

**Can a Psychotherapy Student Authentically  
Grow Under Academic Demands: A Heuristic  
Inquiry**

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# **Can a Psychotherapy Student Authentically Grow Under Academic Demands: A Heuristic Inquiry**

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## **Abstract**

Psychotherapy practice is said to promote its client's personal growth by creating an environment containing conditions needed for clients to authentically be themselves. This research aims to explore a parallel process, namely, to discover if a researcher and psychotherapist in training can achieve authentic growth during the process of writing a dissertation in an environment containing academic conditions and academic demands. This research asserts that accruing knowledge in training for a chosen profession benefits from being carried out in alignment with the way that profession values knowledge. However, the academic environment in which psychotherapy training occurs appears to include an intolerance of ambiguity, a demand to be clear and straightforward, and an assumption that privileges intellectual understanding, all of which are at odds with the value psychotherapy places on the inclusion of the unconscious and the unknown needed for authentic growth. Exploration of the tension between these two sets of values may prove a useful focus of inquiry for both the profession and its trainees. Using a heuristic methodology and method, and guided by Donald Winnicott's idea of the "true self," this research will seek to discover, during the dissertation writing process, aspects of that work which either promote or diminish the ability to grow authentically. Research findings will aim to assist psychotherapy students to gain more growth from their training courses, and also to assist psychotherapy training courses to consider possible improvements that could be made in the way in which future psychotherapists are trained.

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**Attestation of Authorship**

“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 university or other institution of higher learning.”

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James Loh (Candidate)

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## Chapter One: Introduction

In this chapter, I aim to discuss how my research topic initially became evoked in me, my process for finding a research question, the context of my study, my key point of concern, the aim and scope of the study, the significance of the study and lastly how my initial research pointed towards a good match between my experience and the literature.

My topic began through noticing strong resentment, anger and a feeling of powerlessness that led towards a paralysing collapse during assignment writing. This paralysing sense of powerlessness debilitated me in all aspects of life (house work, entertainment, socialising), accompanied with strong guilt, anxiety and shame towards not being able to overcome it. Assignments were a painful and taxing chore to complete, which resulted in a personal response of resentment over academic values being disconnected from my own. I felt I was selling out my authentic self in the act of achieving a qualification that I needed so I could practice what I loved, in the hope of regaining the authentic purpose I was slowly losing along the academic way. I knew I did not understand these strong reactions. The more I looked at them, the more I started to see the all-encompassing grip they had on me during the academic year. During the four years of study under these conditions leading up to my final year, I experienced strong anxiety around whether I could complete a dissertation at all. Despite the tremendous struggle I experienced when working on assignments, I would force myself to push on. I managed seven and a half years of passing grades in a university setting (including my Bachelor of Property and Commerce degree) before I failed my first assignment in my third year of study at AUT. The failure brought tremendous amounts of shame on me; disappointment that I couldn't write assignments without these debilitating feelings overwhelming me; and resentment that academic values did not match my personal strengths, or seem to match the specific requirements that I believe make a good psychotherapist. My lecturer, for the failed assignment very kindly talked to me about a resubmit and was extremely supportive in taking me through the assignment writing process. My experience rewriting the assignment revealed a marked difference in my energy levels and motivation. The result was a piece of work I could be proud of. In Winnicott's formulation, the existence and activity of the True Self relies on the "good-enough mother", who "meets the omnipotence of the infant and to some extent makes sense of it" (Winnicott, 1960, p. 145). Winnicott argues that "the True Self does not become a reality



except as a result of the mother's repeated success in meeting the infant's spontaneous gesture or sensory hallucination" (Winnicott, 1960, p. 145). The kindness of this lecturer reminded me of Winnicott's good enough mother and helped me become more aware and make more sense of some of my academically debilitating dynamics. I felt more authentic and discovered more of my true self during the resubmit process. My lecturer's support gave me a different experience to the one I had growing up with my parents and previous teachers, enabling me to shift my perspective. Weiss (1993) describes the patient's reparative experience in psychotherapy:

In transference tests, he behaves with the therapist as in childhood he behaved with his parents. He reproduces the behaviour that, in his opinion, provoked the parental reactions from which he inferred his pathogenic beliefs. The patient unconsciously hopes that he will not affect the therapist as he affected his parents. He may hope, for example, that he will not... by his contentment provoke the therapist to charge him with complacency.... If the patient observes that he does not affect the therapist as he affected a parent, he may take a step toward disconfirming the belief that had provoked the dramatic parental reactions (p. 14).

Due to my learning disabilities, ADHD and dyslexia, my previous teachers would tell me I was intelligent but lazy and that I was just not putting in the effort. My parents would provide me with extra outside support, but deny there was anything wrong with me, in case this might have a negative effect on my self-esteem. Winnicott's description of meeting the child's spontaneous gesture or sensory hallucination describes an emotionally attuned and non-impinging set of responses that creates an environment where it feels safe for unconscious dynamics to surface. The joy and excitement I felt from this transformative experience left me wondering if I could continue to grow authentically in a psychotherapy training program. Could I act through my true self, in a way that parallels psychotherapeutic growth, when I was under academic demands that felt jarring and counterproductive towards this goal?

## Context of study

I discovered my research question during a class exercise in my Research for Psychotherapy paper. I started toying with ideas on how “beliefs and worldview affect happiness” or “Does fluidity/rigidity of belief systems influence happiness.” My lecturer suggested my topics were too broad in scope and I needed to narrow them down. As I narrowed each of my possible questions, I quickly lost interest in the topic. I realised I wanted to expand and open the question, wonder about something until a new perspective arrived and changed the way I experienced the world. I wanted the freedom to search and discover something new out of the blue. How could I have a question if I didn’t even know what I was going to discover? I value the act of staying open to inspired thought, from a place of not knowing. All I knew in the beginning was that my preference fit well with heuristic inquiry rather than positivist research. During the research class an inspired idea struck me out of the blue, the exact experience I was chasing. I wrote the idea down on my phone as follows:

“Losing and finding the soul – finding peace in the torture of narrowing down a finding, when writing a dissertation for a spiritual psychotherapist who values opening over closing and embracing the unknown over assuming to know.”

I took it to my lecturer and was surprised to find he liked the idea and I was still passionate about the topic after he narrowed it down for me with advice to stick with the “learning process.” He suggested the title “Genuine inquiry or empty rhetoric: A heuristic inquiry of doing a Masters of Psychotherapy dissertation.” I had trouble explaining to others what this dissertation was about. During a dissertation support class I had another lecturer reword the question in a way that I liked: “Can a psychotherapy student stay authentic, under academic demands”. Three months into the dissertation I realised I did not want to simply stay authentic, but grow into a more authentic self, resulting in me adding the words “grow authentically” instead of “stay authentic” in my dissertation title as well as adding “A heuristic self-inquiry” to the end of my title, because I liked another lecturer’s feedback for this change.

## **Key point of concern**

The key point of concern that drives my research is the disconnect between the way psychotherapy values the unknown, ambiguity and the unconscious to form part of the process for authentic growth, and the way the academic setting in which psychotherapy is trained does not. The research seeks to discover if a psychotherapy student can stay congruent with psychotherapy values to achieve authentic growth under academic demands during the writing of a dissertation. If a practice like psychotherapy, which campaigns for authentic growth, is taught in an environment that does not value the same process of knowledge acquisition or promote a student's growth in the same way, then this incongruence could have implications for student motivation. A more congruent course design could reduce student dropout rates and create opportunities to increase the quality of training for future psychotherapists.

## **Aim and scope**

I aim to discover if the psychoanalytic idea of growing authentically in therapy can also occur in psychanalytic training within an academic frame. Due to size restrictions in this dissertation, I will use the psychoanalytic idea of Donald Winnicott's "True self" and "False self" as a guide for achieving authentic growth. I will focus on literature written by psychoanalysts/psychotherapist's or writers writing from a psychoanalytic view point. I will define academic demands as demands that are oriented towards getting passing grades to pass course papers.

## **Significance of the study**

My study will have significance to all students in study, but particularly students of psychotherapy training. I hope that the study will raise awareness academic frustrations and provide inspiration to students to heal from their own struggles with study.

The process will highlight how psychotherapy can heal in a lasting way. I hope this will give readers who are not familiar with psychotherapy a positive insight on why and how it works and gain motivation to engage in it for themselves.

This study is important in how we think about the educational pathway into practising psychotherapy. Psychotherapy students that get great marks in assignments do not necessarily make the best psychotherapists. I wonder how many incredible psychotherapists the world is missing out on solely because they are not academically inclined. I hope this study can help create educational policy change in the future, creating psychotherapy training courses more in line with psychotherapy practice and highlighting deficiencies in current programmes.

This research can also be used to think about growing authentically in other vocations outside of academic study and reflect on the social implications for a society made happier through people feeling a sense of authentic purpose in what they do.

### **Experience matching the literature**

Through informal conversation, there seems to be widespread agreement among students that are training in psychotherapy in an academic setting, that such an environment evokes extreme demands towards the students, well in excess of what one might expect of the usual academic master's degree. The literature seems to point towards an academically oriented environment not being the best match for quality psychotherapy training. I believe a heuristic inquiry from the point of view of a student who is currently struggling in this environment would prove illuminating and thought provoking for future conversations on psychotherapy training requirements and psychotherapy students experiences of these training requirements.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, my research topic was chosen because of its power to evoke strong personal meaning. The size and scope of the study will be restricted by focusing on literature predominantly from a psychoanalyst/psychotherapist perspective. and the experience of meeting academic demands needed to gain a passing grade for this dissertation. I believe this study will form a significant contribution towards thinking about psychotherapy training and its wider educational philosophy and act as a valuable resource to inspire thought and provoke discussion for struggling students to gain clarity and relief.

## **Chapter Two: Literature review**

In this chapter I discuss literature on Winnicott's True self and False self concepts and the importance environment plays in their expression. I articulate the two different values for knowing, between psychotherapy and academia. I give a brief history on why psychotherapy training is disconnected from psychotherapeutic ways of knowing. I conceptualise the possibility of academic demands promoting False self aspects at the expense of the True self. Lastly, I discuss literature on how to promote authentic growth in the class room, with a focus largely on Carl Rogers' criteria for meaningful learning that can directly influence behaviour.

### **Authentic Growth using False-self and True-self Concepts**

Due to authentic growth being hard to measure and qualify, I will use the concepts of Donald Winnicott's True self and False self as a barometer for authentic growth. Winnicott's (1956, 1960a) concept of the True self suggests a True self is developed in early relations, through a good enough mother repeatedly meeting the omnipotence of the infant and to some extent making sense of it, this process gives life to the infants True Self. The True Self is experienced through being, that feels alive, purposeful and full of vitality. In an environment void of a good enough mother, who is unable to meet the infant's omnipotence, this moment of meeting is instead substituted with her own gesture. The mothers own gesture is then made sense of by the infant's compliance, and the infant's compliance is the earliest stage of the False Self, through the inability of the mother to sense her infant's needs. A False self is developed as a way to continue living through an alternative façade self, which allows the True self to become hidden, yet stay intact and protected, with the possibility of returning under more tolerable circumstances. The False self can be lived by doing what is needed to meet the demands of the environment but leaves us feeling deflated. As quoted in the beginning of my "Introduction" chapter, Winnicott stresses the importance of a non-impinging environment that can allow the existence and activity of the True Self.

Psychotherapy values and seeks to create a similar non-impinging environment in the therapy room for the True self to flourish and authentic growth to occur in patients. Because there is an emphasis on certain conditions being met in the environment, this research is interested in the possibility of authentic growth occurring in an academic environment in which

psychotherapy is taught. My use of Winnicott's True and False self-concept has been modified and simplified for the purposes of this dissertation, in particular focusing on Winnicott's description of the True Self - as being, that feels alive, purposeful and full of vitality, and observing if student's growth, learning psychotherapy in an academic environment mimic these same traits as opposed to feeling deflated as described by Winnicott's explanation of the False self. I will also focus on the Academic environment acting closer to a good enough "non-impinging" mother in the learning process or rather more like a not good enough mother imposing or pressuring some type of compliance from the students, in order to achieve a pass grade, something more in line with the False self, which I will infer as a measure of the environment being conducive or not to authentic growth.

## **Two Different ways of Knowing**

This research asserts that accruing knowledge in training for a chosen profession would benefit from being carried out in alignment with the way that profession values knowledge. However, the academic environment in which psychotherapy training occurs would appear to include an intolerance of ambiguity, a demand to be clear and straightforward, and an assumption that privileges intellectual understanding - all aspects which are at odds with the value psychotherapy places on the inclusion of the unconscious and the unknown needed for authentic growth. Meriläinen and Piispanen (2012) outline the academic learning process commonly known as theme-teaching. This process is teacher and subject centred, concentrated on content rather than skills, taught through the use of text books, and assessed using tests. Theme teaching is made easier to administrate by using objective guidelines. This objectivism requires a tolerance for certain unproven assumptions, with the benefit of making the world an easier place to understand. Slife (2004) points out that the foundation of science is investigation, including the investigation of its own values and assumptions. He argues that in objectivism "bias and values are viewed as either irrelevant or already settled, because objectivist methods are assumed to control or eliminate them through research" (p. 68). When unproven assumptions become common among so many, it is often hard to remember they are unproven, i.e. "some assumptions and values are so familiar that they are thought to exist in the external world. As the 'real' rather than the debatable" (p. 68). The process of transcending Winnicott's False self into the True self, in order to create authentic growth, as noted in the previous chapter, requires one to become aware of the False self. This is similar

to becoming aware of false assumptions. The value of awareness in psychotherapy would appear to clash with many of the fundamentals that objectivism is built on. Slife (2004) continues: “unrecognized assumptions are the worst sort of mental constraints, because they exert their influence without our awareness. We are so familiar with them (through our formal training and acculturation in the discipline) that we automatically and unconsciously assume them” (p. 67). There seems to be a direct disconnection between psychotherapy and objectivism in regard to tolerating unproven assumptions. Another valued aspect in psychotherapy is the importance of a person being seen, understood, and valued in their wider community to create a sense of belonging (Herman, 1992); and it is worth noting how common objective assumptions can be in many parts of our society, including the academic environment, leaving those with a different understanding of knowing feeling unseen, misunderstood and undervalued - “We are so used to organizing and interpreting the world with these assumptions that we forget they are conceptual organizations and interpretations” (p.67). Dr Slife, a practicing psychotherapist for thirty years and Professor of Psychology at Brigham Young University, adds rhetorical weight to his point through grouping his words into threes. This use of repetition suggests a sense of passion and frustration in his words:- “They become reified, stultified, and ultimately constraining to our perception, thinking, and experiencing, because they are institutionalized through the discipline that informs us. They color our perceptions, direct our thinking, and imbue certain experiences with special importance” (p. 67). Likewise, Williams (2001) asserts: “There is, in fact, no evidence that a single meaningful, directed, telic behavior has ever resulted directly from any physiological state” (p. 60). A number of scholars echo similar critical evaluations of materialism and reductionism, including Agazzi, 1991; Charles & Lennon, 1992; Davidson, 1980; Dupre, 1993; Eccles & Robinson, 1984; Lennon, 1990; Robinson, 1985; 1995; Sarbin, 1990; Slife & Williams, 1995. Slife’s argument seems quite opposed to many mainstream materialists, some of whom cite an extensive database of positive findings and reviews on materialism. However, Slife (2004) questions whether these are grounded in the data, or as he points out “are they the result of an unrecognized, and perhaps even unintentional, bias toward materialism in interpreting the data, with all its accompanying problematic inferences?” (p. 28-29). Whether Slife’s view is common among psychotherapists cannot be certain. I was unsuccessful in finding literature by psychoanalysts or psychotherapists that supported objectivism in their training programmes. I did however pick up on the same passion and frustration as well as cynicism in other literature, which I will explore in more depth in the following chapters. The lack of fit between psychotherapy and objectivist values contrasts

strongly with Winnicott's "good enough mother" ideal noted in the previous chapter. In particular, the ability of the environment to meet the student's truth in the moment and support the student to make sense of it is discussed as parallel to the mother meeting baby's gaze in the previous chapter. Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan questions the issue of his discipline being accepted by a wider community; "Can a discipline that seeks to disrupt and overturn all the "acceptable" and routinized ways of seeing reality actually be accepted in a widespread way?" (Johnson, 2014, p. 149). The literature seems to point towards a fundamental disconnection in the "ways of knowing" between academia and psychotherapy. This results in a training environment quite different from the one proposed by Donald Winnicott, which promotes creating a facilitative environment needed by the True self for authentic growth. I detect a sense of frustration over this disconnection by many writers of psychotherapy literature, not in the explicit text so much as in the mood of the writing. I will return to this theme in following chapters.

