I'm Torturing Myself:

A Thematic Analysis of Psychoanalytic Literature

on the Internal Persecutory Experience

Kiersten Boughen

A dissertation submitted to

Auckland University of Technology

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Psychotherapy

Department of Psychotherapy

School of Public Health and Psychosocial Studies

2013

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

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 a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date: 23 September 2013

Acknowledgements

My thanks go to the many people who have supported me through my study.

To my supervisor Stephen Appel, thank you for your continual support, encouragement, and patience.

Thanks to the other members of my supervision group, Claudia Gross and Graham Southwell. Special thanks to Claudia for our many discussions about our respective research.

To my family, friends and colleagues, thank you all for your interest in my study and your many acts of kindness which have supported and encouraged me. Thanks especially to Margot Hinton for many weekends of studying together. They kept me going through the difficult times of writing this dissertation.

To Linde Rosenberg and Jazelle Alderdice, thank you both for your guidance in relating this topic to my personal and professional development.

Thank you to Kyle MacDonald for our discussions during my clinical training which helped me determine my dissertation topic.

To my husband Brendan and our son Ari, I am profoundly grateful to you both for your unfailing support and faith in me throughout my many years of study. I could not have done this without you.

Abstract

Psychotherapists are familiar with working with clients who persistently self-sabotage and mentally torture themselves. This is inevitably re-enacted in the therapeutic setting and, through the process of projective identification, client and therapist become entangled in the internal persecutory experience. This dissertation is an analysis of the clinical material identified in peer-reviewed psychoanalytic literature on the experience of the internal persecutor in the therapeutic setting. A thematic analysis within an interpretive hermeneutic framework was critically applied to the literature and the salient patterns of meaning, or themes, were identified. Non-hierarchical networks of themes were developed based on the interrelationships among the themes. The results are six thematic networks: Destruction and Desolation, Hidden/Disowned, Stuckness, Disorienting, Bridging, and Connection and Transformation. The themes are discussed in the context of wider psychoanalytic theory and the clinical implications of these findings are considered. The analysis of the interrelationships between the themes reveals the internal persecutory experience as a destructive, self-perpetuating, persecutory cycle. The therapeutic process is identified in the analysis as bridging and transforming the internal persecutory experience.

Look for the connections between things
- that's what makes us human.
Roald Hoffman

Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation is about the experience of the internal persecutor in the therapy setting. Clients who are mentally torturing themselves and those around them are well known to psychotherapists. At one end of the spectrum, the internal persecutory experience is so common as to be virtually ubiquitous. Most of us recognise the harsh inner critic within. At the other end of the spectrum are those we recognise as our most difficult clients; those who are trapped in an endless self-sabotaging cycle. In the therapeutic setting, through the process of projective identification, we become entangled in this harsh and destructive internal persecutory world. The experience of the internal persecutor is the experience of both therapist and client.

My interest in the concept of the internal persecutor began during my training as a psychotherapist. In my practice of both individual and group therapy I have seen clients whose symptoms range from self-harming behaviours, dangerously restricted eating, drug and alcohol abuse, remaining in abusive relationships, and repeatedly and chronically self-blaming for actual or perceived inadequacies and failures. At times the therapy could feel stuck at the point of "why do I keep doing this?" and "how do I stop this?" Corradi reflected on the repetitive nature of human experience, observing: "However well or ill one's style serves a person, it tends to repeat itself, over and over. Such repetitions are most striking, and puzzling, when they are maladaptive, repeatedly leading to failure or damage to the self" (2009, p. 478). Clinically, this raises the question as to how to work with clients who are seemingly trapped in an endless experience of self-persecution. Through discussions with my clinical supervisors I decided I wanted to know more about the phenomenon of internal persecution.

This dissertation is a study of the clinical material in 27 articles that have not previously been brought together in one research project. By means of a thematic analysis, the specific, salient patterns of meaning across the data are sought and will be analysed in depth.

Literature Review

This dissertation is based on an in-depth analysis of the themes identified in a selection of relevant, published, psychoanalytic texts, which will form the basis of a review of the therapeutic experience of the internal persecutor. In this brief literature review I provide a context for the research and explore the development of the concept of internal persecution through the literature of some the major psychoanalytic theorists.

