating difference? When we forget it or turn our attention from it, are we missing what could have been a valuable signpost to a core yearning or a pearl of wisdom?

What are the alternatives to avoiding envy? Some therapists spoke of being able to live with envy with some degree of comfort—permission to feel it, finding confidence, hope, self-care, compassion, and a sense of self-responsibility were spoken of as contributing to the ease or acceptance of envy.

The following chapter is my discussion chapter in which I will further explore, discuss and deepen the material already named throughout my thesis.

## **Chapter 8--Discussion**

In the previous four chapters I have shown examples of my participants' lived experiences of envy. I have also teased out the possibilities of meanings, and interpreted and analysed these. In most cases the therapists spoke of experiences of envying, and in some cases they told their experiences of being envied.

The following themes and sub-themes arose out of the therapists' lived experiences of envy. There is a desire to have or be what the other is perceived to be having or being. This is fuelled by a perceived lack or need in the self. Desire, perception, transposing of experience, and anxiety are possible contextual determinants of envy. Envy happens in a relational context. The thinking sense and feeling sense may be at odds. Envy from one context may be carried over and transferred, or "transposed" to a later present situation. It is possible to make things up or imagine things about others. Perception can be shaped by felt experience, as well as by thoughts. There are feared and potentially real consequences of expressing envy.

Envy shows itself as powerful feelings towards others. This includes envy as devaluing, as contempt, as anger, as nasty, as resentment, and as wishing to destroy or disappear the other. Envy evokes powerful feelings which impact on the self. This includes envy as painful which occurs through devaluing and/or judgment of the self, as well as through sadness and shame. Envy as threatening, as disturbing and as anxiety provoking were also experienced. Envy is lived with in numerous ways, such as by accommodating, by controlling it with the mind, by deleting it, by avoiding it, or by neutralising it. Therapists also found ways of transforming envy through widening their perception, through finding acceptance of the self, sometimes as good enough, and sometimes as confident. Some therapists were able to transform envy through surrendering their resistance to responsibility, and sought self-responsibility and hope for themselves as a way of transforming self, their envy and hoped for connection with self and others.

Having laid out the themes and the sub-themes of my participants' lived experiences of envy, I will now discuss and gather together some of the threads of possible meanings within these. Whilst there are no hard and fast conclusions, I am hopeful that some of the insights I speak about will invite the reader to consider and explore more deeply the experience of envy, as well as making some sense of the experience of envy amongst psychotherapists.

### **My findings and the previous literature interface**

In the literature review chapter I named many theories about envy, particularly those offered by Klein (1957/1975). I will now discuss the interface between the findings of my research and this previous literature, looking at those theories named which my findings support, and those which they refute either partially or wholly.

In chapter 2 the literature review, of my thesis I presented Klein's (1957/1975) definition of envy as "the angry feeling that another person possesses and enjoys something desirable—the envious impulse being to take it away or to spoil it" (p. 181). The findings of my research seem to confirm this definition as a partial description of envy. It seems to me that the lived experience of my participants adds detail and offers evidence to substantiate Ogden's (1984) suggestion that Klein brought the concept of envy as a relational experience to the fore. This concept was later, according to Ogden, followed on by Bion's formalising this relational notion. While "an angry feeling" is included in my findings as one of the feelings towards the other, there are other powerful feelings towards the other that showed up, including devaluing, contempt, nastiness, and the wish to destroy or disappear the envied other.

Furthermore, the therapists in my research spoke of having experienced powerful feelings towards themselves when they felt envious. While Klein (1957/1975) named many possible defences against envy, such as denial, splitting, idealisation, confusion, devaluation of others, and devaluation of self, the findings of my research show that these defences are in fact part of the lived experience of envy. These include envy as painful, devaluing of self, judging of the self, envy as shameful, as

threatening and as anxiety provoking. These lived experiences broaden the entire picture of the experience of envy and give more support to the relational concept.

Whilst she speaks of envy as an angry feeling and as an impulse to take away “it” or to spoil “it”, Klein seems to be naming “it”, the thing possessed, as the object of anger. She seems to be implying that the angry feeling belongs to the one envying, and that the envious impulse to take or to spoil is an action. My findings seem to suggest that not only is the context of envy a relational one, but also that there is an intersubjective and possible co-creation that occurs between the envying and the envied one.

Klein (1957/1975) continues defining envy by saying that the original definition above “implies the subject’s relation to one person only and goes back to the earliest exclusive relation with mother” (p. 181). For the most part all of the therapists in my research spoke of envy in relation to one other person only. However, they also implied a cultural envy as an immigrant. Regarding envy going back to the earliest exclusive relation with mother, the therapists’ lived experience was about envy going back to mother, father and siblings. It is therefore not possible for my research to confirm or deny this last assertion of Klein’s.

Klein (1957/1975) further says that “whilst envy seeks to rob in the way that greed does, envy also wants to put badness...into the mother, in order to spoil or destroy her.” My findings seem to confirm the first part of this aspect of Klein’s defining of envy, as the therapists in my research spoke of the wish to steal from the other what they desired and what the other possessed. The second part of this quote also seems to be confirmed in that some of the therapists spoke of wishing to destroy the envied other. Klein further said, “In the deepest sense, this means destroying her creativeness.” Whether my findings confirm this or not is uncertain.

Also in my literature review in Chapter 2, Hiles (2002) agrees with Likierman’s belief that Klein offers two theories of envy. I will respond to each separately. The first theory is that envy is “a gratuitous aggression towards anything that is good”.