### **How Psychotherapy Lost its way to Science**

To understand how psychotherapy's ways of viewing knowledge became dismissed in favour of academic views of knowledge, particularly in the training of psychotherapy, we have to look at the beginnings of psychoanalysis where the roots of psychotherapy began. In 1909, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung were invited to Clark University to be presented honorary degrees in psychology and education, during which Freud presented a number of lectures to some of the most prominent American intellectuals of the time. Freud's ideas were not well received and were criticised as lacking scientific validity. Taubman (2012) notes how these events were the start of an ongoing process in which psychoanalysis disclaimed its own most radical knowledge. The need to gain institutional acceptance led to attempts to become more aligned with scientific values at the cost of removing itself from being taught using Freud's most important discovery, the unconscious. Taubman considers this a great loss, particularly given Freud's claim that "perhaps the most important of all the activities of analysis . . . is the application of psychoanalysis to education" (New Introductory Lectures, 1933/1964, p. 146).

### **Losing Ourselves to Qualify**

As noted in the previous chapter, there seems to be a difference in knowing between psychotherapy and academia. Taubman (2012) believes "that psychoanalysis has disappeared



from institutional ways of knowing” (p. 79). He suggests that academia is “organized by an intolerance of ambiguity, a yearning to be perfectly straightforward, at one with itself, transparent, devoid of ignorance” (p. 79). This is quite different to how psychoanalysis values knowledge. Taubman describes psychoanalysis as knowing “that there will always be yet a few more loose ends to tie up, and then a few more, always a few other implications to trace, and then a few others still; there can never be complete self-accountability” (p. 79). The major reason for this difference is the value psychoanalysis places on the unconscious “for the unconscious guarantees that there is always some dimension of one’s self that one cannot anticipate or recall or know” (p.79). For authentic growth and learning to occur in psychoanalytic knowing, we must hold onto what we know and what we do not know simultaneously. “In fact, for psychoanalysis, this distinction between what one can know and what one cannot know is the grounds for a dialogue between them, as it were, and this dialogue is the stuff, the activity, of psychoanalytic knowing” (p. 79). This environment allows us to entertain both what we know and what we do not know. “This way of knowing never seeks to be devoid of ignorance, but pulls ignorance to the center of its processes, an insistent other-half in a structural dynamic” (p. 79). Surrendering our False self to our True self is only possible in an environment that allows us to hold the possibility of both. Letting go of our False self would be too frightening if this were the only self we thought we had, because that would mean our complete annihilation. Southwell (2013) articulates this act of surrender, which:

seems less of an intellectual process as opposed to an emotional process of letting go of something (e.g. a child’s delusion of omnipotent control), it occurs in a moment of suffering (frustration) and involves a stepping into the unknown without attachment to outcome or expectation and in this regard it is an act of trusting, trusting that everything will be ‘ok’ although not knowing or seeking to control just what ‘ok’ will look like. In what can be regarded as a shift or expansion of consciousness, what seems to be taking place, in this case for the child – is that developmental change occurs as a result of surrender (p. 64-65).

Key elements in the act of surrender are the use of emotion and the act of stepping into the unknown without attachment to outcome. This fundamental difference in knowing could seem intolerable in an academic setting and therefore stop the occurrence of authentic growth from being able to occur. Eric Santner (2006) advocates teachers be mindful of the unknown

as well as the known in everybody, because every person in the room is a “subject partly at odds with itself, split by thoughts, desires, fantasies, and pleasures it can never fully claim as its own and that, in a sense, both do and do not belong to it” (p. xii). Truman (2012) offers a reason this is so hard to realize - society’s tendency to resist entertaining the subject as it would disrupt the status quo on which so much of our present, collective fantasy depends on. Literature presents strong support for the training of therapy to be taken out of an academic environment by many prominent therapists: for example, “Lacan was deeply anti-institutional and, like Freud, he felt that the process of becoming an analyst should have nothing to do with the formal bureaucratic processes by which publicly recognized “degrees” are conferred” (Johnson, 2014, p. 86). It could be thought that psychotherapy values finding one’s personal inner truth and academic learning could require one to give it up all together, as a price of admission, Charles Rycroft (1993) articulates this further:

Although aspiring analysts are, I hope and presume, not over-impressed by the power of rank or of pomp or even of wealth, they are, I assume, impressed by the power of ideas, of knowledge, of words, of discourse, and many must at one time have entertained the ambition of making original, perhaps revolutionary, discoveries and contributions to psychoanalysis - this modern science that claims that ideas and discourse can change not only minds but also bodies, and that possesses theories capable of being used not only to explain and alter human behaviour but also to demolish the authority figures of the past. So, to any aspiring analyst who still harbours infantile omnipotent fantasies, the theory and practice of psychoanalysis will present itself as a field within which these fantasies could be realised. But here he encounters obstacles. Although, historically, psychoanalysis is still a young science, the field, the stage, is already occupied by predecessors, by founding fathers and others who have already made large claims for themselves... Faced with such claims, such fame, such power, what can the omnipotently inclined aspiring analyst do? ... If his ambition is specifically to become a psychoanalyst, if he has set his heart on becoming one and nothing else will do, he has, as they say, a problem. He cannot eliminate his training analyst (or whichever revered analyst his unglamourisable training analyst idealises) or otherwise defy him since, if he did, he would fail to qualify as an analyst. But he can allow himself to be dissolved in him or her, to be devoured by her or him, and then partake of his or her power and glory. He then has the power and prestige of being an analyst, he can proudly carry a banner bearing the

name of the analyst he has been devoured by and whose theories he has swallowed, but he has not become his own person speaking with his own voice. He is still in the thrall of the introject which carries the omnipotence he has projected onto it (p. 84-85).

Rycroft is clearly not impressed by many aspects of the learning process. I thought it worth quoting fully to pick up the underlying tone of cynicism and frustration behind his words. Winnicott (1956) notes an invigorating quality to living through our True self and a deflating quality when living through our False self. Similar themes are presented in Charles Rycroft's quote above. Meriläinen & Piispanen, 2013, p. 159) find these qualities in other educational settings as well: "Instead of enthusiasm, happiness and joy of learning, the echo repeats problems, ill behaving and indisposition" Jacques Lacan agrees and writes with similar passionate cynicism:

The discourse of the university, on the whole, is a depressing business. That is, as the discourse of mastery produces the mind-cancelling agony of the zombie and hands all pleasure (object-a) to the master, so the discourse of the university produces a subject disconnected from itself, internally alienated, an interior poisoned by reaction, anxiety, and the unending, futile attempt to explain and justify and thereby reconnect with what it has lost, to write as an act of conjuring the always unattainable, dangling carrot that is object-a —a mechanical and deeply exhausting, even deadening labor, dreary and depressing (Johnson, 2014 p. 149).

The literature seems to allude to similarities between the training environment and the process Winnicott describes when losing the True self through an uncondusive environment involving the protective creation of an alternative False self. The literature seems to suggest one can lose a sense of their authentic self by conforming to the academic demands needed to graduate. Due to this environment both the False self and the student become deflated or deadened.

## **Promoting the True Self – Authentic Growth**

After reviewing literature on how a teaching environment can stifle authentic growth, I thought it prudent to search for literature that promoted authentic growth in the classroom. Johnson (2014) points out that some of Bergson's ideas, which are in line with psychotherapy ways of knowing, have reached into the classrooms by virtue of Carl Rogers, James Moffett, and Jean Piaget. In particular, the advantage of teachers getting out of the way of the student to allow the space for greater abstract thinking, free from the immediate environmental stimuli, under the proviso that one must be free in order to grow. The strength of their influence in the modern classroom is of specific interest to me, because this freedom gives room for the unconscious and the act of bearing the unknown in the learning space. A prominent and well-respected therapist Carl Rogers offers a chapter called "Personal Thoughts on Teaching and Learning," in his book "Freedom to Learn" (1969) where he came to the conclusion late in his life, that "Teaching is . . . a relatively unimportant and vastly over-valued activity" (p. 103), for the following reasons:

My experience is that I cannot teach another person how to teach. To attempt it is for me, in the long run, futile. It seems to me that anything that can be taught to another person is relatively inconsequential and has little or no significant influence on behaviour. I realize increasingly that I am only interested in learning that influences behaviour... I have come to feel that the only learning which significantly influences behaviour is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning. Such self-discovered learning, truth that has been personally appropriated and assimilated in experience, cannot be directly communicated to another... As a consequence ... I realize that I have lost interest in being a teacher. When I try to teach, as I sometimes do, I am appalled by the results... because sometimes the teaching appears to succeed. When this happens, I find that the results are damaging. It seems to cause the individual to distrust his own experience and to stifle significant learning (p. 152– 153).

The premium Rogers places on experience as the basis of learning could be a key difference in achieving authentic growth, as it links the learning process with the personal, allowing False self and True self aspects of the student to become engaged. Rogers' therapeutic approach is person centred, so it stands to reason his thoughts on education would be student

centred. Complementary to the psychological research of Jean Piaget and growth approach philosophies of Henri Bergson, Rogers differentiates meaningful learning which emerges in the field of bodily action, and non-meaningful learning which only involves the mind. Rogers emphasises “quality of personal involvement” “the whole person in both his feeling and cognitive aspects being in the learning event” where “its essence is meaning”; and being self-initiated rather than designed by a teacher, which makes a difference to the learner by being persuasive; and is evaluated and graded by the learner and no one else. Rogers stipulates that what prohibits meaningful learning is a prescribed curriculum in which everyone undergoes standardized lectures, assignments and tests assessed and graded by the instructor. In parallel with Bergson, he declares, “Changingness, a reliance on process, rather than on static knowledge, is the only thing that makes any sense for education in the modern world” (Rogers, 1969, p. 104). Rogers proposal to eliminate all teachable knowledge from the learning environment further highlights the vast difference between the ways academia and psychotherapy value knowledge. Johnson (2014) discusses “today’s general silence about pedagogy. We don’t really believe in teaching today, because, a generation ago, it was cast as an activity that largely prevented learning. And because we don’t believe in it, we don’t talk about it” (p. 65). Literature indicates the importance of being conscious of students being less involved in institutional lecture settings than instructors perceive them to be, with estimates that half of a students’ lecture time is spent thinking about things unrelated to the lecture content (Johnstone, & Su, 1994; Milton, Pollio, & Eison, 1986).

Romanelli, Tishby and Moran (2017) emphasises the need for therapy programmes to include ways of being in the room with clients - “Some clinical training programs focus on teaching theories and interventions, with less emphasis on how to be in the room in the ever changing, moment-to-moment inter-personal reality” (p. 20). They suggest an alternative teaching environment to fit this purpose. “In order to achieve this latter goal, there is a need for a training model that provides a setting and language that can capture and enhance these immediacy skills. We propose that theatre improvisational training provides such a framework” (p. 20).

Literature suggests that incorporating authentic growth into other learning situations outside of psychotherapy may also be beneficial (Dewey, 1903, 1910, 1944; Drake and Burns, 2004; Kumpulainen et al, 2011). Meriläinen & Piispanen (2013) support a transformational model of pedagogy:

The curriculum will come alive as authentic as possible with real life tasks, roles and environments as mentioned earlier. In transformational model of pedagogy, students will naturally develop life skills as a norm. The learning tasks are similar to real life tasks. The emphasis is rather on the skills than on the content –both skills knowledge and content knowledge are to be learned and assessed. The pedagogical planning focuses on the child and his uniqueness which influences the choices that a teacher will do concerning the learning context as well as the pedagogics, contrary to traditional pedagogics where the choices are often driven by the school structures, schedules, classrooms and books (p. 165).

Literature on authentic growth in the learning environment from a psychotherapy perspective seems to promote the connection of learning to the personal truth of the student's real-life world. This literature also suggests there could be benefits of authentic growth in other learning disciplines.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I conceptualise the act of authentic growth based on Winnicott's conceptual model of promoting the True self rather than the False self through the context of an emotionally attuned and non-impinging environment. Literature suggests two different values for knowing, between psychotherapy and academia, particularly the way psychotherapy values the unconscious and what is unknown as compared to academia's intolerance for such ambiguities. Understanding how psychotherapy training became an environment that does not value knowledge in the same way as therapy itself takes us to the early history of psychoanalysis, from which psychotherapy emerged. Here Sigmund Freud presented his ideas in the United States of America and came under criticism for lacking scientific validity, resulting in psychoanalysis disavowing its knowledge to gain universal acceptance. Literature seems to point towards the academic environment promoting the False self. This is firstly because holding what is known and what is unknown at the same time is not tolerated, and secondly because the use of emotions and stepping into the unknown without attachment to the outcome is needed to surrender the False self and both of these acts are not conducive to the academic environment., Literature would seem to indicate that students in academic settings present in the same deadened state as Winnicott's description of the False self.

Furthermore, there are strong suggestions by prominent figures in the field to support psychoanalysis or psychotherapy being trained outside academic institutions. Lastly, Carl Rogers criteria for promoting authentic growth in the class room through meaningful learning that directly influences behaviour would seem to require a process which is personal, self-initiated, has a focus on meaning, is self-accessed and involves the whole person in both feeling and cognitive aspects occurring in the field of bodily action.

## Chapter Three: Method and Methodology

In this chapter, I reason why heuristic research is an excellent match with psychotherapy and my own personal values. I will discuss what heuristic study is, and why it is of value, and outline the six phases of heuristic research I will follow. I will also note the limitations of this research method.

I started this research under the conviction that accruing knowledge in training for a chosen profession should be carried out in alignment with the way that profession values knowledge. To discover if a psychotherapy student is able to authentically grow under academic demands, it was important to incorporate methodology that was aligned as closely as possible with psychotherapy ideals. I wanted to use myself as an instrument to gather data, through a lived experience, which aligns with the psychotherapists' notion of using themselves as an instrument of lived experience to discover data about their clients. Rose and Loewenthal (2006) validated heuristics as a "relational research method that facilitates exploration of the lived experience of psychotherapy" (p. 133). Stevens (2006) agrees in regard to heuristics and psychotherapy in "that it explicitly operates at third-order awareness-awareness of awareness-creating cognitive discourse that makes subjective experience of doing therapy accessible for research through self-reflection" (p. 173). Like psychotherapy heuristic enquiry places value on the unconscious - Clements (1994-1995) states "...methodology often evolves and changes during the research because of synchronicities, dreams, intuition, and other manifestations of inner knowing. The researcher is urged to pay attention to expressions of the unconscious throughout the research process" (p. 119).

Heuristic enquiry also aligned with the personal way I value knowledge and growing - steamed in my belief that at the very depths of our unconscious, we can find our true authentic selves as well as the various false senses of self that we collect and cling too, which not only leave us feeling dissatisfied and wanting, but also prevent us from experiencing our true self. I believe we have within us a need to search and return to our true connected self, through an awareness of false self-concepts that can be surrendered; through a change in perspective that permanently changes our sense of self, the soul in search of itself. From the inception of my research, I was interested in beginning with a discovery of new awareness in myself using qualitative research rather than quantifying something with quantitative



research, which I consider to be justified using unproven assumptions, a process in which I place little value on, for reasons stated previously in my Slife (2004) quotes under my “Two different ways of knowing” chapter.

The disconnect between the epistemology underpinning that of the academic environment and that of psychotherapy practice and my own personal beliefs, formed part of my frustration, as a psychotherapist in training, making it of particular importance to undertake the research as a heuristic inquiry.