Throughout the history of psychoanalysis, as far back as Freud, psychoanalysts have been trying to understand and explain the destructive and persecutory aspects of

the self (Savege Scharff, 2003). Some clients can be understood to have a predominantly masochistic personality structure in which self-defeating thoughts and behaviours are unconsciously believed to be either necessary to work towards a secondary gain, or essential to prevent an even more painful outcome (McWilliams, 1994). However, there is a self-persecutory component to all psychopathology, regardless of personality structure (1994), and it is this component that is the focus of study in this dissertation.

While Freud did not use the term internal persecutor, his concept of the death drive can be seen as a precursor. He developed the concept of the death drive in order to explain the on-going self-destructive impulses and profound self-hatred he observed in his clinical work (Kernberg, 2001; Waska, 2002a; Woodmansey, 1966). For Freud, the death drive was a biological imperative, and accordingly he observed that "*the aim of all life is death*" (Freud, 1920, p. 38, emphasis in the original).

Freud's structural theory further explores the harsh and self-tormenting aspects of the self through the introduction of the concept of the super-ego, which acts as a moral guide, monitoring, judging and censoring thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Bott Spillius, Milton, Garvey, Couve, & Steiner, 2001). According to classical Freudian theory, the super-ego develops at around age four or five and represents internalised rules and standards for behaviours, "You *ought* to be like this" (Freud, 1923, p. 34, emphasis in the original), as well as providing a prohibitive function, "You *may not be like this*" (Freud, 1923, p. 34, emphasis in the original). Freud recognised the superego as potentially harsh and cruel, suggesting that "the super-ego can become a kind of gathering-place for the death instincts" (Freud, 1923, p. 54). The term persecutory super-ego, denoting the harsh, self-critical, condemning, self-hating, and tormenting aspects of the self (Bott Spillius et al., 2001; Stein, 2002; Zack, 2005), has subsequently entered the psychoanalytic lexicon.

Anna Freud also emphasised the process of internalising and introjecting as shaping the development of the superego. Where these introjects are critical or aggressive, Anna Freud suggested that rather than immediately turning this against the self, the child imitates the aggressor by "an active assault on the outside world" (A. Freud, 1936, p. 116), a process she referred to as identification with the aggressor. Identification with the aggressor is a defensive process by which the child transforms from being threatened into the one who is threatening (Tsigounis & Savege Scharff, 2003).

Freud's concept of the death drive has been controversial and widely critiqued (Savege Scharff, 2003; Waska, 2002a). Klein, however, identified the death drive as the core of psychic life and human existence (Eigen, 1995). Klein's theory shifts the emphasis of the death drive from biological to psychological (Savege Scharff, 2003; Waska, 2002a).

According to Kleinian theory, the terrifying threat of annihilation, that is the death drive, is present from the very start of life (Rosenfeld, 1983; Savege Scharff, 2003; Waska, 2002a). As Eigen explains:

> The ego's primary anxiety is of being annihilated, not by external danger, but by a destructive force within. The ego can not localise the danger. It can not pin down where it comes from or what it is. It has no frame of reference for the destructive force within. (1995, p. 613)

In order to manage and survive this internal destructive impulse and threat to the self, the destructive impulse is expelled by means of projection onto an external object. The external object now embodies the destructive force and is experienced as a dangerous persecutor (Waska, 2002a). This external persecutor is subsequently introjected and experienced as an internal persecutor (Bott Spillius et al., 2001; Eigen, 1995). Through this process of projection and introjection, the individual feels threatened by both internal and external persecutors (Meissner, 1980).

The process of introjection and projection is seen as the way in which the ego relates to the world, introjecting both good objects (those which are satisfying) and bad objects (those which are frustrating or those objects which have been the recipient of the aggressive projections). Projection is the means by which the ego expresses feelings, needs and desires (Waska, 2002a), while introjection shapes the development of the ego (Meissner, 1980; Waska, 2002a). What is introjected in turn shapes what is projected.

Building on Klein's work, Bion (1959) identified projective identification as the foundation for healthy development. According to Bion, healthy development relies on the maternal figure introjecting, experiencing, and modifying the infant's hostility and dread. Bion, like Klein, identified an innate destructiveness, hatred, and envy as present from the start of life, however, he also emphasised the role of the environment. Bion theorised that a repeated lack of maternal containment of the infant's unbearable emotions intensifies the emotion and that in response the individual makes a retaliatory, destructive attack on internal links and links between the self and the other. The destructive attacks on the linking function severs healthy emotional and thought links and all that survives are links that are "perverse, cruel, and sterile" (1959, p. 315).