While I am not certain that Klein exactly says this, I will say that in any case my findings do not support the idea of envy as gratuitous; as aggression, yes, but not as gratuitous, as in each experience of envy the therapists in my research expressed specific reasons for their envy which seemed to be grounded in their history. The second theory they suggest, which they say links with Kohut's idea about neglect, describes envy as the fragile infant ego responding to deprivation of some kind, which in many instances may be minimal deprivation. My research findings support this idea, shown by many of the therapists who spoke of a sense of perceived deprivation, or inaccessibility by the envied other.

I also wrote about Spillius (1993) in my literature review who speaks of the envious maintaining a sense of grievance as a defence against experiencing the pain of loss of not having the good object which they so desperately desire. This was borne out in my research as some of the therapists seemed to vigorously hold on to their stance of grievance, seemingly in order not to feel the pain of their loss of the desired other.

Also in the literature review, according to Schwartz-Salant (1982), Segal (1983) describes narcissism as a defence against envy, suggesting the great lengths that the narcissist will go to in order not to evoke envy, such as convincing the self that there is no need and no desire for the other. My research findings confirm envy as being an unwanted experience which was shown by the therapists finding numerous ways to keep distant from it.

Etchegoyen and Nemas (2003) described traits of the envious as "a sense of lacking in the self as a result of comparing to another, a sense of dissatisfaction with one's own achievements, degrading the self and negative thinking about the self". My research clearly supports this analysis. They suggest that when the one who envies is able to acknowledge his or her own capacities and capabilities, the virtues of the object of envy become more tolerable, and even enjoyable. This again was borne out in my research, as several of the therapists were able to recognise their own capabilities and to find great internal strength in this, enabling them to enjoy, at least in moments, the envied other.

Klein (1957/1975) said that nothing interferes more with enjoyment than envy. The findings showed that the experience of toxic envy soured and even poisoned a sense of enjoyment, with its disturbing and threatening undercurrents.

Segal's (Etchegoyen and Nemas, 2003) notion that the analysis of envy brings in a possibility of hope is clearly reflected in the stories told by the therapists in my research. A number of the therapists spoke of a sense of hopelessness transforming into a sense of hope, particularly seeing an aspect of envy as letting them know what they yearn for. This seemed to enable a connection with self and a more possible connection with other.

While Symington (2001) stated that idealisation is the first stage of envy, the findings in my research seem to point to identification as the first step. Possibly Symington is including this as part of idealisation. He defines idealisation as an act of "getting rid of my own good qualities, pushing them onto the other which obscures the bad qualities or deficits in the figure I am looking at". What arose out of the therapists' lived experience is that what seemed to affect their ability to see the fullness of the other was their perception, and this perception was influenced by several essential factors which I have discussed in the section on perception in chapter 4.

Symington (2001) also says that Klein's description of the process of envy as the person thrusting out the bad things into the object is the second stage of envy. He suggests that the inner worthlessness caused by the presence within of envy, greed, jealousy and omnipotence, is loathed and must be thrust out. The therapists in my research spoke at length about the unbearableness of being with the experience of envy as I asked them to describe it, and became aware of wanting or needing to push it away. Symington further described paranoia as the hatred for the inner entity now existing outside. Paranoia showed up in my research as the therapists spoke of the sense of feeling threatened both as envier and envied. The perceived threat they spoke of, whether real or perceived, was very disturbing and frightening for them.

## **Envy as lived experience**

In my literature review, I defined envy and jealousy psychoanalytically, according to the theories proposed over time. My research has been about following my participants' lived experiences, along with their understandings of their lived experience. Whilst Symington (2001) cautioned against examining envy separate from jealousy, my experience in doing this research was that though in some cases envy and jealousy overlapped, in many cases envy was spoken about and experienced by the participants as a distinct phenomenon. Though at times the therapists themselves were uncertain whether a particular experience they were naming was envy or jealousy, in most cases they clearly identified envy. And as Klein (1957/1975) proposed, envy consistently showed up as an experience between two.

Symington (1993) says that the moment we bring something, such as extreme jealousy, into our awareness, "we are already entering into some relationship with it, so its strength will be diminishing" (p. 61). This seemed to be the immediate experience of several of the therapists in my research. As they spoke about envy there was in many cases an "aha" moment where they suddenly made sense of something about their experience of envy in a way that hadn't occurred to them before. This was often experienced as insightful and at times as a freeing experience. It appeared to be a moment of disentanglement from the way they had structured their thinking prior to that instance, giving them space to consider themselves and their experience of envy from a different perspective. There were statements such as "hmm, I hadn't actually put it together in that way until now".

## **Envy as uncovering core experience**

In relation to the above, one of the most exciting findings that came to light was that, as my participants and I together investigated their experience of envy, this uncovering of envy seemed to also uncover a *core experience* in themselves. While the data does not explicitly indicate this, it implicitly does so. Reflecting on my experience of engaging with the therapists on the topic of envy has me believing that

a core experienced was uncovered. I based this understanding on several reasons.

First, the intensity of the powerful feelings both towards other and towards self seems to indicate that what is being defended against is important or core. Second, the therapists were easily able to relate their current experience of envy to their early life experiences, which also seemed to indicate something core. Third, as each in-depth conversation deepened, most of the therapists recognised, named and in some cases felt a strong sense of contacting what I would call a fundamental organising principle within them. An example of this was one therapist experiencing that being an immigrant, she imagined that she would always feel like the other and have a sense of not belonging. I experienced this as very core to her, and I believe she did also. Fourth, in the moments that the therapists made such fundamental links, their emotional demeanour in most cases altered. While the therapists at first showed signs of distress, in most cases there eventuated a stance of openness between us, though in some cases still there seemed to be an edge of disturbance present for the therapist. Revealing from the depths, though difficult, seemed to call forth a congruence in the therapist, a kind of honouring or a holding of a sacred space which we both held.