Heuristics is a way of engaging in scientific search through methods and processes aimed at discovery; a way of self-inquiry and dialogue with others aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human experiences (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). As my topic is exploring the question of authenticity in an academic setting, I felt it was important to use a method that provides scope for an opening of a full human experience which allows authenticity, rather than closing down through conventional research restraints. I found the method to mimic my natural tendencies to grow, something in which Sela-Smith (2002) concurs;

“I believe I was able to follow the Moustakas (1990) method as presented in the first and second chapters precisely, without knowing the method, because I had a purely internal goal. I am convinced that this portion of the method does reflect an authentic internal process that is human” (p. 85).

It pushes beyond the known, the expected, or the merely possible (Douglas, & Moustakas, 1985). Without the restraining leash of formal hypotheses, and free from external methodological structures that limit awareness or channel it, the one who searches heuristically may draw upon the perceptual powers afforded by ... direct experience (Moustakas, 1990, p. 44) - aspects of non-impingement which could prove important towards achieving authentic growth noted by Winnicott, in my “Authentic Growth using False-self and True-self Concepts” chapter. Similar to psychotherapy, a heuristic inquiry intends to uncover a deeper meaning than other methods, through the use of all the elements that make us human, including emotions - sensations that are excluded from most research methodologies. These elements are noted by Rogers as important for meaningful learning, as can be seen in my “Promoting the True Self - Authentic Growth” chapter and could help

promote authentic growth. The deepest currents of meaning and knowledge take place within the individual through one's senses, perceptions, beliefs, and judgements (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15).

Heuristic inquiry is a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. The question is one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one's self and the world in which one lives (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). The heuristic process continues through the discovery of a deeper understanding of the self, in terms of awareness and self-discoveries, as these are some of the constituents and qualities that make up experience (Moustakas, 1990). There is an importance placed on the disclosure of the self within the study. Jourard (1971) has pointed out that self-disclosure is “the act of making yourself manifest, showing yourself so others can perceive you” (p. 19). Douglas and Moustakas (1985) note that the disclosure of self promotes the disclosure of others, in that, “response to the tacit dimension within oneself sparks a similar call from others” (p. 50). The extension from self to others extends further - “the heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social—and perhaps universal—significance” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). As the problem is understood more fully through self-inquiry, the process can be continued through another deepening, through the experience of others. Maslow (1966) has emphasized that “there is no substitute for experience, none at all. All the other paraphernalia of communication and of knowledge - words, labels, concepts, symbols, theories, formulas, sciences - all are useful only because people already knew them experientially” (pp. 45–46). Although the Heuristic process seems directionless in the fact that it is self-directed, self-motivated, and open to spontaneous shift; it also requires a passionate and disciplined commitment to remain with a question intensely and continuously until it is illuminated or answered (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). Heuristic research is a demanding process. It requires “rigorous definition, careful collection of data, and a thorough and disciplined analysis. It places immense responsibility on the researcher.” (Frick, 1990, p. 79).

According to Moustakas (1990), the heuristic research method has six phases:

1. **Initial engagement** in which the researcher finds a topic of intense personal interest, a question that “holds important social meanings and personal, compelling implications” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27). My research topic connects with a major struggle I have in the way

I learn and grow in an academic setting. I want to grow authentically through gaining awareness of my truth, living it, challenging it, and being open, to letting it go, in order to make way for an inspired shift in perception that reveals more authentic parts of myself, akin to my experiences in psychotherapy. I want to feel alive during the study process, fuelled by the natural motivation I get when I feel like I am fulfilling my purpose. I want to know if it is possible to achieve this type of growth under academic demands and discover the reasons why I have not been able to do so in the past.

2. **Immersion** is the process in which the researcher “lives the question in waking, sleeping, and even dream states” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28), enabling the question to become more fully crystallised for the researcher. During this phase, everything in the researcher’s life can appear to connect to the question, including internal connection such as “intuition”, and external connection such as relationships in the researcher’s wider social context. This phase is an excellent fit with my personal beliefs in growing authentically. I experience my most fulfilling growth when I hold a question in mind and become mindful to receiving the answer through all forms of life, and have experienced gaining answers to my question through the people I met, watching movies, reading books and poems, listening to the radio, being in nature, and experiencing changing bodily sensations. I believe my positive past experiences in this area leave me in good stead to feel confident in gaining results through this method.

3. **Incubation** is the process of retreat from the question after the intense, concentrated involvement of the first two phases. Expansion of knowledge, awareness and understanding continues during this phase, but on a more unconscious level than previously. Once full immersion in the question has taken place, the third and fourth phases of heuristic research (incubation and illumination) require a retreat from conscious effort, allowing further and deeper understanding to take place outside of conscious awareness. During the initial phase of my research, I anticipated meditation (including a ten-day silent retreat) and journaling to be vital during the phases of incubation and illumination. Illumination is the naturally occurring process “when the researcher is open and receptive to tacit knowledge and intuition” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29), allowing what may have been unconscious to break through into conscious awareness. Often new perspectives and insight come to me when I first wake up and before I get out of bed where I undertake a slow free association period. Pulling away from “doing” activities and engaging in activities of “being” seemed helpful in this stage.

4. **Illumination** is the naturally occurring process “when the researcher is open and receptive to tacit knowledge and intuition” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29), allowing what may have been unconscious to break through into conscious awareness. I expect this phase to reveal themes I had previously not thought of and new perspectives on my topic that differ to initial hypothesis or expectations of the topic. I will continue to journal, meditate and create space during this phase.

5. **Explication** is a deeper reflection and examining of the material that has come to light in the previous phases. Heuristic research concepts are used in order, to come to an understanding of the essential themes of the material and to be able to depict the meanings of these from what has been discovered. During this phase, it is anticipated that the raw data will be more fully analysed and reflected on and meaning created from the material. Themes will have emerged and will be developed, which also point to opportunities for further research based on the findings. I felt privileged during my research to have so many support channels of people to help me in this stage - my dissertation supervisor, dissertation class, study group, personal therapist, work colleagues, and therapy supervisors. Having other people to reflect on ideas with was particularly helpful during a time where I was completely immersed in the material and needed an outside perspective to help me step back to get a better perspective of things, something which mirrors aspects of psychotherapy. Researching literature during this phase also helped bring deeper understanding to my data.

6. **Creative synthesis** is the final phase in which the findings are fully processed and written up in order to be communicated to an audience. “Knowledge of the data and a period of solitude and meditation focusing on the topic and question are the essential preparatory steps for the inspiration that eventually enables a creative synthesis” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32). This process is an explication of the findings the research has illuminated, linking the phenomenological data, the researcher’s reflections, and the literature. The process of writing during this phase creates an order and makes meaning from the discoveries and themes that have emerged. I found this process to give me great clarity over my findings, which seemed to be a giant mess of overwhelming haze and unprocessed insight during the initial phases.

A potential limitation to the research method could be that it is too subjective. I tried to integrate more intersubjectivity into the research to reduce isolation and broaden perspectives in a way that fosters creativity, incorporating methods developed by Key and Kerr (2011) that expand on Moustakas's original formulation. I used my wider community of co-researchers during the entire research process including classmates, dissertation class, dissertation supervisor, men's therapy group, personal therapy, clinical supervisors, clinical group supervisors, friends, work colleagues and family. Reason and Rowan (1981) as cited in Rose and Loewenthal (2006) warned the researcher might only hear what they want to hear, and advocated the importance of support during data analysis (an aspect not acknowledged by Moustakas). Rose and Loewenthal (1998) as cited in Rose and Loewenthal (2006) strengthened a case for additional support to address blind spots which, they suggest, can emerge especially in the immersion phase - I needed my personal therapist to highlight how my feelings of panic were not only because of the frustrations I felt with the course requirements, but also to do with internal shame I had acquired through my personal history of failing to meet my parent's academic expectations. The heuristic research process is not one that can be hurried or timed by the clock or calendar (Moustakas, 1990, p. 14). The academic requirements to complete a study within a specified time-frame and meet learning outcomes, may be considered a limitation in the context of what Sela-Smith (2002) referred to as the "free-fall surrender to the process" (p. 70). Psychotherapy practice towards authentic growth mimics the heuristic inquiry's need to be unbound by time pressures, where outside time pressures exist and therefore my experience of the competing needs of being unhurried and meeting timeframes formed an important part of my research. To ensure the best possible outcome of this research, I will maintain strict time schedules to dedicate towards the work throughout the year.

## **Conclusion**

Heuristic inquiry forms a research method well aligned to the way psychotherapy values knowledge, particularly the inclusion of the unconscious and matches particularly well to my personal values and world views - both important aspects in experiencing authentic growth under academic demands. The heuristic method is a form of research designed to uncover underlying means of important human experiences and contains important values that align with my literature on authentic growth, particularly with aspects of non-impingement noted in Winnicott's environment and the inclusion of human aspects, including emotions and

beliefs which are largely unaccounted for in most other research methods. To ensure I have a successful experience, I will implement structure and a high level of effort and focus into my research, through following the six steps of initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis. Limitations of the research method include it being too subjective and time sensitive - I will try to minimise these limitations through open discussion with others and maintaining strict time schedules to dedicate towards the work.

## **Chapter Four: Results/Findings**

In this chapter, I aim to outline significant events that occurred during the six phases of the heuristic process, that is, feeling stuck and overwhelmed with feelings in initial engagement; accessing intuition and tacit knowledge during immersion; becoming aware of my False self during incubation; surrendering the False self to reveal the True self during illumination; gaining clarity and insight at the explication stage; and lastly feeling stifled to continue authentically growing during the creative synthesis period.

### **Initial Engagement**

My research started with a feeling of being stuck or paralysed from moving forward in the dissertation process. Academic demands and an academic environment seemed to suck the vibrancy of life out of me, and I found it completely uninteresting and devoid of anything that had meaning to me in that present time. I felt like I was being closed in or restricted from expressing myself. I also felt angry at myself for not just getting on with it and confused about why my anxiety and stress had such a large influence on my life. I also felt guilty for procrastinating, sadness and embarrassment, and feeling broken in some way, resulting in shame for my debilitations. I wanted to have a discovery experience, which would change the way I viewed myself and perceived the world. I wanted to feel enriched by this experience and invigorated by having anxiety and stress drop away from my life.

### **Immersion**

Interestingly, the beginning of the heuristic process contained many of Rogers' conditions for significant learning, as discussed in my "Promoting the True self" chapter. The topic contained a high quality of personal involvement, my feeling and cognitive aspects were in the learning event with a focus on finding meaning and it was all self-initiated. Under these conditions I was discovering meaning in the most unlikely places. For example, while viewing the movie "Sully: Miracle on the Hudson" (Berman et al. 2016), a movie about two pilots being accused of malpractice through scientific flight simulation, which ended with the discovery that the scientific model used for the flight simulator was not realistic enough and the restrictions of scientific assumptions were stopping the truth from surfacing. This movie

stirred up frustration inside me, validated my world views, and produced feelings of being isolated and misunderstood. I discovered feelings of being disconnected with the world I lived in, because I felt it was common to treat unproven scientific based assumptions as factual and this practice came at the expense of not valuing experiential knowledge. I felt like I was being forced to attend a church for a religion I did not believe in. This huge experience due to one small scene in a movie led me to finding literature containing similar frustrations by other therapists, see Slife above, in “Two Different ways of Knowing” chapter. In the same time period, I read a movie review on “Neon Demon” in the New Zealand Herald by Karl Puschmann (2016), “Scratching the Glossy Surface of the Year's Most Intriguing Film” (available in my appendices), where he could not decide if the movie was genius or dumbed down nonsense. How deep does its shallowness go, he pondered? The beautifully stylised movie, purposefully devoid of substance stirred up the frustrations and disconnect I was feeling in my training environment around the teaching having very little impact on how the students practiced in the therapy room. Both instances lead to a new awareness to material in my unconscious that I was previously unaware of, which gave new meaning and understanding of myself, which lead to what Rogers terms “significant learning” and permanently changed my behaviour. I became aware of how growing up mixed race in a small rural town in the early 80’s affected my dilemma to fit in and feel a sense of belonging, or be my authentic self and feel accepted and validated for my difference. I was no longer in a haze of frustration, and I no longer became blindly upset when in environments that could not tolerate differences. I was also no longer upset at myself for procrastinating on school work. I now considered my feelings a reasonable response to the circumstances, which gave my frustrations clarity and reduced inner shame, which allowed my procrastination to lessen. Linking learning to my true experience resulted in me feeling invigorated and alive again, increasing my vitality and motivation for learning. The heuristic method allowed an opening to value the unknown and become aware of material in the unconscious.

I was also discovering meaning through everyday interactions with people. I attended a weekly morning meeting at the North Shore Community Mental Health department in which new clients are presented to the group. On one particular day, there was a presentation on a young Asian girl with extreme debilitations that led to me having a deep reaction to my own Asian heritage, in particular, the academic expectations within this culture and the huge effect it can have on children that do not meet these expectations. Due to my learning disabilities being undiagnosed during my early school years, I had teacher feedback of being incredibly



bright but lacking in effort, leading to experiences of shame and feeling completely misunderstood and missed. On the same day, I started seeing a new client who was also Asian and who also talked at length in his assessment about losing face with his family and being too paranoid to leave his house, out of shame if someone he knew saw him and asked him what he was up to. Being made aware of how my Asian culture had affected my academic shame felt validating for me, I had an answer for why I felt so debilitated in an academic setting and felt renewed agency that I could work on doing something to fix it, which gave me renewed hope. This discovery was not only on a cognitive level but on an emotional level, where I felt very old wounds for the first time in a very long time. Unprocessed grief was starting to become uncovered in a very real authentic experience. I consider this experience to be in line with the beginnings of authentic growth, I had new awareness of my False self, which was created to protect my vulnerable True self during a time of distress and from an environment unequipped for my True self to flourish.

I had a similar experience when I became aware of how my ADHD and Dyslexia learning disabilities affected my self confidence in an academic setting. This occurred when I was working with three separate clients that had deep troubles with their schooling experience. Staying empathetic to the client's emotional pain helped trigger my own deep pain around my learning disabilities - I had been unaware of the magnitude and significance of how much they affected me until I had this bodily experience. I felt deeply missed and misunderstood in a school setting and my heuristic inquiry was helping me to make sense of my feelings and uncover material from my unconscious. It always seemed easier to see aspects of myself in others, rather than seeing these aspects directly in myself. Being open and acquiring new knowledge and learning through being with the question and trusting that shifts will internally occur through reflections on outside sources, requires one to let go of controlling the process of knowledge acquisition. The difference between doing and being comes to mind. When one is engaged in acts of doing to acquire knowledge, one must start with assumptions and perceptions that limit and control the knowledge search, creating a closing down rather than an opening of new ideas. Acts of doing also contain large cognitive bias, where the emotional experience is missed and as such significant unconscious insight is not obtained or uncovered and the beginnings of authentic growth not achieved.

Becoming aware of the effect both Asian cultural expectations and my learning disabilities affected academic stress, allowed me to reclaim a sense of agency towards transforming my

internal shame and academic anxiety and reintegrate with the wider community around me. When I was unsure about what these feelings were, I felt too afraid to confront them or open up to others about them, being worried about what I might find and how others would view me. The deepest fear would be the possibility of being viewed as broken or faulty and being kicked out of the psychotherapy program. I had a similar experience at the end of my second year in the program, where I was told I could only study part time because my lecturers felt that I did not have what it takes for full time study. Having answers to my shame and anxiety, allowed me to open up to others, and receive love and support in my environment that seemed to wash away the shame and anxiety inside of me; and left me feeling validated and integrated in the academic community, increasing my confidence and self-esteem.

### **Incubation**

In the middle of April 2017, my marriage ended, leaving me in an intense state of mourning that caused me to pull away from my dissertation all together. Although I felt guilt and anxiety that I was falling behind in the writing of my dissertation at the time, upon reflection I saw this was a vital step in the heuristic process, as it naturally allowed me to begin the incubation process. I discovered a link between feeling debilitated in fixing my marriage and feeling debilitated to move forward in my assignment writing, where the collapse of my marriage allowed me to process unconscious feelings of shame and inadequacy that were at the heart of both.