In healthy development, projective identification establishes a positive, self-perpetuating cycle, while in pathological situations, or if the bad object overwhelms the internal experience of the individual, "the same internal processes generate endless despair, mistrust, emptiness, and persecution" (Waska, 2002a, p. 374). Thus, the formation of an internal persecutory experience becomes self-perpetuating, in that persecution becomes expected. Expectation, reinforced by actual life events, strengthens the internal persecutory objects, which in turn shapes the individual's relationships to self and others in a way that attracts more bad experiences (Tsigounis & Savege Scharff, 2003). As Tsigounis and Savege Scharff suggest, the internal persecutor is "a harsh, retaliatory part of the self that controls and torments *self and other*" (2003, p. 3, emphasis added). In states of high arousal, in spite of desperately needing the good object, the ego may paradoxically be incapable of taking it in (Rosenfeld, 1983).

Unlike Kleinian theory, which places an emphasis on the intra-psychic experience, object relations theorists emphasise the role of the environment in the creation of the persecutory experience. Guntrip, for example, states that "persecutory anxiety, arises in the first place as a result of an actual bad, persecutory environment" (as cited in Tsigounis & Savege Scharff, 2003, p. 11). Winnicott (1965), likewise emphasising the environment, wrote of good and bad things happening to the infant. Central to his theory is the relationship between mother and infant. Self and other destructiveness results from failures of this relationship rather than from the death instinct, which Winnicott, like Freud, places at a later stage of development.

Fairbairn (1952) saw self-destructive processes as the means by which the child internalises the bad aspects of the parent, based on the child's need to remain attached to the parent. The need to relate to the other overrides the pain of relating to the bad object (Tsigounis & Savege Scharff, 2003), yet the need to relate to the bad object is experienced as intolerable. Through the internalising of the bad external object the dependent child gains control of the badness by locating it inside the self. For Fairbairn, the compromise is that: "Outer security is thus purchased at the price of inner security; and his [*sic*] ego is henceforth left at the mercy of a band of internal . . . persecutors, against which defences have to be, first hastily erected, and later laboriously consolidated" (Fairbairn, 1952, p. 65).

These bad aspects may be actual bad experiences, as in the case of abuse, or may be aspects of the parent experienced by the child as bad or oppressive (Tsigounis & Savege Scharff, 2003). Fairbairn (1952) saw this, to some extent, as a normal process

of human development in that all children will have some experience of bad objects that they internalise.

Based on the unconscious need for the parent, internalised objects (good or bad) remain powerful throughout people's lives. The attachment to internalised objects becomes part of the personality structure. Where these objects are predominantly persecutory, this powerful internal process becomes deeply engrained in the psychic structure to the extent that the "patient's tie to the persecutory object is the only methodology available to the patient to retain a sense of contact with another human being. There is no other way to relate" (Tsigounis, 2003, p. 225).

Research Aims

The overall aim of this dissertation is to gain an understanding of the internal persecutory experience, particularly as it manifests in the clinical setting. The question I am exploring in this research project is "what is the experience of the internal persecutor in the therapeutic setting?"

The first challenge in addressing such a broad question has been to define the parameters of the study, a difficulty that troubled me for much of the research process. As I was nearing the end stages of my data analysis, I came across an article about photographer David Liittschwager. Since 2006, he and a team of scientists have been engaged in a research project which involves taking a one-cubic-foot metal frame to different locations around the world and, over a 24 hour period, recording the biodiversity occupying and moving through that defined space. Researcher Jasper Slingsby commented on the project; "it would take more than a lifetime simply to document the diversity of life in one cubic foot here. Even one cubic inch is a world worth contemplating" (as quoted in Vidal, 2012). Similarly, this dissertation, by means of a thematic analysis, provides a close and detailed analysis of a clearly defined subsection of the literature on the topic of the internal persecutor. The complexity and richness of the available literature is such that closely analysing a defined selection of texts is both valid and clinically relevant.