A metaphor that comes to mind is about the method of core sampling used to determine the age of a tree. This involves drilling a very small hole into the side of the tree, as far as its centre, and pulling out a cross-section sample of its developmental rings, each ring indicating a certain number of years. In a similar way, using envy as a tool to pierce the protective coverings of being seemed to enable a process of entering into the core of each therapist's unique experience of themselves. The considering of the experience of envy evoked powerful feelings and previously unspoken thoughts, which when spoken seemed to be experienced as a linking up of something inside of the therapists.

### **Envy as not spoken**

Another significant finding that emerged from my research is the difficulty each therapist experienced, in their own way, in speaking about envy at all. Whilst all but one therapist had volunteered of their own accord, it was evident throughout each

interview that the experience of envy itself was not easy to talk about. In day to day life, envy amongst psychotherapists, and envy in general in the world, is a hidden experience. I believe that not talking about envy is partly out of shame, partly out of self-judgment, and partly out of fear of others' judgments. I will here discuss each of these reasons separately.

Regarding shame as a factor in not speaking about envy, as psychotherapists it often seems that we are not really supposed to show our envious feelings, particularly the perceived "negative" manifestations of envy, which includes the wish to destroy the other, or have the other disappear, as well as the self-denigrating and lack of self worth experienced by the envier. These feelings, linked with the experience of most of the therapists in my research in which they felt there was no space to speak of envy when they were growing up, make a lethal mix.

One of the difficulties that we face as psychotherapists is that our personal self is intimately linked with our professional self. There is really no way around this fact. So what we think and/or feel about ourselves, and what we think and/or feel in relation to others, are significant issues. Whatever any of us decide about the other on a personal level is often immediately linked to the professional self. An accountant, for example, may have a deeply troubled personal life and still feel very good about their work. We as psychotherapists do not have that luxury, for better or worse. We are trained to monitor ourselves and others, including other psychotherapists.

Embedded in the devaluation of the self and the other in many of the excerpts, there was also the sense of judgment of the self for having the powerful envious feelings towards the self and towards others. There is something significant about the perception of the self as being bad, or as being wrong for being envious. Expressions like, "being pathetic", "hating the self for feeling envious", etc. were often vehemently or apologetically spoken by the therapists. These judgments of self and judgments of envying seem to be connected with the sense of perception of the self. While Merleau-Ponty (1962) describes judgment as being a mere factor of perception

and a logical activity of drawing a conclusion, he offers his notion of judgment as “a transcendental act of perception grasped from within by authentic reflection” (p.33-34). Authentic reflection might lead to deeper self reflection which could lead to less judgment of the self, of the other and of the experience of envy.

The third reason that participants found it hard to talk about envy relates to the fear of being judged and possible reprisal by others for being envious. Most of the therapists in my research were concerned for varying reasons about what they said in the in-depth conversations with me remaining strictly confidential. In each of the interviews the therapists directly or indirectly enquired how I was going to keep this anonymous. They said this particularly just before or just after having revealed something sensitive and potentially detrimental in relation to their experiencing envy. I assured them that I would maintain confidentiality and I have of course tried to do this throughout my interpreting and analysing of the data, by subsuming the individual experiences in the universal themes.

### **Keeping envy conscious, or not**

One of the significant findings in my research is that we protect ourselves from the painful aspects of envy by not allowing ourselves to keep the experience of envy conscious. Instead there is deleting, forgetting, use of mind control, attempts to equalise and innumerable efforts at keeping distant from envy or its associated manifestations such as anxiety that might be experienced as unbearable and possibly overwhelming. Most of the therapists in my research were initially more vocal about the ways in which they do not stay conscious to their envy, or anxiety, or their fear of anxiety. As we spoke and the therapists expressed their lived experiences, they allowed themselves to become aware of its manifestations (such as the powerful feelings towards the self and towards others) and in so doing some insight was disclosed to them. They were able to name what envy felt like, and through this the many forms that envy takes were revealed.

One of the most striking findings is that, with envy showing up as its multiple forms, envy itself is often not recognisable. This has been one of the fascinating things

about this hermeneutic phenomenological research, the disclosing or unconcealing of envy into its component parts. As each therapist described their lived experience the essential aspects of envy emerged, laid out before my eyes in all of its expressions, unravelled out of the stories of each participant. At times I felt absolutely confused by these multiple forms that envy takes, until slowly the analysis process of having to compartmentalise each experience seemed to make the phenomenon of envy more manageable and understandable.

In the findings in my research it became apparent that when envy is more conscious, it is often less toxic, and when it is less conscious, it can work underground to destabilise the individual as well as the relation with the envied other. The therapists in my research made a distinction between the admiring stance, in which there is an appreciation and recognition of the other, and the more toxic envying stance, in which there is a marked desire to have or be what the other is perceived as having or being.

### **Anxiety and fear of overwhelm**

Anxiety showed up as underlying the experiences of envy named by the therapists in my research. The sense of being anxious seemed to sit alongside the sense of lack, the sense of desire, and the powerful feelings associated with the experience of envying, and being envied. In her talk on “Emotional Contagion” (2005) Gibson suggests that we defend ourselves against the experiencing of anxiety. Sullivan (1953) spoke of envy as one of the substitutive activities we engage in to ward off an intolerable anxiety. The findings in my research seem to confirm this statement. Being absorbed in having powerful feelings towards the self and towards others, the therapists in my research seemed to use this absorption as a means of not having to be with their anxiety about envying. As long as one is engaged in attacking the self or other, there is no space in the self to be with unbearable anxiety or underlying grief that may arise alongside of anxiety. The findings also show that with envy, there is a self and an other, whereas with anxiety and the fear of overwhelm or annihilation, there is only the self, it is a “nameless dread” (Joffe, 1969) avoidable at all costs.