Two weeks before my marriage officially broke up, when I was feeling particularly distressed about its impending end and paranoid about my wife's suspect behaviour, I decided to get out of the house and watch a movie the "The Salesman" (Farhadi, 2016), which had great reviews. While waiting in line for a ticket at the movies, a clear inspired thought entered my mind, that said to go to "Beauty and the Beast" (Hoberman, Lieberman, & Condon, 2017) instead. I thought to myself that is an awful idea, it is not my type of movie, has bad ratings, is a musical which I am not particularly fond of; all things pointing to a complete waste of time and money, and logistically it was playing at a much later time - there was nothing positive, rational, or logical about going to see it. Despite my continued internal argument, this inspired thought did not shift - it felt like a solid loving parent patiently waiting for its spoilt child's tantrum to run its course. I felt like I was fighting against a brick wall and eventually felt silly to even question it; I caved in and bought a ticket to Beauty and the

Beast. I then used the touchscreen to pick my seat, which is usually four rows from the front, but the touch screen was broken and the employee behind the counter gave me the seat directly in the middle of the theatre. When I arrived in the movie theatre, I was all alone in the middle seat of a huge theatre until an older Asian man sat at the very back left seat. I felt extremely vulnerable and exposed in this large space where this one person could see me, but I could not see them. The movie was about a beast ashamed for who he is, and having to let a girl go, for him to be free of his inner demons. During the movie, I felt huge uncontrollable grief flowing out of me like a heavy waterfall, full continuous pain violently pouring out of me, without room for breathing in-between. The movie environment was dark, and the sound of the movie was loud, leaving the spotlight and focus off me and on the cinematic event, creating a feeling of added safety to let out my grief. The movie itself showed themes of a Beast misunderstood by society - I later understood this to represent my "otherness" growing up mixed race in rural New Zealand - which were removed enough for me to engage in and created enough distance from me to not be overbearing to the point my defences might kick in and halt the grieving process. I felt good afterwards, like I had released some of my shame in the presence of another, in an environment which represented being completely exposed. I had no idea that this particular movie would unlock unconscious shame and deep painful feelings of being misunderstood - I needed to be in touch with intuitive tacit knowledge and have enough faith in the process to trust going along with it. This experience helped me gain confidence and see value in exposing my vulnerability to the presence of others, which led me to a second experience involving exposing my full vulnerability in front of a group of twelve people. This time, it was in my Experiential Training (ET) group, which is a group therapy setting that forms part of the psychotherapy course. When sitting in the group, I almost instantly fell apart in deep grief, crying profusely in the presence of my classmates and group facilitator. Exposing my full vulnerability in the circle of supporting others created an experience of the constant shame felt inside my stomach region to flow out of me, leaving me feeling different. My shame was similar to Brown (2008)'s definition "intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging" (p. 5). I was experiencing authentic growth through disproving unconscious self-beliefs about being inadequate through the uncovering of these emotions from my unconscious; the exposure of them to relating to others and experiencing support and belonging disproves these deep limiting beliefs which internally changed my sense of myself. I felt like I had been changed in a permanent way, which allowed me to integrate and socialise with my classmates in new ways. I had exposed and disproven a part of my False

self and its departure had revealed my True self, leaving me full of love and gratitude, feeling full of vitality and empowered to act in new and more constructive ways. My experience relating directly to my academic procrastination and having a different sense of myself through the experience, allowed me to reach out to a wide range of supporting others, meet classmates to form study groups, approach student services to help with my learning disabilities; and write and meet with my supervisor more often than I would have otherwise. My growth was of the kind Rogers called significant learning, and it changed my behaviour on a permanent basis.

The process of authentic growth through the disproving of my False self to reveal my True self is a hard experience to articulate. The metaphor of a debate inside my head comes to mind, where the shame for being inadequate (False self) was highly influential and highly hidden from my consciousness and my True self was highly hidden and highly uninfluential to begin with. It was almost like aspects of my False self were influencing me through whispers from the shadows - they were hard to detect and yet highly effective, resulting in debilitating behaviour. The intuitive tacit knowledge that knew of my True self seemed to be hidden in a dark corner in the back of the room. The act of asking the question, in my case “why was I procrastinating” and being open to an answer, as well as my meditation retreat and being focused on the question over a period of time, seemed to draw my attention to things that were happening in my life, such as relating to clients, or watching movies or reading, that contained clues to my own dynamics. I started becoming aware of how internalised parental expectations and my learning disabilities were affecting me on a cognitive and emotional level, and how the feeling of being “other” as an ADHD and dyslexic student created painful similarities to being “other” in Aotearoa due to my mixed racial heritage. The big breakthrough occurred during the grieving of my marriage - I seemed to connect with the deeper emotions of my shame and inadequacies; they were no longer in the shadows; I was able to see them clearly. The True hidden self started with a whisper, but its voice grew louder, letting me know I was more than just my False self. Expressing my False self to the group seemed to transform the idea that I was my False self - it felt ridiculous almost as it left my mouth. I was embarrassed to be saying such ridiculous things, and the support of the group with their contradictory response similarly gave power to the voice of the True self and disempowered the False self to the point that it no longer had an influence on me. Although I still needed to grow, the small parts that were engaged in this healing experience seemed to heal in a way that was instant and permanent.

On 16 April 2017, the third authentic growth experience occurred – I was visiting my parents to talk about my marriage break-up, and my father became angry about circumstances that had happened to me, and the fact I had not protected myself. I tried to calm my father down and suggested he sit with me and connect rather than yell and walk away. As my father continued escalating in his anger (which I understand to be my father feeling hurt for my hurt, but expressing it through the only emotion males often feel they are allowed to express, due to social conditioning), I eventually started to cry a long full sob. Both my mother and father came to comfort me and stayed rubbing my back as I let out my grief. I said I felt like I could never meet my parent's expectations and felt shame and like a failure. My father softened and explained his behaviour as being how he was parented growing up, while also supporting me through disproving my limiting self-beliefs. Getting support from my parents left me feeling better, my stomach feelings were settled significantly, and a further reduction in shame occurred, by dissolving the weight of parental expectations that were particularly pertinent in my Asian culture. My father and mother both stated how proud of me they were, and we all had a moment of authentic meeting, which was a rare family moment.

### **Illumination**

Bearing my vulnerability in the presence of others allowed my unconscious beliefs of shame and inadequacy to rise into my awareness and flow out into my experience. Being met with reactions from others that contradicted these beliefs and gaining a higher awareness of intuitive tacit knowledge that also contradicted these beliefs, allowed me to let them go and become aware of a new and different sense of myself that I consider to be more in line with Winnicott's "True self". I had maintained an intense focus on my research question for eight months - from September 2016 until April 2017 - and in the process of letting it go, I started experiencing large shifts in my sense of self through the act of awareness of my False self and the surrender of it, as outlined in the Southwell (2013) quote, in my "Losing Ourselves to Qualify" chapter.

### **Explication**

Reflecting on the data from literature, illustrated in my appendix section, did deepen my understanding, but it seemed as though it came after the authentic growth event had already

occurred. An example of increased understanding was further insight into Asian parental expectations, with regards to the effect migration had on my father and also his academic expectations of me. My Father was thought of as privileged, being only the second child of eight to head overseas in pursuit of better education and more career opportunities; and I had not considered that this might affect the importance he placed on education and the academic expectations he had for me. Reading (see appendices) about social stereotypes that Asian's are good at school and are perceived by teachers to require less support, and that Asian students are less likely to ask for support (see appendix), helped me make sense of my schooling experience in light of my learning disabilities, which deepened my understanding of my feelings on the matter. I also felt deeply sorry for myself when reading some of the ADHD/Dyslexia literature, in regard to the negative effect it has on students' self-esteem. At the same time, I felt validated, because I was finally feeling understood in new ways – ways that I had missed during my schooling years. Feeling deeply misunderstood became my greatest point of pain and shed light over why I found my research question to hold so much meaning for me. I gained a great amount of clarity on my dynamics and this seemed to reduce stress and anxiety as if it took a great deal of weight off my shoulders. Particularly, it came from understanding that much of my frustration was a very reasonable response to a system that is not built to accommodate my specific personal style of learning. The beginning of the heuristic process allowed me to do things my way and it felt liberating. Being mixed race in Aotearoa has left me with the experience of being “other”, and feeling liberated to express my difference, has become an important part of my lived experience.

### **Creative synthesis**

It was in the process of writing the dissertation that the full weight of academic demands started to impinge on my ability to authentically grow. Meeting learning outcomes required an almost systematic and robotic style of writing which I felt bleached out the colour and vibrancy of myself in the work. Creating more objective perspectives requires one to take out the subjectivity and also take out the high quality of personal involvement and feeling aspects Rogers advocates for significant learning. My experience of authentic growth in the previous chapters seemed to be in agreement with Rogers, as their occurrence seemed to require personal involvement and the respect of feeling aspects to be able to uncover my unconscious aspects of shame and inadequacy, which prompted authentic growth to occur. Another of Rogers suggested conditions for significant growth was self-initiation - academic demands

required strict rules to present the research at a scholarly level as a learning outcome, resulting in the freedom I enjoyed in the heuristic process having to be completely stopped as I conformed to academic demands. Conforming to academic demands was particularly striking in the way it closed down the process of surrender, as quoted by Southwell at the end of the my “Incubation” chapter. This particularly includes stepping into the unknown without attachment to outcome or expectation; that is, not knowing or seeking to control just what ‘ok’ will look like. These aspects are in complete contrast to scholarly standards and my experience of trying to authentically grow under these academic demands was significantly stifled to the degree I found it was not possible to do so. My ability to access intuitive tacit knowledge was also significantly affected under academic demands; I no longer had the ability to access intuitive thoughts or follow them.

My data, resulting in an experience of achieving authentic growth in the heuristic process and failing to achieve authentic growth under academic demands, allowed for an opportunity to compare and contrast the different environmental factors that promote and stifle authentic growth from occurring.

## **Conclusion**

During the initial engagement, I felt overwhelmed with feelings of deadness, anger, anxiety, stress, guilt, procrastination, sadness, embarrassment, and shame. While in immersion, I started to get in touch with intuitive insight and tacit knowledge. In the incubation stage, I started developing faith in the process by following intuitive insight and tacit knowledge even when it did not seem to make any sense to do so, and this led to emotional unconscious insight. During the period of illumination, I became aware of my False self and through the contradictory response of my peers and parents as well as the increase in contradictory tacit knowledge, I was able to surrender my False self to reveal my True self. During the explication phase, I gained increased clarity and understanding, but was left with unanswered questions around the role this had in my authentic growth. In the period of creative synthesis, I noticed the effects academic demands had on me where it stifled my ability to access intuitive tacit knowledge or gain valuable insight through my unconscious and emotive states.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

In this chapter, I will discuss the importance of environmental factors, in regard to building trust and faith, and how this allowed authentic growth to occur. I will then note implications of the authentic growth experience in regard to gaining clarity and how I experienced academic demands shutting down my ability to authentically grow. After that, I will then discuss how Carl Rogers' criteria for meaningful learning related to my experience, starting with the importance of bodily action and how meditation helped me become attuned with intuition and tacit knowledge. I will next reflect on how personal involvement helped cultivate authentic growth, and how academic demands seemed to pull me out of the natural intuitive flow of the unknown that is needed to gain further unconscious insight, which resulted in less personal involvement. Consequently, I will discuss the positive effects of including feeling states in the learning process, alongside cognition; and touch on psychotherapy being faced with similar challenges in the wider world, in regard to evidence-based medicine; and how stripping our feeling states from the learning process creates a training course that is incongruent with what it is teaching. A focus on meaning will be discussed, including the importance of faith. The importance of being self-initiated is also explored, in regard to personal buy in and motivation. I will also go into being evaluated and graded by the learner, and how an academic environment that is focused on assessment creates an impinging environment unconducive to authentic growth. There will also be discussion on how authentic growth created a change in my behaviour by no longer procrastinating as well as on what prohibits meaningful learning.

### **Importance of the Environment**

My agonising procrastination was only experienced in an academic setting, never in the workforce; and it had been occurring over a twenty-two-year time span, without improvement or clarity on my part, despite continued efforts to overcome it. In the beginning of the heuristic process, I discovered a mix of attributes contributing to the paralysing experience, and I was unable to make sense of any of them until I discovered limiting beliefs in my unconscious. The importance of the environment to this experience was in line with the literature, in particular Winnicott's ideas discussed in the beginning of my introduction and within my "Authentic Growth using False self and True self Concepts" chapter, regarding the



“good enough mother” meeting the baby without impingement for the baby’s True self to develop. I experienced and needed relating, non-impinging environments to allow my true experience to flow into the space unencumbered, along with a felt sense of support, to give me the courage to allow shame to flow out of me, allowing my awareness of my own hidden inadequacies. Not only was a non-impinging environment important, but it was also imperative that adequate time was given in this environment to build trust and a feeling of enough safety to allow reliance on it. I needed to build up enough positive experiences with the environment to allow me to develop trust to a satisfactory level, where it would not impinge, and I felt comfortable enough to express myself freely. The environment needed to be reliable and consistent enough to allow this trust to develop. This aspect also parallels Winnicott’s comments about “repeatedly meeting the omnipotence of the infant” as trust would form through repetition. Academic demands seemed to impinge in areas of class work assessment and constructive criticism, for example requiring a student to be a challenger and critique another student’s therapy work presented to the class via video. This creates an impinging environment which possibly affects ongoing trust. A possible alternative might be to allow an open space to discuss ideas that would be helpful for the therapist’s work with the presented client – this would bring the focus on group learning and how to help the client rather than what the student therapist was doing wrong.

Along with trust, another important aspect was faith in the process. Having a positive experience blindly following my intuition (when breaking down in the movie theatre, discussed in my “Results/Findings” chapter under “incubation”) helped increase my faith in the process increasing my courage to continue bringing my vulnerability in other safe settings. Reflecting on how trust was obtained in the movie theatre environment, included - being in the dark, loud noise playing to cover any sound I made, facing away from the guy behind me, placed far away from the guy behind me, being anonymous to this stranger, never having to see this stranger again, and being stimulated by a movie that related to my emotions, but was far enough removed from being directly about me, which made it more comfortable to engage in. The movie theatre conditions remind me of a conversation with a work colleague, who stated he preferred to talk about his shame sitting down rather than standing up, an act of minimising or hiding oneself during the process. Faith in the process producing results was developed by the positive experience I had in the movie theatre. Following my intuitive guidance, I took a step into the unknown without attachment to the outcome, discussed in the Southwell quote on surrender in my reflections on “Losing

Ourselves to Qualify.” On a cognitive level, I did not think this movie made any sense in terms of the type of movie I would find entertaining, but the movie experience allowed me to access and fully express deep underlying grief. Afterwards, I felt a lightness and sense of being less burdened. Anxiety seemed to have fallen away from me, and this positive experience helped me build enough faith to repeat the process - an important factor in building courage to take further leaps of faith into the unknown.

Increasing faith in the process at the movie theatre and having previously built up trust in my ET group through experiencing an emotionally attuned and non-impinging environment, I was able to let go and fall apart in the ET group and the positive experience of doing so led towards me feeling the courage to break down in front of my parents. Each experience provided me with increased faith in the process, increasing my courage to open up in other scenarios. The environment allowed me to access hidden feelings and hidden beliefs in my unconscious, which were the missing pieces I needed to become aware of my False self. Each experience left me feeling less anxious and increased my sense of being connected to others and belonging in my community.