A thematic analysis provides a systematic and transparent approach to the act of discovering the themes, or patterns, in the data. It is an approach well suited to psychotherapy, in that it is a process of meaning-making, involving a deep engagement with the material. As McLeod suggests, "the phenomena of . . . psychotherapy are complex, elusive and sensitive" (2011, p. 71) and a thematic analysis provides a means of extracting such complex and elusive meanings from the data being analysed. By applying this method to literature, the opportunity exists to discern themes that span

across the history of psychoanalysis and across modalities. As with any form of research, the choices made around what data is collected and analysed and the approach or method used to analyse the data will inevitably highlight certain aspects of the phenomena being studied, while others will be downplayed (McLeod, 2011). I will discuss the strengths and limitations of undertaking a thematic analysis based on published psychoanalytic literature throughout this dissertation.

The main objectives of this research are: providing a context for the analysis by briefly outlining the major psychoanalytic theories as discussed in the literature (as above); undertaking a thematic analysis of a selection of case study material; and discussing the findings in order to contribute to the body of knowledge on this topic.

A secondary aim of this dissertation is to provide a clear explanation of the way in which I have conducted a thematic analysis. While thematic analysis is acknowledged as a widely used method in qualitative research, there are remarkably few publications that provide a detailed disclosure of the way in which the method was employed (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012). This dissertation is a contribution to the small body of literature detailing the techniques employed in a thematic analysis and, as such, the aim is provide a thorough and comprehensive record of the method as it was employed for this research. There is a paucity of available examples of applying a thematic analysis to existing published literature and this dissertation aims to provide an example of how this can be done. By undertaking and sharing a robust account of this particular application of the method itself, it is hoped that future researchers will be able to apply and improve on the method.

Terminology

For the purposes of this dissertation, the terms *psychoanalyst, analyst, psychotherapist*, and *therapist* will be used interchangeably, as will the terms *psychoanalysis, psychotherapy* and *therapy*. *Client* and *patient* will also be used interchangeably. The terms *internal persecutor, internal persecutory experience, persecutory object*, and *self-persecution* are used to refer to the same phenomenon.

Format

APA 6th Edition format has been used for this dissertation, except in the instances where AUT University or Department of Psychotherapy guidelines recommend an alternative format, or in instances when a minor adaptation aids readability.

Dissertation Outline

This dissertation consists of six chapters.

Chapter 2 outlines the methodology underpinning the research and details the specific method that has been applied. Modifications that have been made to the method are outlined and some of the advantages and limitations of the approach are discussed.

Chapter 3 describes the application of the method, beginning with the process of data collection and selection, creating meaning units, the coding phase, and concluding with establishing and refining the themes.

Chapter 4 examines the results of the thematic analysis, analysing the data through the themes.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results of this research and considers their clinical significance by evaluating the results of this thematic analysis within the wider theoretical context. The relationships and interconnections between the themes are explored. Limitations of this study and suggestions for areas for further research are also discussed.

Chapter 6 offers some final thoughts and concludes the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach and research design. The guiding philosophical assumptions underpinning the research are outlined and the rationale for the approach taken is discussed.

Interpretive Research

The research method undertaken is a thematic analysis within an interpretive, hermeneutic framework. Interpretive research assumes that reality is socially constructed and subjectively based and "that our knowledge of reality is gained only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, documents, tools, and other artefacts" (H. K. Klein & Myers, 1999, p. 69). Our world is constructed through all such human activity, both collectively and individually, and the meaning we make of it (Martin & Thompson, 2003; McLeod, 2011).

McLeod suggests we "inhabit a social, personal and relational world that is complex, layered and can be viewed from different perspectives" (2011, p. 3). Qualitative research within an interpretive paradigm enables the researcher to gain insight into the complexities of this socially constructed world (2011). Unlike quantitative research, which seeks to measure observable data, qualitative research pertains to the interpretation of human experience and seeks to discover underlying meanings and processes (Rennie, 2012; Thompson & Harper, 2012).

Interpretive research is particularly suited to psychotherapy research. Frank (1987), for example, argues that quantitative approaches have not proven effective in providing insight into the process and effects of psychotherapy. He suggests this is because meaning, which is at the heart of the psychotherapeutic encounter, cannot be objectively measured: "Meanings are subjective and the validity of a meaning for a person is independent of how widely it is shared or whether it is replicable. They are either experienced or they are not" (1987, p. 298). Psychotherapeutic knowledge tends to be drawn from case studies and expert opinion rather than conventional scientific research (Rennie, 2012; Thompson & Harper, 2012). The application of interpretive research methods to clinical material provides the means by which patterns of meaning can be identified and new insights generated (McLeod, 2011). This "somewhat more self-conscious version of the meaning-making in which we all engage throughout our lives" (2011, p. 146) provides a legitimate research basis to the process of making sense of the information (Loewenthal, 2007a).