Along with the sense of anxiety experienced by the therapists in my research there seemed to be a deeper fear of being overwhelmed if they allowed themselves to stay with the experience of envy. Heidegger (Hoffman, 2002) called anxiety and fear “kindred phenomena” (p. 409). This combination showed up in the interviewing itself, as I often would see or sense the therapists’ overwhelm through their tears, or a shakiness in their voice, or in a struggling to stay focused on the topic, which at times led to a complete change of tack on the part of the interviewee. All of this indicated the degree of distress being experienced in the talking, in the bringing of their unspoken experience into language. The degree of distress was also evident to me at times in the intensity of anger and resentment that some of the participants showed.

### **Envy as relational**

My study supports the notion that envy is a relational experience. This confirms Ogden’s (1984) suggestion that Klein and later Bion named envy as a relational experience. In each experience of envying or being envied that my subjects described, there seemed to exist a linking or even a binding between the self and the other. One of the ways this binding showed itself was in the wish or desire to have or be what the envied is perceived to be having or being. This is in keeping with what Merleau-Ponty (1962) says about the self and other, that “there exists an internal relation which causes the other to appear as the completion of the system...we are collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity...our perspectives merge into each other, and we co-exist through a common world” (pp. 352-354).

A second way in which the binding showed itself was the unspoken binding between the self and other. As the therapists named the powerful feelings that they experienced towards others, there was often in the same sentence a naming and recognition of the powerful feelings thus evoked in the self. It was as if they could not talk about the other without talking about the self. The separation between self and other, on this level, seemed to be less as they voiced their experience of envying.

Thirdly, binding also seemed to manifest not just as a disturbance experienced within the one envying, but also, when known, by the one who was being envied. These were disturbances of some sort of equilibrium, with a fear of envy becoming out of control if allowed to be felt. There was often a kind of power struggle, imagined or acted out. A sense of feeling threatened as well as the fear of annihilation was named. It was safer not to feel the entirety of the experience; however as they allowed themselves to speak about envy, most of the therapists, if not all, also allowed themselves to feel some, and at times a great deal, of their experience.

The recognition of this relational context brings me to another way in which binding between self and other occurs, that of envy as possibly being a co-creation. In most cases in my research the envied were perceived and as a result experienced by the envying as in some way inaccessible. This seemed to activate a felt sense of deprivation “already there” with the envier, which often resulted in the envier shifting from an admiring envy to a more toxic envying stance. This aspect of deprivation or withholding supports Hiles (2002) theory about withholding as a factor in envy. The aspect of perception influencing experience fills out Symington’s notion of envy as “faulty perception”, for the findings show that in envy there is a narrowing of perception that occurs, certainly in the one envying, and often in the envied, when known. A kind of ping-ponging of narrowed perceptions occurs. The findings also showed that for those therapists who allowed themselves to step back and perceive the wholeness of themselves and/or the envied other, the experience of destructive envy often softened, at least momentarily.

Most of the therapists in my research told experiences of both envying and being envied. Part of the disturbance experienced by the envying and the envied was in relation to the experience of aggression. Orange (2003) speaks of a propensity to react as an emergent property of relational systems—past, current, and imagined future. She suggests that while aggression may appear to be unprovoked, it is essential to see the context within which it occurs, considering the person’s subjective experience as well as the injury, deprivation and/or frustration to which it is reactive (p 474). It seems to me that the aggression in the form of anger, resentment, hate, revenge, and sense of feeling threatened, and aggression towards

the self shown by the therapists in my research is in part an indication of the context and relational systems within which they exist.

One aspect of this existence is a hierarchical context, a competitive context, an inclusion and exclusion context, a context of time composed of past, present and future. This context is part and parcel of evoking aggression, and aggression of a primitive nature, as named by several therapists.

The linking of power and envy arose for the therapists in my research. Some of the therapists spoke of their concern, fear and the sense of feeling threatened by the power over that they perceive in the hierarchical context of the psychotherapeutic community. “Being good enough”, according to Anderson (2002), or “as good as one can be”, is not a feature of the envious (p. 16). He suggests they want to be number One, and that they therefore see a limited amount of advantage that exists, and as a result are convinced that one either has this advantage or not. Though this was not explicitly named by the therapists, the sense of felt competition and expressions of strong resentment at the advantage of the other support this idea. In this smallish community of psychotherapists it may seem that there are possibly not enough places for top-dog. And the top-dogs are thus perceived by the bottom-dogs as being in powerful positions. This is likely to evoke envy. The sense of fear of powerful positions and possible loss of reputation is an ongoing threat as well, and those therapists who appear to not think about, or in actuality don’t need to think about this, may be envied. The sense of vulnerability named by some therapists in relation to this was palpable.

Several therapists spoke of wanting the object of their envy, that is, another therapist, to be harmed or to disappear, and the imagined sense of relief or freedom as a result. Davey (2004) cited Thorpe saying that the chopping down of the tall poppy is an avoidance of envy. He called this an “egalitarian fantasy”, the threat of envy and the corresponding controlling of envy by controlling the object of it. Davey offers “The Lord of the Flies” as an example fantasy of what can happen when groups are ruled by sibling cultures.

The context of the psychotherapy community is a perfect set up for the emergence of envy. We are a community of caring people. Caring is what we do as psychotherapists, caring is who we are. We easily can identify with each other in this place of care. Freud (1955) said that identification is known to psychoanalysis as “the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person” (p. 105). Several of the therapists seemed to find themselves identifying as an initial step prior to envying. Or is identification another component of envy? In this identifying there are initially some we are drawn to more, and some we are drawn to less. We rapidly identify those therapists we feel equal to, greater than or less than. Here there is the possibility for equality, for idealisation, for devaluation, for belonging or not belonging, for experiencing inclusion or exclusion.