Winnicott’s True-self and False-self concepts, as discussed in my section on “Authentic Growth using False-self and True-self Concepts,” were of great benefit in helping me understand my authentic growth experience. Winnicott’s explanation of feeling vitality when in the True self helped validate my sense of my authentic growth. It is simple to understand and easy to distinguish the difference between feeling alive and full of vitality, compared to feeling dead, unmotivated, and stuck. True-self and False-self concepts, which I found to be a consistent theme in my literature, exactly matched my experience. I came to agree with Sela-Smith that a portion of heuristic inquiry reflects an authentic internal process that is human, as noted in my “Method and Methodology.” I consider Winnicott’s concepts and the Rogers’ criteria for meaningful learning, which I discuss next, to demonstrate similarly accurate qualities.

There seem to me to be areas where my psychotherapy training course could increase alignment with Winnicott’s ideal environment. Removing assessment and grading would take away students’ fear of getting things wrong or feeling shame through criticism in assessment feedback. Supporting increased proficiency in skills and openly discussing benefits and disadvantages of doing things in differently puts a focus on best practice rather than on

personal attributes. A safe non-impinging environment in all areas of the course would foster an academic environment in which it was possible to express emotional vulnerability and creatively make meaning of personal experience. Students would not need to fear being missed, misunderstood, dismissed, or invalidated, in expressing their emotions in the classroom. An increase in, reliable and consistent holding in the psychotherapy training environment could occur. Academic demands could be better aligned with other parts of the course, such as therapy groups and supervision, to enhance a supportive, non-impinging environment. This would allow students to access very real and authentic personal material, and students personal meaning making could increase student engagement. In traditional academic settings, I had struggled to make sense of myself during the previous twenty-two years. This was due to the academic environment being too consumed with “doing” and prioritising an intellectualized, cognitive understanding to allow much-needed space to access intuition, tacit knowledge, and felt emotional material arising from my unconscious through “being”. In order to bring a sense of safety amongst students, the academic environment could allow room and space for beingness and create “doing” activities based on what surfaces in the being state, for example, allowing students the time to self-explore issues and topics that may arise for them to aid their process of understanding instead of stifling such processes with heavy workloads and tight deadlines focused on “doing” activities which barely allows any room for self-exploration. Impinging “doing” activities include activities where the student is trying to produce an outcome, in an extreme sense this could be described as a receive and regurgitate process, under a reward and punishment system, where students strive for an “A” grade by producing what they think their lecturer wants, because they cannot bear the shame of a lower grade. Trusting in the environment and increasing faith that the process will produce new self-awareness would allow an open platform for students’ inner experiences, developing student empowerment, self-esteem, courage, and inner confidence. Building trust and safety in an academic setting and building faith in the possibility of authentic growth through academic learning would increase over time, through constant positive authentic growth experiences and create momentum through continued increases in trust and faith in the process. When comparing the list of nonthreatening environmental factors in the movie theatre listed above to current academic environments, the presence of a brightly lit room packed full of people, sitting in close proximity and possibly all facing towards an individual when that individual speaks, feels more confrontational and demanding, with more spotlight and focus on assessment or grades or one’s ability for specific performance, in contrast to a single nearby presence situated relatively far away in a

dark non-impinging movie theatre, which cradles much like a womb; it is a supporting presence nearby, but non-impinging and holding no expectations on me. I envision that a classroom arranged with people lying down in a darkened room, heads in a circle all looking up, for example, could completely change the classroom dynamic, and experimentation with room setups could help increase trust and safety in the academic setting. Having to get it right when expressing new emerging unconscious material that has not yet been fully understood, leaves one feeling foolish, vulnerable, and exposed. I concluded that I could authentically grow in an environment I feel safe and comfortable in and wonder if creating such environments would positively affect modern Western societies' faith that we can grow authentically through complications in our life.

In conclusion, a non-impinging environment seemed vital in my ability to authentically grow, because it gave me the courage to bear vulnerabilities and access deep unconscious material. Courage was directly bolstered through the development of trust in the environment and faith in the process. Winnicott's True/False-self concepts provided clear and distinguishing features that were easy to apply and fit to my experience, and as such, provided clarity and validation toward my authentic growth. Academic environments could bolster an ability to promote authentic growth, through valuing student self-exploration and creating non-impinging environments in all student interactions, creating a reliable, and consistent environment that fostered student's trust in the environment to safely self-explore and produce new awareness of the vulnerable unprocessed unconscious material needed to bring about authentic growth.

### **Learning from the field of bodily action**

As stated in my "Promoting the True Self - Authentic Growth" section, Rogers (1969) differentiates "meaningful learning" to emerge in the field of bodily action, and non-meaningful learning involving only the mind. My experience of authentic growth included the need to express all of the aspects that make me human, on top of cognitive states - this included emotional and feeling states of which, I will expand on later, and sensations in my body in which I will now delve into here.

An increase in my awareness of bodily sensations seemed useful for providing clues to uncovering unconscious material. I started with strong feelings within the pit of my stomach,

which I would later discover was shame; and a shaky nervous energy running throughout my entire body which I would later discover was anxiety and panic. I also had a very visceral experience of these feelings washing away and disappearing instantly, during the time I received love and support from my ET group.

Visiting a Vipassana centre for twelve days, which included a ten-day silent retreat and intense meditation practice, allowed me to quiet distracting thoughts and increase my awareness of sensations in my body; and build up faith in the possibilities of drastic changes being possible, due to many examples occurring; such as painful symptoms running up and down my legs disappearing in an instant, and long-term aches and pain in my knees and shoulder also disappearing. The fact that I could not understand my debilitating dynamics for twenty-two years, despite constant efforts to think my way out of them, lead me to believe the great value in Rogers' field of bodily action; and I think this was vital in my ability to authentically grow. I found it interesting that quietening my thoughts through meditation practice helped open me to become more receptive to tacit knowledge and intuition discussed by Moustakas (1990) in my "Incubation" chapter, because the academic requirement to engage in a busy mind with busy thoughts seem to value acts of doing the exact opposite. I found it vital to the process of authentic growth to extricate acts of doing - including forced structured goal-orientated thinking common to academic demands and helpful to the process of disengaging in any attachment to outcomes - through activities such as meditation that help quieten the mind and reduce distraction from the awareness of intuition, unconscious insight, and tacit knowledge. Rogers does not directly note the value of bolstering awareness of intuition and tacit knowledge through the disengagement from "doing acts" and engaging in acts of "being", and I consider this to be a worthy addition. I will expand on "being" vs. "doing" as a common theme later in this chapter.

In the psychotherapy course, there is an inclusion of class exercises to increase body awareness. However, the balance in academic activities seemed heavily biased in favour of cognitive thinking with discussion of class readings and presentations. Addressing the balance could prove beneficial in creating a course more in line with psychotherapy practice which requires thinking, feeling, and being aware of bodily sensations.

In conclusion, I found the process of emerging from the field of bodily action, as stated by Rogers, to be in line with my experience of needing to express all human traits in the learning

process to achieve authentic growth. Awareness of bodily sensations provided helpful clues to underlying unconscious dynamics. Quietening the cognitive distractions through meditation practice, and other “being” activity seemed conducive to me engaging in such a task; academic demands and other “doing” activities seemed to inhibit my ability to engage in such a manner. Adjusting a psychotherapy course to allow for a more balanced value between cognition, feelings, and bodily sensations could prove beneficial for psychotherapy students as they would require the same values later in their psychotherapy practice.

### **Personal Involvement**

Rogers (1969) also emphasises quality of personal involvement for meaningful learning - my choice of topic was heavily influenced by my lecturer for my research paper, whom had suggested the best heuristic studies contained topics that contained strong meaning for the writer. Without personal involvement, I doubt I could have experienced such strong feelings, or achieved authentic growth. It took the breakdown of my marriage, which felt intensely personal; to understand the deeper debilitations I had in regard to my performance anxiety. It was, in particular, the similarities between my internalised expectations for being a good husband and my internalised expectations for being a successful student as well as the way I would unconsciously give up or collapse in both as a defence around unbearable feelings. This seemed to form an unconscious defensive protection strategy - if I did not give my best efforts and failed, I am protected from definitely being a failure because I did not give it my best efforts in the first place. I wonder if a topic being personally meaningful is an indicator that there is unconscious material underneath to be uncovered. In my case, I had strong reactions to my frustration in an academic environment, and the unconscious shame underneath was a huge part of why I had those reactions. Without personal involvement, my ability to access emotional material, discussed later in this chapter, would have been hindered. I also felt more motivated to work on my dissertation in the beginning due to it being personal to me; the topic gave the work more context, meaning, and purpose, which flowed into aspects of Winnicott’s True self feeling alive and increasing one’s sense of vitality.

Academic assignments do not usually contain elements of personal involvement, which could hinder one’s ability to authentically grow. In regard to my procrastination in writing my dissertation, once I had my authentic growth experience and made sense of my newly

discovered unconscious material that revealed why I was doing so, I was no longer debilitated by it. It then felt less relevant to me to continue to read and write about that particular topic. By the time I was writing the dissertation, I felt my natural quest for insight had moved on, and I started to feel resentful again for being forced to spend so much time and energy on something that now had less meaning and effect on my life. My intuition was now revealing aspects of my mixed race, and how my experience of being classed as “other” resulted in me feeling ashamed to reveal my difference. This was where I now wanted to focus, because this was what was surfacing in my present moment. It was also new insight and it was helpful in explaining why I found being misunderstood so painful, including feeling “other” in my learning disabilities and feeling misunderstood in an academic environment. This was now where my passion was, yet I did not have the time to continue the heuristic process of discovery, because I was now required to meet deadlines and finish the creative synthesis phase of writing and deliver a finished product. My passion and purpose seemed to be in a different place to the writing, leaving me resentful and demotivated. Becoming more in touch with intuition through less forced activity created a natural sense of purpose and flow towards natural discovery, where the most productive course of action seemed to be to get out of the way and flow with it. By contrast, contradictory forced action felt like I was fighting against the tide, losing important clues that could unlock my unconscious. The act of writing during a time I was naturally entering more discovery, felt jarring and out of sync, preventing further authentic growth. Authentic growth needed freedom from restricting factors and contradictory actions. There was a disconnect between the act of producing my findings and an authentic growth process that released attachment to outcome. This seemed to connect to certain aspects of time. Authentic growth seemed to focus mainly on the present, where academic demands seemed to be located in the past and future, writing about past findings to produce a future product. Being located in the past may hinder the ability to stay in the present and therefore could hinder authentic growth. Being located in the present could be a useful aspect to add to Rogers’ criteria for meaningful learning. A larger focus on present actions could enhance authentic growth within a psychotherapy training program. Rilke (2002) eloquently wrote in his letters to a young poet:

I would like to beg you, dear Sir, as well as I can, to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don’t search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And

the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer. p. (13-14).

Within this context, I am advocating for student choice to receive a training program that is student-focused and engaging in activities that bolsters student development, rather than those focused on what benefits the university. For example, if students want to produce research for the university, this could be made as a separate activity or pathway that is a choice and not as a requirement of passing the course. If therapy clients were required by their therapist to produce a 3-page testimonial and ten hours of letter-drop marketing for that therapist's practice as a requirement to receiving therapy, this would pose trust issues for the client with regards to the therapist's intentions. Benefits of creating research for the university, which includes bolstering the university program and having the title of a Masters degree, may help psychotherapists gain employment overseas; however, it is worth pointing out that this practice comes at a cost to personal involvement and authentic growth.

In conclusion, personal involvement from the beginning awarded the research a strong sense of meaning, context and purpose, creating aliveness and passion that differed from my previous academic assignments and formed an important aspect toward achieving authentic growth. However, this did not last. Academic demands are often not conducive to personal involvement in the present. In the case of my research, while there was personal involvement in the beginning, as the demands increased, this seemed to restrict my ability to continue to keep the research focused on ongoing present personal involvement as it evolved over time. This suggested to me the tendency for academic demands to be located in the past. Through the process of writing my dissertation, I found that personal aspects continually changed over time, and in order to stay personally involved, there is a need to stay located in the present moment. A psychotherapy training course with a strong focus on students' present personal involvement could possibly enhance students' ability to authentically grow.

### **Righting the imbalance between feeling and cognitive states**

Rogers promotes the whole person in both his feeling and cognitive aspects in the event of learning. The beginning of the heuristic process allowed me to enter the learning event as a whole person, in ways that I was unable to accomplish in previous academic assignments.



Similar to the importance of bodily action, it was the new experience of having the feeling aspects alongside the usual cognitive aspects that was vital in allowing me to have a breakthrough experience, something I was unable to do over the previous twenty-two years of problem-solving through cognitive thinking only. As Rilke expressed in the quote above, I needed to live the answer to have my breakthrough around shame and inadequacy in my feeling states, and it took an event of emotionally falling apart to achieve this breakthrough. Once I had gained new awareness through bodily sensation clues and deeper feeling states, I could then use this new data to cognitively make sense of myself. Through my experience, I was able to discover the source - intense shame and feelings of inadequacy - and from this experience, I was able to cognitively discover a failure to meet internalised expectations, brought about by the particular importance placed on academic success through my Asian heritage and my failure to meet them due to particular struggles with learning disabilities, including ADHD and dyslexia. My experience as being seen as “Other” due to my mixed race, and growing up in rural New Zealand in the 80’s, also resulted in very painful feelings around my difference – not always being adequately valued, validated, and tolerated in the community I lived in; resulting in similar feelings when my learning disabilities (feeling of being “Other”) were not adequately acknowledged and accounted for in an academic environment. It was not that I considered feelings to be more important than cognition; one seemed to feed into the other. I considered cognition without feeling experiences to be like the act of making sense of research without the data; and being in a society and academic environment that focuses only on cognition, seems to me to be missing out on something vitally important in the learning process. “Academia has a hard time accepting the idea that a disciplined subjectivity is just as important as any kind of objectivity - and much harder to specify, weigh and measure” (Rowan, 2005, p. 2). Possible issues with objectivity are documented in my “Two Different ways of Knowing” section; and it is my opinion that the value of being perceived to be getting closer to some pseudo illusionary truth is not worth the cost of achieving authentic growth. This applies when designing a psychotherapy training program and trying to compromise a program by serving two opposing goals at the same time, only serves to create further confusion and frustration for the program’s students because of the contradictions, as explained in this “Discussion” chapter, that exist between them and how the contradictions of one impacts on the ability to perform the other.

As noted above, once I had run through my cognitive process making sense of my breakthrough during the writing of this dissertation, I felt ready to open up to another

breakthrough experience, involving my hidden feelings and unconscious material; but the learning environment then changed, in that I was then needing to meet academic demands to finish my dissertation on my first breakthrough. I had to abide by certain academic structures to meet learning outcomes that felt systematic and slightly robotic, taking away my ability to express all of my humanly functions. My cognitive state focused on tying things off and bringing things to an end, but my feelings were suggesting the search was not yet over. Academic demands seemed to result in an environment that focused on cognitive states at the expense of feeling states, while I needed an environment that allowed one to seamlessly flow from one to the other. I no longer had the space to embrace the unknown because there was a direct focus on articulating what was already known, which requires cognition without feelings. My experience of objectivism shutting down my ability to continue gaining awareness of my unconscious was in alignment with Slife (2004)'s comments, as noted in "Two different ways of knowing." Again, I noticed a theme of "doing" vs "being". At this point, "being" seemed to be needed to uncover the unconscious or access intuition or tacit knowledge; and "doing", which is based on what is known, seemed to stop my ability to authentically grow. Academic demands seemed to require students to compartmentalise and separate different human functions to complete academic tasks efficiently; for example, a student needs to put aside other human traits to focus on just cognition in order to write a theoretical assignment. Authentic growth seems to require the ability to express all human traits together, without compartmentalising them into separate defined acts; this includes the act of "being". In an interview with Hillary and Bradford Keeney on reimagining psychotherapy, Keeney, Keeney, & Gibney (2012) agrees: "the performance of being liberates us from the tyranny of being framed by any attachment to knowing" (p. 66).