Qualitative research is dynamic, contextual and subjective and the researcher is indelibly interwoven into the research process, bringing his or her own understandings,

assumptions, expectations, and experiences into the process of interpretation (Loewenthal, 2007b; McLeod, 2011). As will be taken up in the next section, interpretive research is the process of developing meaning rather than an attempt to objectively study a phenomenon. In order to demonstrate the rigor of the research process, it is imperative that qualitative researchers disclose "what they are doing and why" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). This will be taken up in chapter 3 of this dissertation, in which I detail the way in which I have applied a thematic analysis to the data being studied.

Qualitative researchers such as Rennie (2012) suggest that it is precisely because the researcher brings his or her cultural assumptions that the act of interpretation is possible. As the beliefs and values of the researcher are an integral part of the interpretive process, this necessitates that qualitative researchers position themselves in regard to the research being undertaken. While my topic was consciously chosen from what I was seeing in the context of my clinical work, my own experiences of a harsh inner critic were undoubtedly part of my interest in the topic. As a psychodynamically trained psychotherapist, I have an interest in psychoanalytic literature and was keen to use this research opportunity to further engage with this literature, which strongly influenced the way I searched for the literature utilised in this study, both in my choice of search terms and of databases searched.

Hermeneutic Framework

Hermeneutics, which is often described as the art and science of interpretation (Chessick, 1990; Martin & Thompson, 2003; McLeod, 2011), is well suited to this research project, which is concerned with the interpretation of the psychoanalytic literature on the internal persecutor. Hermeneutics traditionally applied to the study and interpretation of religious and literary text, but is now more broadly applied in the social sciences as a method for interpreting and understanding human motivations and behaviour (Boyatzis, 1998; Chessick, 1990; Martin & Thompson, 2003; McLeod, 2011).

Hermeneutics, like the practice of psychotherapy, is an interpretive process of engagement to discover meaning and develop understanding (Frank, 1987; Martin & Thompson, 2003; Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). In keeping with the hermeneutic tradition, I will be reading and relating to the literature that forms the basis of this study, as a "partner in dialogue" (Smythe & Spence, 2012, p. 23) with the text. Hermeneutic research presupposes that the researcher brings his or her prejudices to the research. According to the hermeneutic traditions developed by Heidegger and Gadamer,

meaning is generated between author and reader, rather than something objective to be discovered. Text is therefore an intermediary between the author and reader rather than an object of meaning in itself (Chessick, 1990; Martin & Thompson, 2003; Smythe & Spence, 2012). Rather than a hindrance, the prejudices of the interpreter play a positive and active role in producing meaning. Prejudices form a background of understanding and it is through this background of our sociocultural history that it is possible to recognise a lack of knowledge in a situation, pose questions, remain open to new understandings, engage in a process of inquiry to develop a richer, multiple perspective understanding of the situation, and subsequently act from out of the amplified understanding (Martin & Thompson, 2003; Polkinghorne, 2000).

The process of hermeneutic inquiry has been described as an open-ended dialogue in which "both the phenomenon into which we are inquiring, and our own understandings are transformed" (Martin & Thompson, 2003, p. 4). As with the concept of the hermeneutic circle, which assumes that understanding is based on the relationship between the whole and the parts, I have begun this research with a preliminary understanding of the concept of the internal persecutor. Through the process of a thematic analysis, which will be outlined in the next section and detailed in the following chapters, I will engage in "an ever-more probing analysis and synthesis of the parts" (Chessick, 1990, p. 257) which will in turn broaden and deepen my understanding of the concept as a whole. This research then forms part of the on-going process of interpreting and communicating meaning, specifically in relation to the concept of the internal persecutor.

Thematic Analysis

The aim of this thematic analysis is an in-depth engagement with the literature in regard to the experience of the internal persecutor in the therapy setting in order to develop a comprehensive and thorough understanding of the theoretical and conceptual considerations by identifying, analysing, and reporting on the salient themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As outlined in the literature review, many modalities within the field of psychotherapy have developed a theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of self-persecution. The benefit of a thematic analysis is that it can be applied across the different theoretical approaches which will potentially facilitate new, rich, detailed, and complex understandings of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Rather than focusing on the concept of internal persecution by undertaking a concept analysis or a systematic review of the theories, I have chosen to undertake a thematic analysis to explore emergent themes and patterns across the modalities. By applying a thematic analysis to

literature rather than conducting interviews or focus groups, the data studied is not bound by time or geographic limitations. This study, therefore, has the potential to yield new findings and develop a comprehensive understanding of this important topic.