This context allows many questions to emerge. Who decides who belongs and who does not belong in the psychotherapeutic community? Are those “inside” the ones who belong and those “outside” the ones who don’t? Or is it vice versa? Who is included, who is excluded? For many of the therapists in my research there was a sense of longing to feel they belonged as well as a sense of feeling excluded, or not included. There was a wish for acceptance from the other as well as a wish or desire for self-acceptance.

The therapists in my research spoke of envy in relation to equals, or hoped-for equals, or perceived equals. These others were sometimes colleagues they worked with and sometimes colleagues they saw from afar. In both cases the other had qualities that they longed for in some way, and in most cases, at least prior to the toxicity of envy arising, the therapist envying liked and even enjoyed the one they envied. In many cases also the feelings of admiration and love fluctuated with the feelings of anger or hate. While the therapists often named admiring as almost a preamble to toxic envy, I am wondering if admiring may be another component of envy?

Jones (Joffe, 1969) suggests that hate can only be expressed when there is “a durable affective bond with an object”...we can only hate properly someone who is in some way superior or stronger than ourselves, or someone who has power over us, and

particularly, someone “with whom we have or have had much to do, and whom we had hoped to love” (p. 535). According to the findings of my research it is essential for me to add that it is the *perception*, rather than the actuality, that the other is stronger, superior or more powerful. In the case of actual equals, peers or friends, the hate and love aspects of envy were more easily visible.

Tutors, skilled therapists and senior therapists were also named as the object of envy. Davey (2004) said that in training high levels of idealisation bordering on apotheosis may emerge and that this sets up a developmental difficulty later in how the developing therapist differentiates from these idealised objects.

Training psychotherapists are “borne” into a culture of psychotherapists that is composed of power imbalanced relationships, yet we are not supposed to be envious. If or when we do experience envy, it is not part of the culture to speak about it.

We are trained consciously or unconsciously, to be healers, heroes and sages, all rolled up into one. Brightman (1985) writes extensively about the ways in which our training as psychotherapists affects who we become and how we become psychotherapists. He speaks about the grandiose professional self of the trainee, with narcissistic aspirations of omniscience, benevolence and omnipotence emerging through the training process.

For a therapist to shift out of this into a healthier and truer state of equilibrium might require, as Brightman (1985) citing Kohut (1971) suggests “moving from a position of fragile grandiosity and idealisation to a more moderate and stable self-esteem and internal system of values”. If this is not done, the therapist will continue to relate to other therapists and clients as “a substitute for the missing segments of the psychic structure”. As a result of this, “relatedness consists mainly of the struggle to manoeuvre the other into a parasitically complementary position (e.g. as a mirror to the grandiose self or as an idealised figure) and to control and hold it there, rather than have a true interchange between two clearly differentiated personalities” (p.313).

As long as we only see a portion of the other person, the idealisation of them and often resultant personal devaluation is heightened, and distance, as well as power imbalances, is enlarged. Some of the therapists in my research held their stance of devaluation of the envied other, while most, when they were able to step back and have a wider and more all-encompassing perspective of the other, were able to see the humanness of the other.

My findings also showed that the perception of self and other is a key factor influencing one's experience of envy. The perception of self, the perception of other, the perception of self and other, as well as the interrelationships amongst the three, all factor into one's experience of envy. These perceptions are influenced by the contextual and environmental factors of past, present and future experiences. This supports Klein's (1957/1975) ideas about envy as constitutional, in that envy showed itself as a phenomenal and essential part of our being in the world.

While literature suggests that envy occurs most amongst equals, the perception of equality can occur in multiple configurations. This linked with Freud's (Joffe, 1969) interest in envy shown in his concern with the child's rivalry in regard to their siblings as well as their parents. The findings showed that perception of the other was dependent on several factors. One of these factors was the experiences of the therapists' childhood influencing their perception. The transposing of their early experience from "then" onto "now" altered perception. Most of the therapists in my research spoke of the envy between themselves and their siblings. Some also told stories of the difficult relations with one or the other, or both parents. Some spoke of how they learned about envy as bad through observing their parents' ways of being with or not being with envy. Another factor influencing the therapists' perceptions was the sense of anxiety and possible fear experienced by the therapist.

Though envy is mostly not talked about, it is clear from this research that envy is ever-present. It also became evident that in our psychotherapeutic community, envy is impacting on who we are with each other and how we are with each other. Zeddies (2000), in writing about the "relational unconscious", spoke of several analytic writers (Bollas, 1987; Fourcher, 1992; Hoffman, 1998; Kumin, 1996) who have

argued that “a nonverbal stream of experience exists alongside, and is distinct from, experience that is structured by language” (p. 469). I think that whether the envied is aware of it or not, the one who is envying is in relation with aspects of the envied one. It is therefore a relational experience, though unconscious.

### **Envy as felt experience**

Many of the therapists in my research talked about envy as “going underground” when it is not being named, and that often resentment can build as a result. Fantasies begin to be created in the silent communication, as assumptions about the other can run rife when no words or feelings are being named. In this unspoken context envy seems to take on a life of its own, like a wellspring of water underneath the surface of the earth that begins to carry an extensive and complicated life and ecosystem of its own, seemingly totally separate from the reality of day to day being with others and communicating. Yet envy showed itself in my research as constantly influencing therapists’ thinking and being and felt experience in daily life.