"Knowing" also impacts on our ability to change. If we "know," our sense of self is fixed; and without any possibility for an alternative self, we no longer hold a perspective conducive to growing, as such fixed conditions hinder our ability to become aware of our current False-self aspects. Discovering a faulty "fixed" self would be too shameful and debilitating and contain no benefit to the person in doing so, if there was no alternative self to grow into. One can describe this as a snake needing to grow new skin before it can discard its old one. If my new unconscious awareness left me feeling like I truly was inadequate as a person, I would be left with a lowered self-esteem and feel resentment and regret over commencing the discovery journey. I suspect that some awareness of an alternative possibility, or respect for the unknown or inkling that there may exist an alternative True-self would be needed to find

the courage to authentically grow – making adjustments to academic demands for the tolerance of this ambiguity could unlock students’ ability to engage in an authentic growth process. Holding in mind a possibility of an alternative self formed part of my tacit knowledge, and this was communicated to me through intuitive thought, which allowed me to have the courage to become receptive to hidden feelings in my unconscious. Had I only thought that these debilitations were a true fixed part of me, I could only ever be my False self. Without conditions that allowed me to be aware of subtle intuitive thought and consider the existence of an alternative True-self, it would have been too painful to engage in the process, and there would be resulting resistance to do so.

In conclusion, I found that having access to the expression of emotional states seemed to form a vital aspect needed for me to authentically grow, because it facilitated the awareness of new material from my unconscious. I am therefore of the opinion that any perceived benefits of objectivity are not worth the costs of achieving authentic growth in a psychotherapy training program and trying to compromise by meeting both goals only creates more confusion and frustration for the students. An increased tolerance for ambiguity contained within academic demands could create a safe environment to engage in the process of authentic growth and be open to the emergence of an alternative true self.

### **Focus on meaning**

Rogers also promotes “meaning” as the essence of learning, and again, my experience strongly matched this statement. With a focus of meaning in mind, I started to use everyday occurrences in my life to gain new perspectives on my dynamics, for example, through watching movies, reading movie reviews, and working with clients. From fully immersing myself in the meaning of my topic, I was able to gain the relevant emotional and cognitive insight. Without engaging the focus on meaning in my mind, I do not think authentic growth would have occurred, because I would have missed too many insights and clues around my unconscious dynamics.

An aspect of focusing on meaning that allowed me to authentically grow was an assumption that I did not know any answers, and a belief that new insight would come. This allowed an open space for material in my unconscious to unravel into my consciousness, without being dismissed by my perceived better judgement. This not only provided new insight aligned

with my True-self, but also gave contrasting insight which directly illuminated my False-self. This allowed me the opportunity to disprove, surrender, and release previous false self-perceptions and beliefs which in turn allowed more of my authentic True-self to emerge.

Academic demands require that we articulate what we think we already know. In my experience, such articulation is counterproductive to the process of authentic growth. Letting go of what we perceive we know requires more open-mindedness in allowing intuitive thought to significantly change the way we view ourselves in the world. Academic demands usually value scientifically measured data over other perspectives, which can diminish a student's ability to authentically grow. By highly valuing the measured/scientific perspective, this trumps the student's inner perspective and our value for the unknown, which stops students from gaining awareness of their False-self and limits the emergence of the True-self. The prioritisation of measured/scientific perspectives also leads to a focus and value of published research literature, instead of personal involvement, emotional response, self-initiation, and self-assessment – all of which are Rogers' suggested criteria for meaningful learning.

In conclusion, my experience of achieving authentic growth matched Rogers' comments on the essence of learning being "meaning". A focus on meaning was required to gain insight into my unconscious dynamics received through everyday occurrences. Releasing assumptions of "I know" complemented a focus on meaning with regards to authentic growth. It also highlights how academic demands prioritise measured/scientific perspectives over the False and True self perspective, to the detriment of authentic growth; and also creates a focus on written literature, which takes the learning process away from many of Rogers' criteria.

### **Self-initiated learning - I'll do it my way.**

Rogers also stated the importance of being self-initiated, which makes a difference to the learner by being persuasive. Having the flexibility to self-initiate this research in comparison to previous assignments, I experienced benefits in practicality, self-relevance, meaningfulness, purposefulness, and an increase in self-engagement and vitality in the work. Creating more personal relevance and meaningfulness evoked more emotional responses in myself which lead to more authentic change.

Being self-initiated allowed the research to flow with a sense of purpose that was connected to my intuition without contradiction. The research process became an integrated holistic whole, leaving me feeling alive and motivated, which is in line with Winnicott's description of the True-self. By comparison, other academic assignments which involved learning about things that had little meaning to me, did not engage my intuition and tacit knowledge in the same way. Academic demands could easily be adjusted by allowing more leeway for student self-initiation to bridge the gap between achieving tasks and retaining holistic whole-being traits that make us human such as intuition and emotive states. Such traits could be reengaged, increasing students' sense of aliveness.

Becoming practical seemed to be an emerging advantage to self-initiation. I noticed a conflict between wanting to learn practical skills to be a therapist and instead being taught to be an academic. The end of year Psychotherapy student feedback also revealed a strong theme of students wanting more practical therapy skills on the course. The overwhelming need for students to gain therapy skills seemed to be taught as an afterthought to the main objective of academic requirements. This created frustration and student objection because fundamentally in therapy, academic requirements are viewed to be less important than skills. A case could be made that training psychotherapists in an academic environment creates a disconnection between university goals and therapy learning goals. In the current course set-up, to become a psychotherapist, one must tolerate instead being taught how to be an academic. Bergson's (1990) ideas for teaching, which were not dissimilar from psychoanalyst ideas, came to an end due to this difference in goals that "defines the contemporary understanding of student development; that is, that we cannot say much more than that growth means increasing membership in our community and becoming - whatever this might mean - one of us" (p. 3). It could be understood that once students start engaging with placement clients, the need for students to be taught therapy skills takes on an even larger priority in the student's mind. This takes priority over academic requirements, because of the ethical and moral dimension of needing skills to ease the suffering of fellow human beings that are often in very vulnerable and desperate places. Clinical work often involves managing risks that could have very dangerous consequences. I formed the impression that the psychotherapy lecturers on the course were stuck somewhere in the middle, wanting to provide more psychotherapy skills training, but also realising that any further demands on top of the very time-consuming academic criteria would cause further unreasonable stress and overload to the students. I felt

this resulted in lost opportunities for skills training. Being taught to be an academic did not contain enough practical advantages for the students and did not engage in enough personal meaning for many of them. This mismatch between what academic demands offered and the skills that psychotherapy students were after, impinged on self-initiated learning. There exists an opportunity for psychotherapy training courses to become more skills focused, bridging the gap between students' needs and course requirements. It is not lost on me that what I am advocating for is a course that is more student-focused, which unsurprisingly aligns with Rogers' ideals, fitting with his background in client-centred therapy.

Despite objections by students, there seems to exist an expectation that students should “suck it up” and “play the academic game”; “tick the boxes” in order to get through the course. It is worth noting this situation leaves me feeling deadened and unmotivated in line with False-self aspects, quite the opposite to self-initiated learning discussed above. Forgetting one's reasonable and real objection and just getting on with it, does not gel with the psychotherapeutic ideals of living one's truth or being authentic to one's true experience. Therapists are taught to uncover meaning and move towards understanding, rather than ignore or pretend that it is not there; yet lecturers are bound by the requirements of a university setting and are therefore prevented from resolving conflict through psychotherapy ideals.

In conclusion, self-initiation formed another important aspect on my ability to authentically grow because it engaged Rogers' other aspects of holding personal involvement, which adds emotional aspects to the material. There was an integrated holistic match, free from contradictions, that produced an invigorating quality reminiscent of the True self. Being practical seemed an emerging theme in regard to self-initiation, and academic demands could focus on the needs of the students to learn therapist skills. This would allow students more scope to personalise their learning to increase levels of self-initiation and motivated engagement.

### **Graded by the learner. Did it work? Are you right? Do you feel different?**

Lastly, Rogers discussed meaningful learning benefiting from being evaluated and graded by the learner and no one else. I found it interesting that the authentic growth I experienced in the heuristic study did not seem to be impeded in the beginning, even though it was to be graded. This fact might have something to do with the way I separated the heuristic experience and the writing of that experience. The demands of the heuristic process seemed to allow authentic growth to happen in a way that academic demands of the dissertation did not. This seems congruent with Rogers' and Winnicott's ideas and conditions discussed herewith. The beginning of the heuristic experience felt quite free and open, and I was able to embrace the unknown without attachment to an outcome. I only started the serious part of the writing process after I had my first authentic experience; it was the start of this writing period where I felt the weight of evaluation and grading. Being graded by the learner allows a release of control and frees up restriction from any desired outcome. As discussed earlier in this chapter, assessment that is implicit in academic demands restricts and controls this process, and impinges on the creation of a trusting environment, both inhibiting authentic growth.

The evaluation of psychotherapy students through objective marking criteria can be argued to be a flawed fit, because psychotherapy is a subjective art as much as a science and requires students to bring their emotional selves and vulnerabilities quite different to other learning disciplines. Seashore (1975) lists growth aspects students are usually not aware of when entering such programs:

I don't recall having written anything that would have helped a potential student understand the likelihood of his spending far more energy on survival than on growth... that you would have to re-examine, renegotiate, or just plain retreat from most of the significant relationships in your life...growth and regression just might be intertwined in such a way that one step forward might require several steps backward...for those with spouses, partners, and children, that although they filled out the application as an individual, they actually were enrolling their family in a change program...(p. 1).

Psychotherapy values mirroring and validation, meeting clients exactly where they are to create an environment conducive to the expression of emotional material, and creating a safe

and trustworthy place to explore one's vulnerability with the utmost care. The environment matches with the task. Psychotherapy training courses could refocus on ways to foster emotional insight needed for authentic growth, rather than assessment and academic criteria. This would create an environment more aligned for students to bring their vulnerable and emotional self. Upahi, Issa, & Oyelekan, (2015) states assessment should be relevant, authentic, and approximate skills in real-life situations. In real life therapy situations, when a therapist gets things wrong, they try to talk it through with the client, understanding what went wrong and the reasons why; this is a rupture and repair model which privileges the continued relationship. However, academic demands focus on objective assessment that is ill-matched to a student's subjective emotional responses. Students are clueless as to which of their emotional responses are being assessed and may therefore feel reluctant to express them. This is not to say connective personal dialogue is not possible between students and lecturers. Establishing a supportive and understanding environment is a step towards a Winnicottian ideal which would allow the True self to emerge. Valuing these sorts of reparative support structures as the norm could increase student engagement and meaningful learning opportunities.

In conclusion, being graded by the learner allows a release of control and restriction from any desired outcome, conducive to authentic growth. This is another opportunity for academic demands to allow the dynamics of creativity to flourish in a psychotherapy training course. There seems to be a mismatch in required environmental factors between academic demands for objective assessment and the psychotherapy student's requirements for a non-judgemental space to bring their emotional responses in the course. Bridging this gap could allow meaningful student learning conducive to psychotherapy values for knowledge and an increase in student engagement.

### **Change in behaviour**

Congruent with Rogers' ideas about authenticity, the growth I experienced has influenced my behaviour and had a meaningful impact on my studies. Once I had achieved some clarity about my hidden unconscious feelings and limiting beliefs, I was able to identify what parts of my feeling responses were as a consequence of my history and which parts were my frustration to the very real tension that exists between psychotherapy's core values and its modes of training.



Understanding my history on a cognitive level was not enough. I needed to access the depth of my despair through feeling states to become aware of my False-self. Accessing my unconscious was the vital step needed to make sense of my confusing dynamics, and having a safe non-impinging environment was a key element in becoming aware of hidden parts in my unconscious. I am still aware of my shameful feelings when completing assignments, yet they are not as strong and I no longer feel ashamed for having these feelings. I previously did not understand why I was procrastinating. The problem seemed huge and unsurmountable, like a repeated battle I could not overcome. I felt worn down, hopeless, and powerless in my situation. I was afraid to look at it and had no idea why that was, leaving me frustrated and deflated. I tried to concentrate so much of my efforts on achievement in order to gain approval and compensate for feelings of inadequacy; so much so that my capacity for enjoyment was impaired (Sidney, 2004). After gaining clarity, I no longer give myself a hard time for finding it difficult to work on assignments. I do not feel guilty or judge myself as lazy, and I know I am not broken or defective because of these feelings; in my current perspective, they were a reasonable response to painful schooling experiences I had and a response to an environment that was not set up to value my way of learning. I now feel more loving towards myself and my experience, and am less affected by my feelings of shame, which used to debilitate and paralyse me. I am now able to embark in my studies in a free and liberated manner. The dynamics surrounding my academic shame helped me to make sense of many other confusing aspects in my life, such as the way I act in all interpersonal relationships and has given me an opportunity to make rewarding changes in the way I interact in relationships in the future. The dissertation has also allowed me to reinterpret the way I want to practice as a psychotherapist, in regards to how I can incorporate theory into my practice, without dishonouring my personal value towards authentic growth; I find that I better understand the authentic growth process and how theory can be incorporated in a complimentary way. On days I struggle to write, I take time out without stress or worry and am able to effortlessly put pen to paper after such a break. I now feel reenergised, hopeful and empowered. I have reclaimed my agency because I understand what and why things are happening, and I have experienced hope through growing. I am able to communicate where I stand in a clear and concise way and because this response is different to my past acting out responses, I am experiencing different reactions from relating to others that are supportive and understanding. This increases my sense of agency, empowerment, self-esteem and sense of belonging.

In conclusion, through authentic growth, I experienced significant changes in my feeling states and in my behaviour, congruent with Rogers' key indicators for successful meaningful learning. I no longer procrastinate during assignment writing or feel weighted down by my shame, and I experience benefits in the way I interact with relating others that increases my sense of agency, self-esteem, and sense of belonging.

### **Prohibiting growth**

Rogers (1969) suggests that what prohibits meaningful learning is a prescribed curriculum in which everyone undergoes standardized lectures, assignments, and tests which are assessed and graded by the instructor. This set of criteria is not dissimilar to Meriläinen and Piispanen's (2012) description of themed-based teaching, references at the beginning of "Two different ways of knowing."

I discovered that in my experience, the process of authentic growth requires resisting compromise and contradiction. There exists significant scope for academic environments and academic demands to eradicate contradictions and compromises to create a training program conducive to authentic growth. Not only were academic demands and authentic growth unable to be mixed, but the activity of one seemed to negatively affect my ability to perform the other. As discussed in my section on "Righting the imbalance between feeling and cognitive states," academic demands seem to have a debilitating effect, diminishing my ability to connect to my intuition. By contrast, the process of authentic growth seems to hinder my ability to meet academic demands. I experienced that wavering between the performance of both to be inefficient, incredibly time-consuming, and frustrating. Similarly, the emotional toll of seeing therapy clients and undertaking personal therapy intruded on my ability to meet academic demands. In previous studies, during my Bachelor of Property and Bachelor of Commerce degrees, I could easily work on assignment writing after a day of class or placement work, but in psychotherapy, I found it difficult to achieve any productivity. Referring to notes in my heuristic journal, I noted a metaphor likening the process to trying to finish academic writing after grieving at a funeral of a close family member. I found that in my process, my head is so foggy and full of unconscious dynamics after an emotional day that the act of academic writing seemed completely unproductive and counterintuitive to the space and time needed to allow unconscious understanding to emerge

in order to make sense of the fog. Reading and writing after an emotional day are tasks I could not find a way to achieve. With time being a limited resource, priorities needed to be made; and because academic demands are linked to requirements needed to pass papers, such activities were pursued with increased difficulty. That pressure, on top of processing all that occurs in therapy spaces, is it a wonder that authentic growth is hindered in the pursuit of both.

Given these circumstances, my experience indicates that technically, given enough time and space, it seems possible at a stretch to meet academic demands and authentically grow throughout the year by swinging from one to the other. The chance that this might happen would increase if a psychotherapy student studied part-time, had minimal other distracting outside activities (such as work) during term times, and no assignment deadlines looming in the near future. I found places within the training course that met Winnicott's and Rogers' conditions for unconscious material to be uncovered. These were in client work, supervision, and therapy groups such as Experiential Training group, Community Korero group and the Men's group – these were places in which I felt I belonged. However, the time it took to complete these activities seemed to be inadequately linked to gaining points to pass papers, leaving me with the impression that the university was not able to acknowledge their value. Due to time constraints and priority setting discussed above, any possible authentic growth on top of meeting academic demands may be severely compromised.