Thematic analysis has predominantly been applied to transcripts of interviews or other interview-based media such as questionnaires, essays, and visual recordings (Joffe & Yardley, 2004). The application of a thematic analysis to published literature is a radically different approach to psychoanalytic material and offers a rigorous, systematic, and indeed visionary approach to analysing complex relationships and underlying conceptualisations across the data being studied. Applying a thematic analysis to existing published texts required some modification to the method, most notably that the method is not well suited to texts based on theoretical and conceptual discussions and arguments. The data analysed in this study was therefore limited to the case study and clinical material found in the published texts. As psychoanalytic literature is predominantly drawn from case studies and expert opinion a thematic analysis was identified as a highly suitable approach, notwithstanding the limitation of having to exclude theoretical discussions.

Thematic analysis has been described as "flexible, straightforward and accessible" (McLeod, 2011, p. 146). For this reason, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that it is a method well suited to the neophyte researcher. A thematic analysis is a quality, nuanced, systematic, and transparent method of qualitative research that seeks to elucidate the salient patterns of meaning, or themes, from the data being studied (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Joffe, 2012; McLeod, 2011). According to Joffe a thematic analysis:

> facilitates the gleaning of knowledge of the meaning made of the phenomenon under study by the groups studied and provides the necessary groundwork for establishing valid models of human thinking, feelings and behaviour . . . [and] is among the most systematic, transparent forms of such work. (2012, p. 210)

While a good thematic analysis is both rigorous and transparent, there is a surprising lack of what McLeod refers to as "'how to do it' literature" (2011, p. 147). One of the best known and most frequently cited is the guideline to thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). My approach to a thematic analysis is an integration of their step-by-step guide and the thematic network model developed by Attride-Stirling (2001). In addition, I have critically reviewed the work of a number of other qualitative researchers who have written about or published accounts of thematic analysis (specifically, Boyatzis, 1998; Joffe, 2012; Joffe & Yardley, 2004; McLeod,

2011; Meier, Boivin, & Meier, 2007; Polio & Ursiak, 2005) and from this I have devised a version of the method that is suited to my way of working and to the material being analysed. This is all fully explicated and demonstrated in the following chapters. I begin here with a brief outline of the structure of this research project.

The first phase of this research project is to determine the literature that will be studied and then to read the collected literature in order to familiarise myself with the data.

The second phase involves "reducing the text into manageable and meaningful text segments" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 390) and involves a process commonly referred to as coding. Coding will be data-driven (Braun & Clarke, 2006), that is, codes will be determined by what is found in the data itself, rather than from a pre-determined theoretical construct. As will be detailed in the next chapter, through my research into the method I chose to undertake a two-phase approach to coding; initially reducing the text to text-near segments, which I refer to as meaning units, and then collating these meaning units into codes. By adapting the method in this way I retained the "flexible and organic" approach to coding advocated by Braun and Clarke (n.d., para. 40) and also develop a coding frame (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Boyatzis, 1998; Joffe, 2012) that could be utilised in further research into this topic.

In the third phase of the thematic analysis, the thematic networks are developed. This involves identifying the themes through a process of clustering the coded data segments and secondly, refining the themes by a further clustering of these themes. A theme refers to a pattern of meaning that is identified in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012; Joffe & Yardley, 2004). As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, I chose to conduct a latent level thematic analysis, going beyond the explicit meanings in the literature being analysed, to identify patterns in the underlying ideas and assumptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