In our attempts to think about envy, Davey (2005) says that our thinking “gets interfered with, and that this sense of interference can be an indication when envy is at play, from inside and outside”. It seems to me that our thinking gets interfered with because envy is not something that can only be thought about. The findings showed that on some level, when named, envy is simultaneously felt or experienced, and the experience is not pleasurable, because it is so evocative of powerful feelings and thoughts which are painful in some way. It is often an experience that is felt by the body. Several of the participants seemed to experience anxiety in their bodies as they spoke with me about envy, and some named the body sensation. This naming is suggestive of a fuller, more embodied experience.

Van Manen (1997) speaks of corporeality and the sense of embodiment or disembodiment that we experience in relation to life and world. When I think of embodiment I think of a greater degree of consciousness about experience, a sense of owning, almost a physical owning of experience. The more embodied an experience is, the more it is part of our overall body-self, which for me includes the physical,

mental, emotional and spiritual “bodies”. Thus when the physical self is engaged, all of our “bodies” are or can be more engaged, consciously or unconsciously.

Lewis, Amini and Lannan (2000) make a very strong case for the linking of mind and body, and speak about the body/mind as not only wanting but actually needing emotional connection. They say that “the mammalian nervous system depends for its neurophysiologic stability on a system of interactive coordination, wherein steadiness comes from synchronization with nearby attachment figures” (p. 84). This synchronising, which they call “limbic regulation”, is part of an “open loop” arrangement, an emotional connection, which we as humans need in order to maintain our stability. They suggest that throughout our lives, we continue to need a source of stabilisation outside of ourselves. They speak of the “wordless ties of relatedness” between us as beings in this world, and suggest that who we become depends on who we love.

With the above notion of synchronising in mind, I want to suggest that admiring and identifying as possible initial steps of envy, are in fact attempts to create an emotional connection with an other. Are we, as Stern (2004) quoting Kohut suggests, longing for mirroring? The felt sense and pain of not being seen or recognised by the other compels the one envying to return to themselves and their sense of unfulfilled longing to connect. Both as envying and envied, the therapists in my research spoke of the painful experience of feeling invisibilised or not seen by the other. It seems to me that envy is painful because of the felt sense of disconnection from the hoped for love object. In this loss of hoped for love, the pain is unbearable. All of the therapists described envy as painful, and each of them found it difficult to make sense of the pain. The lived experience of pain was described as *a sense of lack, a hungry feeling, a wanting, an uncomfortableness, a disturbance*.

Envy, according to Joffe (1969) is one of the responses to mental pain that occurs as a consequence of a discrepancy between who one is, and who one imagines one could be. It seems to me that the greater the discrepancy, the greater the intensity of envious feelings. He speaks of envy as being a significantly different reaction or response (as opposed to depression as another possible response), composed of

aggression, hate, resentment, and admiration, the result being that “in envy, hope is not lost” (p.542-543). Envy is in this way a communicating to the self what one might want or have or what one is capable of wanting, having or being. Several of the therapists spoke of their experience of envy as letting them know what they wanted or longed for.

Most of the therapists in my research spoke of their fundamental longings, such as the desire for belonging, for inclusion, for connection and for stability. They spoke of acceptance of self as one of the ways of transforming envy. Meade (2005) suggests that what we are all longing for is love. I wonder if we were able to allow ourselves to see the range of our perceptions in the moment of relating, we might have a broader range of responses available to us, and that in fact we might choose love, or at the very least, emotional connection. Hall (1993) offers the idea of “circumspection”, which to me is a much more all encompassing way of perceiving. Rumi says that “everything is about loving, and not loving”.

Is envying a communication, (as Ogden or Grotstein suggested about projective identification) to negotiate the gap of separateness between self and other? I want to suggest that envy is a communication. It is a communication to the self, and it is also a communication to the other. Envy tells the self what the self needs through the avenue of whatever one is desiring. Lacan (1977) speaks of desire as a demand, and that every demand is actually a request for love. Is envy then a communicating to the other a desire, a request for love?

Ghent (1990) suggests that often we have healthy motivations which are disguised by “what looks like perversion” and that in fact they are “a living testimonial of the urgency with which some buried part of the personality is screaming to be exhumed” (p. 212). I wonder if envy might be one of these testimonials...one of these healthy motivations. He describes one feature of surrender as being the discovery of one’s identity, one’s sense of self, one’s sense of wholeness, even one’s sense of unity with other living beings (p. 216).

As the therapists in my research peeled away the layers of the powerful feelings of envy, what came to light was the sense of worthlessness, the self-devaluation, the devaluation of the other, the idealising of the other, the wish to destroy or steal from the other, the denial, rationalisations, and evasions. Ghent (1990) refers to such protective expressions as superstructures of defensiveness and calls them our “deceptions”. He wonders, as do I, if it is possible “that deep down, we long to give all of this up, to “come clean”, to surrender, as part of an even more general longing to be known, to be recognised”. And further, “might this longing also be joined by a corresponding wish to know and recognise the other?” (p. 215).

### **Understanding envy in ourselves**

Symington (1993) says that “there is a demand in all of us for more than sheer survival” (p. 35). He refers to Searles (1975) who says that “in everyone there is a need to heal, and that this outer desire to heal is a symbol of the inner task, the task of bringing the different parts of ourselves into unity” (p. 36).

Merleau-Ponty (1962) described living as “never entirely comprehensible...what I understand never quite tallies with my living experience, in short, I am never quite at one with myself. Such is the lot of a being who is born, that is, who once and for all has been given to himself as something to be understood” (p. 347).

If we are to accept Merleau-Ponty’s suggestion that we are given to ourselves as something to understand, then it follows that there is the necessity to have our envy be conscious to our own self. The findings seem to show that there is a spectrum of envy, from non-toxic envy which is most conscious, to toxic envy which is most out of our conscious awareness. The more envy is out of our conscious awareness, the more toxic it can be, the more it can leak out in unexpected ways. Symington (1993) suggests that “as a psychotherapist you cannot make an interpretation about someone’s sadism, jealousy, or homosexuality if you are anxious about that thing in yourself. It cannot be done” (p. 36). Can we then make interpretations about envy if we are anxious about envy in ourselves?