The major point I want to stress is that even though it may be possible to achieve both, the process is taxing, soul-destroying, and feels quite contradictory to psychotherapy values. Living a life full of vitality with the allowance to express a holistic whole-being free from contradiction and full of purpose, feels different to experiencing constant contradictions through a closing down of what it is that makes us fully human, which then introduces a feeling of deadness and demotivation. One struggles to enjoy authenticity if they are required to intermittently live in an unauthentic manner. The argument for a psychotherapy course that contains both opportunities for authentic growth and competing and conflicting academic demands is in my opinion flawed, contradictory, and damaging. If I were to add to Rogers' criteria, I would state that the conditions for meaningful learning require uncompromising loyalty, that is, they are either followed faithfully or they are not. Because the importance of being an academic has little relation to being an effective psychotherapist, the paradox that one must pass academic criteria to practice as a psychotherapist leaves me feeling pessimistic

and despondent at times, especially when one must engage in activity that could debilitate abilities that facilitate therapeutic healing, such as intuition and tacit knowledge.

In conclusion, within my particular psychotherapy training program, academic demands that are connected to gaining points to pass papers seem to hinder authentic growth, while other aspects seemed to exist within the course that were conducive to promoting authentic growth. With enough time and space, it seemed possible to achieve authentic growth while meeting academic demands, but I question why anyone would want to because compromise may come at a price of inefficiency and frustration that could spoil the entire experience.

### **Implications to the field of psychotherapy**

The psychotherapy program seemed to be split between teaching under two different ways of knowing – there exists certain aspects that allow for authentic growth, such as therapy groups and supervision, and other aspects which caused one to move away from authentic growth, such as assessment and standardised lectures. Learning under two different masters with two conflicting values for knowledge, that negatively affect one another, understandably results in confusion, frustration and demotivation for the students. My research indicates an opportunity to address such failings by creating an integrated and congruent learning program, that teaches in line with how psychotherapy values knowledge. An integrated training environment would not only benefit psychotherapy trainee's, but could also develop important implications on how psychotherapy is marketed to the world. A clear cohesive identity and the promotion for what psychotherapy stands for, could emerge. Training psychotherapy, in an academic format that intrinsically goes against many key psychotherapy values, results in incongruence and a blurred identity. My heuristic journaling included a memory that came to mind; where a former manager demanded his staff act one way, when he himself acted in the contrary, resulting in the staff losing respect for him, demotivation, and reduced pride in the company they worked for and the profession they worked in. In contrast a previous managers congruence, instilled pride and passion in the work environment, and that instilled invigorated energy into the staff, so much so, that it was a common occurrence that any client visiting that work environment would seriously ask "How do I get a job here?" Being incongruent is a signal of being inauthentic or acting under a False self, and my experience of being in an incongruent course, leaves me feeling the same demotivation and sense of deadness, describing the False self. I should feel immense pride,

for the wonderful profession of psychotherapy and all the wonderful things it stands for, with the same sense of passion I had, when I first entered the course and when I engage in therapy work with clients. As described above, the intrinsic difference in the value of knowing, between psychotherapy and academia does not seem to me, to be able to be compromised for one another and my experience seems to fit the writings of Lacan, Fraud and Taubman who claim that quality psychotherapy training has no place being taught under current academic criteria. There is a strong need for psychotherapy to promote the value of the unconscious in its learning environments and to experience the advantages of its increased value within mainstream society. My research resulted in an experience that matched both Winnicott and Rogers concepts, and contributes to a body of research that offers clear suggestions for psychotherapy training to become more congruent with its core values. I believe an integrated training environment could result in an increase of pride and passion for the psychotherapy profession and cultivate a strong belief in what it stands for. Positive, invigorated, motivated energetic psychotherapy students and their lecturers would draw curiosity from the wider community around them and promote the value of living an authentic meaningful life full of passion and purpose. The negative social stigma surrounding psychotherapy could be surpassed, when psychotherapists become lived examples of the benefits that psychotherapy brings to the healing of the soul. After telling someone we are psychotherapists, the response, should be “wow I want have some of that,” rather than a negative defensive; “so does that mean you are reading my mind right now?” I do not believe that the psychotherapy profession is taking advantage of all the positive aspects psychotherapy has to offer. Doing so would create a clear, congruent, positive identity that the wider community would be drawn to. Just as the academic environment was pivotal in influencing psychoanalysis to disavow its own knowledge, described in my section on “How Psychotherapy Lost its way to Science”, it could act as a spring board to instigate positive change, with the promotion of integration, resulting in authentic growth and a professional community living its True Self aspects.

Tolerating incongruence in psychotherapy training flows into allowing incongruence within the psychotherapy profession in the workforce. One such example is evidence-based-medicine. Keeney, et al, (2012) states that “any talk therapist subscribing to evidence-based research is signing a death warrant for their profession, the ultimate variable for an outcome study is a single pill, not complex communication” (p. 67). Psychotherapy seems to have disavowed their own knowledge, to receive widespread recognition, and in doing so, seemed to have diminished the importance their knowledge processed. Morstyn (2010) articulates an

ethical concern, very much in line with my research, concerning the loss of authentic relationship, that could come from trying to fit psychotherapy into an objective evidence-based paradigm:

Evidence-based psychotherapy, which requires that psychotherapists ignore their thoughts and feelings with individual patients in favour of following standardized manuals and guidelines, is being increasingly promoted as part of evidence-based medicine (EBM). However, this represents an inappropriate extension of logical empiricist philosophy and significance testing methodology, on which evidence-based medicine is founded, to psychotherapy. It sacrifices a search for truth in psychotherapy, for an illusory search for certainty. The inevitable consequence of this is that psychotherapy becomes a commoditised pseudorelationship. Merleau-Ponty provides an alternative ontology, based on the primacy of perception, that gives an epistemological foundation for the search for truth and integration as a basis for psychotherapy. The practice of evidence-based psychotherapy raises serious ethical concerns about pseudorelationships being passed off as authentic, which could lead to missed opportunities to engage mentally ill patients in treatment and to reinforcement of their damaging sense of alienation (p 225).

It is a damaging sense of alienation, experienced by the mental health community, that seems to create the social stigma to begin with, and I question - is it any wonder that the majority of public have no idea about the difference between psychotherapy, psychology or psychiatry, given the lack of clear identity psychotherapy has left itself, as a cost to tolerating such incongruence.

I am hopeful emerging neuroscience can bridge the gap between the two values of knowledge of psychotherapy and science in the future. I have also realised that my stance is not opposed to all theory and research, but rather a wish to have theory and research grounded in an authentic experience that allows meaningful context and wisdom to emerge. I also wonder if the University could be engaged about the benefits of allowing psychotherapy to be trained under different, less restrictive conditions. I would hope this research could be used as a catalyst to motivate the psychotherapy community to do just that.

In conclusion, my research indicates an issue between academia and psychotherapy, in regard to two different values for knowing, that creates an incongruent training program, with negative effects on students of the discipline and the ability of psychotherapy, to portray a clear and concise image and identity to its wider community. My research contributes to a body of research that provides clear direction, in ways that could create an integrated psychotherapy training course, possibly resulting in important implications toward rectifying issues psychotherapy has in marketing itself. Noticing incongruence within psychotherapy training also serves to highlight similar challenges that psychotherapy faces in the work force. A strong stance that articulates psychotherapy core values would help promote its unique strengths to the mental health community.

### **Implications to the wider world**

Whether we choose to acknowledge them or not, unconscious dynamics affect us in all aspects of life, including work and schooling environments. Benefits of growing through unconscious dynamics to individuals and greater society could include feeling more confidence, vitality, motivation, empowerment, self-esteem, and sense of purpose. The amount of disruption caused to society due to the acting out of unconscious dynamics, or due to a demotivated workforce, could be significant. Making adjustments that allowed authentic growth to occur could create a more productive, efficient, connected, and rewarding world to live in. Society seems to be evaluate both work and schooling on objective criteria, yet inquiry into the real reasons as to why students fail learning objectives or why employees are fired by their employer may have to do with personal attitudes towards the work or employer/teacher, rather than the inability to meet objectives. The underlying forces behind these personal attitudes involve unconscious dynamics. Lack of awareness of unconscious dynamics creates management support systems and performance reviews that may be incongruent with the real issues employees/students are facing, creating a demotivating state of affairs that further increases negative attitudes towards work or employers/teachers. Environments that result in demotivated and frustrated workers/students will likely fail to achieve desired goals. The act of taking joint responsibility in finding solutions, including the awareness of environmental factors and conditions that promote authentic growth, may prove a viable way of addressing both employment and school problems. Real life examples can be found comparing Japan and the United States of American in regard to the motor industry,

where increased Japanese employer loyalty created benefits over their American counterparts.

Increasing “faith” in authentic growth could also be of great benefit to our society. Having a place in the education system for young children to experience such growth could help boost self-confidence, and help children become more robust and resourced to handle themselves under stress. Incorporating more meaningful learning topics could increase engagement and decrease disengaged children from acting out their distress in class. Schooling experiences that negatively affect children’s self-esteem occurs far too frequently. I have a great issue with the excuses typically made when children fail, e.g. that “school was not for them” or that “they are not academically inclined.” Schooling in Aotearoa is compulsory up to a certain age; and I consider creating an environment that is inclusive to all types, and ensuring self-esteem is bolstered or remained intact, to be worthy of serious consideration and diligent application. Valuing a space for supportive non-impinging environmental aspects could have a positive effect on vitality and connection and relieve stress, which could have positive effects on health and reduce health system costs. The number of people suffering from mental health issues in our prison system is also significant. Creating environments that enhance self-esteem, empowerment, and connection could contribute towards reducing crime, bolster connections, and create a sense of belonging in our communities.

In conclusion, unconscious dynamics affect us whether we choose to acknowledge them or not. Being aware of these dynamics and creating environments conducive to authentic growth could create more integrated environments that result in creating more confident, motivated, empowered societies, which would benefit positive and productive outcomes, promote good health, and increase quality of life.

## **Conclusion**

My intention in this research was to discover if it was possible for me to authentically grow under the academic demands of this dissertation. In the beginning, I found that I was able to have an authentic growth experience during the heuristic process, to the extent that it remained outside the influence of academic demands. Once my research progressed, it was increasingly influenced by academic demands, and I struggled to maintain authentic growth.



Experiencing these contrasting experiences became a useful basis for comparison and contrast. I wondered about the difference and came to develop some understanding of why academic demands halted authentic growth. This led me to explore possibilities of adapting a psychotherapy training program that would allow for the authentic growth process to occur. The key finding, where academic demands blocked my ability to authentically grow, was that of two different ways of knowing. Academic intellectual understanding can be contrasted with psychotherapeutic whole-person experience, including key personal aspects needed to grow authentically, which revolved around the value of the unconscious and the act of being with the unknown. Placing value on uncovering the unconscious and unknown as part of the growth process, highlights the importance of a non-impinging environment. In the right supporting environment, developing an environment that allows the hidden feelings and beliefs unconsciously influencing our behaviour to surface into consciousness, creates an opportunity to develop awareness of and eventually disprove hidden feelings and limiting beliefs. This results in a more authentic sense of ourselves through the discarding of the False self and gives permission for the True self to re-emerge. The conditions for authentic growth, which I discovered on the basis of personal experience, were comparable to those stated by Rogers, which includes the need to learn using all human aspects – feelings, emotions, body sensations, and cognitive thinking – with a subject that is personal, with a focus on meaning, self-assessment, and relative freedom from external objective assessment. Alongside Rogers' criteria, I also discovered additional criteria that could be helpful, including bolstering intuition through reducing acts of “doing” and increasing acts of “being”; focusing on the present moment in time; increasing faith in the process; and maintaining uncompromising loyalty to these conditions.

Academic demands, including aspects of the demands for this dissertation, usually contain aspects that contradict the required conditions for authentic growth; not only resulting in the inability to perform both at the same time, but also noticing how the engagement of one affects the ability to perform the other. Due to the conflict between the nature of academic demands and the process of authentic growth, students' ability to authentically grow under academic demands will depend largely on the availability of sufficient extra time and space to fluctuate between performing them both, and the student's ability to tolerate the inevitable frustrations in doing so.

Trying to teach a mathematics class constricted only to the use of drawing pictures would be considered absurd by many, yet teaching psychotherapy in a structure where teaching and learning demands are fundamentally incompatible with the way psychotherapy values knowledge, seems to have continued relatively unacknowledged and uncontested by mainstream psychotherapy as well as mainstream society. In 1925, Freud stated, “The relation between education and psychoanalytic treatment will probably before long be the subject for a detailed investigation” (p. 274). My dissertation is a small step towards that investigation, which I hope will continue and eventually bring about change.

### **Study limitations**

Key limitations to my research include restrictions in size and scale. Due to size constraints, I had to scale back the focus more than I would have liked for a study of this size. As the research data is based on my experience alone, although my experience fit closely with the previous literature, the sample size is small. A study involving a larger sample size and alternative research methodologies could be beneficial. Due to my study being on the subjective matter of authentic growth, I have grounded the experience in Winnicott’s theory of the True and False self. Although Rogers’ and Winnicott’s theory are both well-regarded in the psychotherapy profession and I think this is as good a theory as any to base my research on, there remains the question of the “one size fits all” aspects of the True and False self approach. Lastly, the lack of more empirical evidence to answer this question, which is paradoxically the very thing I am writing about, could be regarded as suspect by some researchers.

My dissertation experience was richly rewarding and even transformative for me. During the process, I felt feelings of validation, understanding, shame, sorrow, grief, anger, and frustration. I was able to gain clarity and understanding; and most importantly, I had the experience of my authentic self giving me the feeling of empowerment, self-esteem, passion, purpose, aliveness, vitality, vigour, and belonging. I am left hopeful for the future of psychotherapy training, giving future students similar experiences of being authentic, passionate, and having pride for the profession of psychotherapy and everything it stands for. The gift of creating a society that is authentic, helping us to live in a way that is fully human, abundant with passion and with a strong sense of purpose, is surely a worthy cause