For the purposes of this thematic analysis, I largely adhere to Attride-Stirling's thematic network model and terminology (2001), as will be further explored in the next chapter. However, rather than the three stages of themes suggested in her model (basic themes, organising themes, and global themes), I have chosen to develop two levels of themes, which is closer to the Braun and Clarke model (2006). Thus, the thematic networks developed in this study will refer to organising themes and global themes. Organising themes summarise a cluster of codes and provide the basis of a broader global theme. Global themes are the core theme of a thematic network and represent the principle patterns of meaning identified in the data set (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Thematic networks take their name from the global theme. The web-like representation of the thematic network is a visual means of representing the interconnectivity between the themes. Attride-Stirling's (2001) example of a thematic network can be seen in Figure 1.
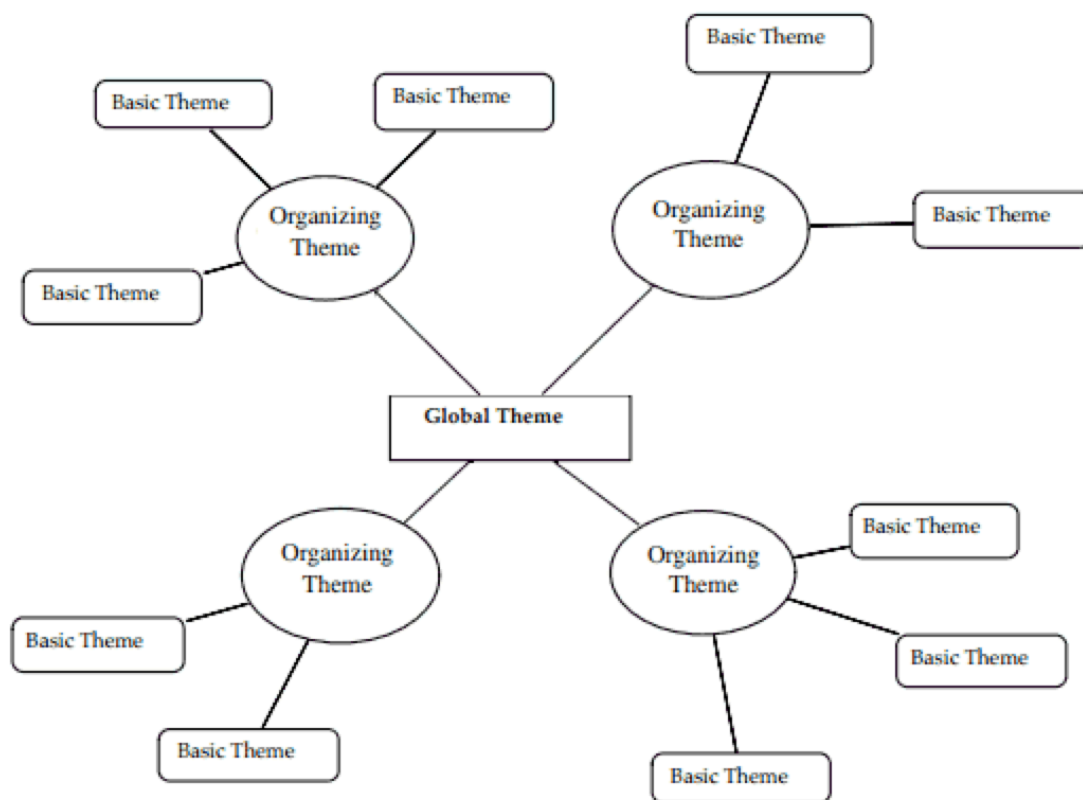
Figure 1. Structure of a thematic network.

The fourth phase of the thematic analysis is to produce the written report. This involves providing a detailed account of the application of the method in order to create a transparent trail in regards to the selection and analysis of the data (Joffe, 2012). Having provided the reader with a transparent process with regards to how the research was undertaken, the thematic networks will then be described, explored, and summarised. In this stage of the analysis, the literature is now being approached through the themes rather than in a linear manner (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The exploration of the themes provides a deep, critical engagement into the layers of meaning within the data. The merit and validity of the analysis is demonstrated by providing a contextualised account of the analysis; that is, by providing excerpts from the original data which illustrate and evidence the themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012). The final stage of the thematic analysis is to explore the themes in relation to the original research question and in relation to existing theoretical concepts and ideas.

Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the interpretive hermeneutic approach underpinning this research. Interpretive hermeneutic research is described as a means of gaining understanding of human experience, meanings, and process. I discuss the hermeneutic position that meaning is neither in the domain of the author nor the interpreter, but rather a process of discovering a common meaning, transforming both the understanding of the interpreter and the phenomenon being studied. The chapter concludes with an outline of my approach to a thematic analysis.

In the next chapter I will demonstrate the application of the thematic analysis, beginning with the process of establishing the specific data for the study, followed by a detailed exploration of the stages undertaken in the thematic analysis.