My research shows that envy exists in the psychotherapeutic community to a greater or lesser extent. Envy seems to be part of the human condition. Facing into envy seems to be about facing into our fear of annihilation. The experience of fearing immense overwhelm, such as underlying anxiety and grief, was named by the therapists.

Stern (2004) says that we have the desire for intersubjectivity and for belongingness, and this is part of the reason for the forming of groups (p. 97). How well do we function as a group of psychotherapists? What is it in our world of psychotherapy that deters or hinders or stops us from creating a community where we can show or reveal ourselves and openly say our judgments and work with these as well? What would it be like for us to be able to say our envy or to speak our inadequacies more than we do now? Can we share amongst ourselves our deeper despair or our deeper longings, or our deepest grief and grievances?

The therapists in my research took the risk to speak their lived experiences of envy, albeit in the confidential space of my conversations with each of them. Envy as hidden, not spoken, shameful, threatening and disturbing were major themes that showed up. Envy as potentially leading to hope, connection with self and connection with other were also named. My final question, for the moment, is “Can we all take a risk?”

### **Implications for Practice**

It is likely that my research would be helpful to psychotherapists because it is about the lived experiences of psychotherapists who are giving language to a complicated phenomenon. I imagine that being familiar with the findings in my research might assist therapists in examining their own as well as their clients' envy, given that envy weaves through as a subterranean text behind so many strongly held and experienced emotions.

My own practice has definitely changed as a result of this research. One of the challenges I faced as a psychotherapist using the methodology of hermeneutic

phenomenology was learning to shift my thinking to more experiencing, being with the lived experience first and then thinking, and to-ing and fro-ing between these two processes. What was also involved for me was a shifting from a semi-pathologising stance to a more widening of perception stance. It compelled me to shift my perception to the stance of openness which Heidegger so encourages. I have carried this wider stance into my practice.

What has also occurred for me in working with this methodology is that my awareness of staying with what is present has been heightened and has expanded, to allow for the multiple possibilities of meanings that others, including clients, present.

### **Implications for Education**

I believe that it could be beneficial to psychotherapy trainees to study and process envy as an experience and as a phenomenon. This could be useful because my research has shown that envy does exist in the psychotherapeutic community, though often unspoken, and thus impacts on our relationships with each other, including our ability to appreciate each other.

Similarly, currently practicing psychotherapists, counsellors and others in the helping professions, as well as to the general population, might be interested in the lived experience of envy. I imagine that most people could resonate with some or most of the findings and this could assist their own personal and professional development.

### **On-going research**

One possibility for further research could be an investigation, or hermeneutic phenomenological enquiry, into perception, how our thinking and feeling sense can often be at odds and how we reconcile or work with these experiences.

While my research is about envy within a group, it could also be interesting to do research on envy between groups, for example envy between cultures, or envy between professions such as between counsellors and psychotherapists, or

psychotherapists and psychologists. Envy amongst siblings from birth to present time could be a fascinating topic of research.

Further research into envy as a disguised healthy motivation and a possible call of connection to self and other could bring more understanding to the wholeness of the experience of envy.

### **Limitations of my study**

One of the possible limitations of my research, due to the small sample size and it being within a specific population, is that some of the findings specific to the context may not be transferable. However, this is inherent in the phenomenological design.

Another possible limitation is that my research is a specific product of what happened in the in-depth conversations between myself and my participants. Another researcher with other participants, or even the same participants, might have highlighted other possibilities of meanings of the experience of envy.

The context of the world of psychotherapy and its likely influence on the interviews is both a strength and a limitation. As psychotherapists there is immense pressure to grow and to be aware, and due to this awareness the therapists were able to be much more self-reflective and articulate about their experience and the meaning of their experience. This meant that they were in many cases processing aloud while they spoke with me. This depth of information, whilst very understandable and significant to other psychotherapists, might be overwhelming and beyond the capacity for the general population to ascertain.

### **Strengths of my study**

First, the participants are people who, relative to the general population, are used to talking about their internal processes and are aware of these processes. While this is a limitation in terms of some of the material not being transferable, it is also a strength.

Second, using an unstructured interview process allowed for myself as interviewer to follow up emerging ideas as they occurred in the in-depth conversations with my participants.

Third, because my participants are not people who have sought clinical help for envy, and the nature of the methodology is that of co-investigators, the results are more robust. This has allowed a deep and clearer exploration of the topic of envy. For this reason, as well as this research being about the lived experience of envy, the findings may therefore appeal to an everyday reader.

Before I conclude I want to say one last understanding and experience of my own, having now reached the very final stages of my writing. This research has been an enormous experience. Whilst it was truly harrowing at times, and my frustration levels reached all time highs, at the moment I am feeling sad to be finishing. What I understand about this is that as I have worked with the data of my participants, and simultaneously worked with my own experiences of envy, I became fully immersed in this world of experiencing, engaged with all bodies of myself in this massive and for me very meaningful project. I have as a result felt at times uniquely connected to myself as I have linked up disparate parts of me in order to be able to find words for very deep experiences.

I have had many moments of feeling very passionate and excited about what has emerged. I wonder about passion arising out of the experience of compassion, and am very aware that over these two years my compassion for others and myself has also grown. Com-compassion, with passion. It seems that in the state of passion, toxic envy is assuaged. Several of the therapists momentarily stepped into their passionate selves as they named aspects of their experiences of envy. Passion, according to Williams (2004), is profoundly creative, and can occur through fully living one's experience. Klein (1957/1975) spoke of gratitude and love as a counteracting of envy. Etchegoyen and Nemas (2003) named appreciation as a counterpoint to envy. Both suggested this leading to creativity. I propose that being passionate about one's own experience of being in the world is another possible key to living and being alongside envy.