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## Appendices

### **Asian expectations.**

Studies conducted in the Western world show academic problems to be one of the most common reported sources of stress for adolescents, as they spend considerable amounts of time within school environments (Genshaft and Broyles 1991). It is considered that, stress is the result of an individual's perception they do not have the resources to cope with a perceived situation in the past, present or future (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). It is induced by fear and the reaction of the body to that fear, and is the instinctive precursor for 'fight' or 'flight' (Robotham and Julian 2006). The same situation might be regarded as stressful by one individual, but not stressful for another, due to differences between individuals. It is important to note, it is the individual's perception and interpretation of demands placed upon him/her that causes harm, not the demands themselves (Ross et al. 1999). This is particularly relevant in the academic arena, where students are increasingly being expected to cope with larger workloads, which concomitantly leads to an increase in self-doubt, regarding their aptitude and the issue of fear of failure (Jones 1993, Tan & Yates, 2011, p. 391). It was found that Chinese students appeared to work harder and had more test anxiety than their counterparts in the West who experienced less academic stress (Salili, Chiu, & Lai, 2001, Tan & Yates, 2011, p. 391). Findings from a study conducted with Asian and Asian-American adolescents have suggested that while striving for academic excellence might result in positive outcomes, negative consequences such as excessive stress and mental health problems were also clearly evident (Shek 1995). Several studies have found Asian parents and teachers to attach great importance to education where their expectations exert a strong influence on students (Lew 2006; Chen and Stevenson 1995; Sue and Okazaki 1990). Confucian heritage culture (CHC) values related to education, effort and academic achievement in particular are highly correlated with high parental expectations (Sue and Okazaki 1990). Teachers and students also, bring to the classroom higher expectations derived from their cultural values, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes (Scollon and Scollon 1995; Hofstede 1986, Tan & Yates, 2011, p. 404). Qin (2008) found parent's educational expectations, stressing educational achievement to the exclusion of other development aspects, such as social and emotional needs to be one of the key differences between high achieving Chinese American adolescents experiencing psychological distress and high

achieving Chinese American adolescents who were psychologically healthy. Qin (2008) noted many of the adolescents experiencing psychological distress reported that their education was one of the key reasons their parents stayed in the United States, despite hardships they experienced following immigration. As a consequence, these students had internalized parental expectations and had a very intense need to achieve. The parents of high achieving nondistressed adolescents, on the other hand, communicated broader goals to their children, such as the importance of having a good purpose in life and being a good citizen and moral person, rather than focus exclusively on academic achievement, findings that are consistent with similar studies of immigrant Asians (Costigan, Hua, & Su, 2010, Corwyn & Bradley, 2008, Li, 2001, 2004, Yang, 2007, Zhou, Siu, & Xin, 2003). Chinese people viewed academic achievement as a route to earn money, acquire luxuries, enter prestigious schools and eventually establish an outstanding career (Lau, Nicholls, Thorkildsen, & Patashnick, 2000). ‘Face’—one’s reputation—was of great concern in the Chinese culture and excelling well at school was highly valued in a family. Not meeting one’s own expectations and the expectations of others resulted in a loss of face in a wider social context and loss of confidence and support from one’s family (Yeh and Huang 1996). Wong, Salili, Ho, Mak, Lai, & Lam, (2005) found that Hong Kong Chinese adolescents’ major sources of stress came from wanting to excel personally and to please their parents, because they saw academic achievement as a filial duty and a source of pride for the family, while school failure was associated with feelings of familial shame. Chinese students living in New Zealand, displayed attributes consistent to Asian students located in countries of the previous studies above, for example they were found to display stronger achievement orientation to their parents’ response to failure and a greater sense of obligation to their parents compared to students from Western cultures, causing higher levels of academic stress (Chung and Walkey 1989). Maxwell (2007) argues that attributing the academic success of Chinese students exclusively to cultural and family values, fails to acknowledge the community resources and social supports that contribute to achievement. Instead, the individual is blamed, magnifying the negative psychological impact of lower achievement. Thus, the model minority stereotype has resulted in the neglect of Chinese children in terms of resource allocation and educational policy development (Li, 2004, Xu, Connelly, He, & Phillion, 2007). The students themselves who are struggling also may not draw attention to their academic difficulties. That is, because of the stereotype, Chinese students who are struggling in school may be hesitant to seek help because of embarrassment or shame in revealing academic difficulties. These students are then at risk for feeling isolated and depressed (Costigan, et al., 2010. p. 236). The image of



Chinese students as success stories includes the implicit assumption that Chinese youth do not experience any problems, a position that ignores the psychological and social problems they experience (Li, 2009; Zhou, et al., 2009). This is an unfortunate situation, as many Chinese adolescents experience high levels of psychological distress, particularly in the form of depression, anxiety, loneliness, and isolation (Zhou, et al., 2009). Of great concern, Chinese American youth also have a higher than average rates of suicide (Zhou et al., 2009) (Costigan, et al., 2010. p. 236-237).

### **ADHD and dyslexia in school experience.**

ADHD or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, is a chronic disorder that is characterized by symptoms of impulsivity, hyperactivity, and inattention (American Psychiatric Association, 1994, 2000). Harrison, Alexander and Armstrong (2013) reported higher levels of depression, stress, and anxiety, associated with increased endorsement of ADHD symptoms by postsecondary students. Individuals with ADHD tend to be at an increased risk for poor outcomes as they age, including social impairment (Mannuzza & Klein, 2000), which may include few friends, poor social skills, and difficulty interacting with members of the opposite sex (Weiss & Hechtman, 1993); concomitant psychopathology, including high rates of affective disorders (Biederman, Faraone, Monuteaux, Bober, & Cadogan, 1993), anxiety disorders (Lomas & Gartside, 1999; Mancini, Van Ameringen, Oakman, & Figueiredo, 1999), and personality disorders (Korotitsch, Smith, Anastopoulos, & Nelson-Gray, 1998); and alcohol or substance use disorders (Flory & Lynam, 2003).

The term “dyslexia” refers to a pattern of learning difficulties consisting in inaccurate or slow and effortful word reading, with weaknesses in decoding and spelling. It is a specific learning disorder, classified among the neurodevelopmental disorders in the Fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2014). Even individuals showing improvements as they grow older continue to take longer to complete reading and writing tasks in academic or professional situations (Hatcher, Snowling, & Griffiths, 2002). Findings, obtained from self-report questionnaires, indicate that dyslexia negatively affect emotional security, daily life, and work productivity. In particular, adults with dyslexia have reported fear of failure, frustration, low self-confidence, difficulties in intimate relationships, and a paucity of friends (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000; McNulty, 2003). Carroll and Iles (2006), findings suggest that having to

read routinely might be an important stressor and source of anxiety for individuals with dyslexia, particularly in situations requiring accuracy in reading and writing, as commonly encountered at university. On the other hand, some studies found no differences between university students with dyslexia and without dyslexia in terms of their symptoms of anxiety and depression (Hoy, Gregg, Wisenbaker, Manglitz, King, and Moreland, 1997, Mattek, & Wierzbicki, 1998; Riddick, Sterling, Farmer, & Morgan, 1999, Nelson, & Gregg, 2012). Differences in the findings may suggest that college students with ADHD and/or dyslexia are a unique subpopulation within the larger population of adults with these disorders and it has been suggested that college students with ADHD possess better coping skills and higher cognitive abilities than does the general population of adults with ADHD (Glutting, Youngstrom, & Watkins, 2005). There are reports in the literature that compared to typically developing undergraduates, university students with dyslexia seem to display lower self-esteem and resilience, and more psychopathological issues (Gregg, Hoy, King, Moreland, & Jagota, 1992, Riddick et al., 1999; Undheim, 2003; Carroll and Iles, 2006). A lower self-esteem can develop unpleasant feelings and emotions, sometimes leading to the onset of depressive symptoms such as lack of interest and energy, depressed mood, pessimism, sadness, self-blame, and sleeping and eating disorders. Several studies point towards students with dyslexia reporting higher levels of depressive symptoms than in the control group (Goldston et al., 2007, Wilson et al., 2009). It has also been demonstrated that other psychological effects can develop in adolescents and young adults with dyslexia, sometimes resulting in various forms of psychopathology (Mugnaini, Lassi, La Malfa, & Albertini, 2009, Drum, Brownstone, Burton-Denmark, & Smith, 2009). In fact, dyslexia has been associated with psychological disorders (Undheim, 2003), and more severe dyslexia, seem to result in higher levels of the associated psychological symptoms. Comorbidities such as dyscalculia, dysorthographia, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) correlate with more severe psychological impairments (Martínez, & Semrud-Clikeman, 2004; Mugnaini et al., 2009). Several studies found that individuals with dyslexia reported experiencing psychophysiological symptoms and psychosomatic disorders such as headache and stomach ache (Willcutt and Pennington, 2000). The literature highlights that adolescents with dyslexia are more likely to withdraw from school (Daniel et al., 2006) and develop social problems (Sabornie, 1994). Notably for school psychologists, children with word reading difficulties and disabilities (RD) tend to report stress in the contexts of performance testing and teacher interactions (Alexander-Passe, 2007), both of which are central to academic functioning in general, and reading instruction in particular:

Many children and young people leave school with little self-esteem and without confidence in their ability to read and write... It is one of the most important responsibilities of nurseries and schools to ensure that all children and young people, irrespective of social, cultural or other differences develop an image of themselves as able to write and with such good linguistic confidence that language becomes a force both in the learning processes in school and education as well as in their lives. This is a basic human, democratic right. (SOU 1997:108, p. 7, 15)

Maughan (1995), found that of the adults with dyslexia, the best adjusted in his study were those who had made choices consistent with their assets rather than their weaknesses. Riddick et al. (1999) concluded that once the subjects in their study had left high-literacy-demand situations, they no longer felt disadvantaged or forced to compare themselves unfavourably with others. It was obvious that the subjects' academic self-esteem was low, considering so few of them (13%) had chosen to go to college in comparison to the population in general (43%). This finding is supported by Zeleke's (2004) review of over 40 studies on academic self-esteem in students with learning disabilities, and also by the study of dyslexic students by Riddick et al. (1999). Nichols, Inglis, Lawson, & MacKay (1988), states; "It may be that because there is a deficit of verbal ability in such children, they come to rely more heavily on nonverbal ability. Such exercise of one kind of ability at the expense of the other may lead to its greater development and even to its overdevelopment" (p.508). Many dyslexic individuals are more creative (Everatt, 1997; Everatt, Steffert & Smythe, 1999) and visually oriented than others (West, 1992, Wolff, & Lundberg, 2002). Lowe (2003) explored the cognitive processes in a group of dyslexic subjects and found that they were inductive by nature and used creativity and intuition to interpret information. Guyer and Friedman (1975) found that LD children appeared to use a nonverbal information processing mode to deal with academic tasks. Galaburda (1985) and Geschwind (1982) have also proposed that the abnormal brain symmetry found in many individuals with dyslexia, indicating that the right planum temporale is just as large as the left, could explain why many dyslexic individuals show talents in areas such as the visual arts, architecture and engineering. Larsen, Høien, Lundberg and Ødegaard (1990) showed that the right-hemisphere planum was larger than normal in the dyslexic subjects, indicating that the visuospatial functions associated with the right side of the brain might be more developed. None of the above studies note a growth of non-verbal ability at the expense of verbal development. It is possible dyslexic individuals

are more right hemisphere oriented from the start, or the brain symmetry might indicate the plasticity of the brain. Reports on dyslexia being associated with superior visuospatial and creative abilities are contradictory (Eckert, & Leonard, 2003), and often of an anecdotal character. To date, the interpretation of the non-verbal improvement is speculative and needs more research, Burden and Burdett (2005) states:

There were many constructs self-esteem, self-worth, self-efficacy, and locus of control that were helpful in understanding the reactions of the subjects in this study, all of which point in the same direction, to the importance of a sense of agency: 'We tend to value ourselves in terms of how competent we think we are, how confident we are in performing well when required to do so, how much in control of the outcomes we consider ourselves to be, the ways in which we react to disappointment and failure, the strategies that we have at our disposal and the amount of effort we are prepared to invest in order to succeed' (p. 20).

In contrast, studies show resigned subjects expressed a feeling that trying hard was pointless, indicating a more external locus of control. The help received was not good or sufficient and they seemed paralysed by their difficulties, sensing that they could not do anything about it. There is a relationship between internal locus of control and higher achievement and achievement motivation (Bosworth & Murray, 1983; Findley & Cooper, 1983).

Livneh, Lott and Antonak (2004) examined the psychosocial adaptation in individuals with various physical, sensory, psychiatric, learning and cognitive disabilities and found that adaptive respondents demonstrated perceived personal control over health outcomes. 'Persistence' was also identified as a vital positive characteristic in other research on the psychosocial outcome of dyslexia, which is accounted for in the resilience research section in the introduction. Galbraith and Alexander (2005) suggest: 'If children can see their own role in the educational process as significant they may be encouraged to persevere in the face of difficulty' (p. 29). Harter and Jackson (1993) found that the relatively high global self-worth in the relaxed group seemed to be the result of a deprecation of school achievements, including reading and writing. This is in line with the two routes to self-esteem enhancement; either raise one's level of competence or deprecate the importance of such competence.

Early diagnosis of dyslexia seems to be a protective factor against poor effects because it allows the child to identify and gradually acknowledge their difficulties, in particular realising they are normal in other aspects, but have a specific difficulty with reading and writing.

Compartmentalization of a learning disability is an essential characteristic of the stages of acceptance (Higgins, Raskind, Goldberg, & Herman, 2002). In contrast to the resigned, the relaxed subjects had found a niche, such as sports, social activities or a special interest where they did well and which made them view themselves positively. Also, they revealed better peer and family relationships. Their mothers appeared more accepting and less worried than those in the resigned group. It appears that dyslexic individuals with a special talent or interest and without a family emphasis on scholastic achievements gradually adjust well and do not suffer from a sense of low self-worth. Find ref This had however not been achieved without hard work on their part. A majority had worked a great deal with their reading, writing and home-work and received extensive help from parents, particularly their mothers. Early on they had also struggled with feelings of inferiority, but they felt that they had gradually adjusted to their situation. They had managed to regard the dyslexia as only one aspect of themselves. For children old enough to differentiate between different domains (Harter, 1993), children with dyslexia report lower academic self-concepts than their normally achieving peers, but their global self-worth is not significantly lower (Frederickson & Jacobs, 2001, Renick & Harter, 1989).

### **The Neon Demon – Movie Review**

*The Neon Demon* is either the best film I've seen this year or the worst film I've seen this year. I can't decide. It might just be both.

Since watching the film last week I've thought about what I think about it a lot. I've discussed it with other people. Hell, I even spoke to writer/director Nicolas Winding Refn about it.

The result of all that conversation and contemplation is that I still can't make up my mind.

In fact, the more I think and talk and ponder and ruminate on the film, the less concrete my position becomes. I've flip-flopped on this damn movie more than a slippery politician during election year.

It's annoying because this sort of stuff is usually black and white. I dig it or I don't.

Inappropriately enough, given the movie's dazzlingly bold and stylistically unique use of colour, *The Neon Demon* has landed firmly in a grey area of indecision.

I love *The Neon Demon* but I also kind of hate it. It's so brilliant in so many ways but it's also all manner of terrible. It's intelligent while also being obvious and dumb. It's the product of a singular vision, but also shamelessly apes genius.

It clearly prizes style over substance, which would usually be instant grounds for dismissal, only here that's kind of the point of the whole film. Does this make it guilty of the exact thing it's accusing others of, or is this a brilliantly subversive commentary on the very same?

The movie's obviously loaded with visual metaphors and meaning but then again maybe it's not. There's no way to work out what any of it means as these don't appear to follow any internal logic or really make a lick of sense when you try to decode them.

But is this because I'm not smart enough to get it, or have I been reading too much into the movie and there's not actually anything there to get? How deep does its shallowness go?

Where it gets tricky is working out how much of this is intentional, making *The Neon Demon* genius, and how much of it is not, making it a failure.

So, what's the movie about, then? Modelling. Yep. I know, I know. It's hardly a topic that warrants such thought or examination.

Prepare to groan louder; it's a coming of age story about a teenager trying to make it big in Los Angeles' nasty modelling scene. It is, essentially, *America's Next Top Model*.

Right up until the moment it's not and it transforms into a sort of glossy horror/thriller type thing.

That moment, when it comes (heh) in a lonely morgue, is almost calculated to send people out of the cinema. Not because it's grisly or gruesome but more because of the sheer audacity of going *there*.

The film's horror and bad taste only amplifies, and this is the point when I really started enjoying the film.

Firstly, because Refn drops the thinky, loaded, stuff and just starts running with the shock schlock. And secondly because all its big reveals are confidently dropped in damn near mute silence. The epitome of show don't tell.

Refn is undoubtedly the best sensory director working today. His use of colour and talent in marrying image and music is simply unrivalled.

But he's also burdened with an artist's pretension. He managed to keep a lid on it on his superb breakthrough film, the ultra-stylish crime flick *Drive*, but succumbed horrifically on

his follow-up, the ultra-stylish trainwreck *Only God Forgives*.

Here, I think he was shooting for a middle ground. Telling an exceedingly simple story, but also filling every shot with metaphor and meaning. But, just like *Only God Forgives*, they're so veiled and obtuse as to be rendered indecipherable.

Unless, of course, they're not there at all and I've been reading more into this thing than intended, or even possible.

But as the film obviously riffs on the strange surrealism of David Lynch's masterpiece *Mulholland Drive* and the considered, perfectionist cinematography of Stanley Kubrick, then you have to believe that something like the sudden and random appearance of a mountain lion is a visual metaphor that means something. But what, gawddammit?

I actually asked Refn, just straight out blurted, "what does the mountain lion *mean*?" because I had to know. Was I failing in understanding the deeper elements of this movie? Or was it as superficial as it appeared?

Yes.

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