## **Conclusion**

The experience of envy amongst psychotherapists has been explored in this study. What has been revealed is that envy is an existing and relational phenomenon, whether known or unknown, whether spoken about or not. All of the therapists were able to identify powerful feelings that emerged as they allowed themselves to be with their experience of envy. While they mostly spoke of their experience of envying, they also told stories of being envied. It was invariably seen that envy emerges within a context of relation and that there are particular contextual determinants including desire, perception and the temporal experience of transposing which are fertile ground for envy to arise.

The therapists in my research invariably spoke of self and other as they told their experiences of envy. Many suggestions of the binding that occurs between self and other in the experience of envy were named. The perception of self and other that each individual carries is another essential aspect of understanding envy. The findings suggest that in envy there is a wanting to be known, and a wish to be recognised in the experiencing of envy. This research is just the beginning of making sense of a very complex phenomenon. It has uncovered lived experience and has opened further understanding to multiple possibilities of meanings. In many cases also previous theory has been validated.

My study has helped me to think more broadly and more deeply about the experience of envy. As much as part of me had hoped to tie it all up in a package, it is impossible. What I have reached, as the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology says, is a place of “more understanding”. This research provides a point of departure for further study into this multi-faceted phenomenon of envy.

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## Appendix A--Ethics Approval

### MEMORANDUM



#### Student Services Group – Academic Services

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To: Margot Solomon  
From: **Madeline Banda**  
Date: 26 September 2003  
Subject: 03/139 Envy amongst psychotherapists in a psychotherapeutic community: A hermeneutic inquiry

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Dear Margot

Thank you for providing clarification and amendment to you ethics application as requested by AUTEK.

Your application is approved for a period of two years until 26/09/05.

You are required to submit the following to AUTEK:

- A brief annual progress report indicating compliance with the ethical approval given.
- A brief statement on the status of the project at the end of the period of approval or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner.
- A request for renewal of approval if the project has not been completed by the end of the period of approval.

Please note that the Committee grants ethical approval only. If management approval from an institution/organisation is required, it is your responsibility to obtain this.

The Committee wishes you well with your research.

Please include the application number and study title in all correspondence and telephone queries.

Yours sincerely

Madeline Banda  
**Executive Secretary**

**AUTEK**

Cc: Crea Land

## Appendix B--Consent to Participation in Research



### Consent to Participation in Research

**Title of Project:** “Envy amongst psychotherapists in a psychotherapeutic community: A hermeneutic inquiry.”

**Project Supervisor:** Margot Solomon

**Researcher:** Crea Land

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project (Information Sheet dated 21 August 03)
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that the interview will be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research.

Participant signature: .....

Participant name: .....

Participant Contact Details (if appropriate):

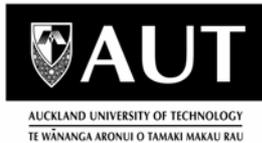
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Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26 Sept. 2003, 03/139.

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

## Appendix C--Participant Information Sheet



# Participant Information Sheet

**Date Information Sheet Produced:** 21 August 03

**Project Title:** “Envy amongst psychotherapists in a psychotherapeutic community: A hermeneutic inquiry.”

**Researcher:** Crea Land

Student of Master of Health Science (Psychotherapy)

Auckland University of Technology

**To the participant:** This participant information sheet is an invitation to be part of the research which I am undertaking. The purpose of this research is to study the experience of envy amongst psychotherapists in a psychotherapeutic community. This involves discovering how envy has contributed to and influenced you both personally and professionally. There has been very little research done on the experience of psychotherapists’ envy amongst each other.

I am a graduate of the AUT Psychotherapy Program and have been practising as a psychotherapist in Auckland since 1998. I have been working at the Waitakere Abuse and Trauma Counselling Service part-time since then, as well as practising privately part-time in Pt. Chevalier, Auckland. I am doing this research as part of my requirements to complete my Masters of Health Science.

There are certain criteria which have been the basis of inviting participants for this study. It seemed necessary to include female and male participants over 35 years of age who have been practising psychotherapists for at least 4 years post-training, and who still are currently practising. It also is important that they have identified envy in their own experience, either as the envier, the recipient of envy, and/or both, and that they are willing to speak of their

experiences in relation to other psychotherapists. All participants have been approached to be part of the study by a third neutral party.

My proposed method of data collection is to have one audio-taped 60 minute conversation with each participant. I hope to hear of your experiences as well as your understandings of envy, in relation to yourself, and in relation to the therapeutic community. The research method is qualitative and interpretive, and confidentiality will be ensured through using pseudonyms. I will also ensure that you will not be identified in any way.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If at any point you wish to withdraw, you have that right without giving any reasons. You are not obliged to answer any questions which you are uncomfortable answering. If you decide to withdraw from participating, any identifiable information provided will be withdrawn. At the conclusion of the interview, if you have experienced any psychological discomfort due to self-reflection, I invite you to discuss this with your supervisor.

The potential benefits of this research for the participant is that through your self-reflection, your understanding of yourself and your experience of envy may increase. The potential benefit of this study is that those who will read the final thesis may be encouraged to self-reflect which may increase their understanding of their own experience. This may enable more languaging about envy and more discussion amongst psychotherapists.

**Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor.**

**Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz , 917 9999 ext 8044.**

**Researcher Contact Details:** Crea Land Telephone: 09/8460662.

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:** Margot Solomon Telephone: 09/3079999 ext. 7191.

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26 Sept. 2003, 03/139.**