Chapter 3: Method

This chapter provides a detailed account of the way in which I undertook the initial phases of the thematic analysis. Beginning with the process of establishing the data set – that is, the data that is being analysed – I then discuss my approach to the data. The process of creating meaning units, generating codes, and developing and analysing themes is described, and includes the rationale for modifications I made to the method. The specific terms used in the thematic analysis are defined as they are introduced.

Selecting the Data

I experimented with various search terms, entering them into the Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing (PEP) and PsychInfo databases. This initial foray into the databases yielded a large number of results. The terms I ultimately chose are based on the knowledge of psychodynamic and psychoanalytic terminology I bring to this project and on considerations concerning the scope of this dissertation and manageability of search results.

I decided to restrict my searches to PEP for three reasons. Firstly, to provide a degree of consistency to the data set, I limited my searches to peer-reviewed, journal publications. Secondly, the articles in PEP best reflect my training and area of interest, that of psychodynamic psychotherapy. Thirdly, the searches in PsychInfo did not return any useful results and were, by and large, duplicates of articles found through PEP.

All terms were searched in the paragraph field unless otherwise specified. Use of an asterisk at the end of the search term enables the database to find articles including the term, including all possible suffixes of the term itself. Thus, as in this study, "internal persecutor*" will find articles which use the term internal persecutor, internal persecutors, and internal persecutory.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

I narrowed my search to five terms (see Table 1) that yielded a large but manageable number of results by excluding search terms that returned more than 200 articles. Based on the results from the remaining five terms, I then applied the exclusion criteria by reading the abstract or introduction and the paragraph/s in which the search term was used. The exclusion criteria applied are:

- Articles that were not relevant, or only briefly mentioned the search term, and duplicates;
- Book, conference or meeting reviews;

- Letters;
- Articles based on child or adolescent psychoanalysis; and
- Articles from a Jungian approach.

The first exclusion criteria, determining if an article was relevant or not, was the most difficult as I was in the process of familiarising myself with the range and quality of material generated from the searches. I erred on the side of including all articles where the concept was examined beyond a mere mention. The results of my initial search are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

Results of Database Searches Applying Exclusion Criteria

Search Terms	Results	Relevant Articles
"internal persecutor*"	194	52
"self persecution"	17	10
"persecutory superego"	61	15
persecutory selfobject	8	5
persecutory [Title Search]	10	3

The second stage of the process was to determine the inclusion criteria and apply this to the articles that remained following the application of the exclusion criteria. I read the remaining articles a second time, this time reading the complete article. While this felt time-consuming and unproductive, immersing myself in the literature was an essential part of the process of refining the definition of the topic.

I noticed that the majority of the articles from my searches comprised a combination of any or all of the three following elements: theory from major psychoanalytic theorists (for example, Freud, Klein, Fairbairn); case material/vignettes, and possibly some verbatim material; and theory building, in which the author theorises and adds new perspective based on the case study material and the theory cited. Through this process of immersing myself in the literature, I further elaborated on my original research question "what is the experience of the internal persecutor in the therapeutic setting?" as:

- How does the phenomenon manifest in the clinical situation?
- What happens between the client and therapist (i.e., in the transference/ countertransference)?

- What is the internal experience of the client and of the therapist regarding the phenomenon?

It was clear at this point that in order to address these questions, my inclusion criteria was the requirement for clinical and case study material. The final results of my searches after applying the inclusion criteria are shown in Table 2:

Table 2.

Final Results of Database Searches Applying Inclusion Criteria

Search Terms	Relevant Articles	Final Results
"internal persecutor*"	52	27
"self persecution"	10	6
"persecutory superego"	15	11
persecutory selfobject	5	4
persecutory [Title Search]	3	2

Given the breadth of this topic, it was evident from the beginning that this research project would only provide an analysis of a subsection of the total body of literature, but the question remained as to what constituted a reasonable data set given the scope of this dissertation. This was a difficult question to answer as there were few available examples of this method being applied to written text (for example, Polio & Ursiak, 2005). Qualitative research tends to favour comparatively small data sets, emphasising the need to "acquire a rich and varied data set" (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991, p. 270). With hindsight, my search process was lengthy and yielded far more results than was possible to work with in a dissertation of this size using this method.

I chose the articles from the "internal persecutor*" search which met the inclusion/exclusion criteria as the articles to be coded. I decided the clinical and case study material from these 27 articles formed a manageable data set and also provided enough material with the potential to yield interesting and meaningful themes (see Appendix A for the list of articles that were coded).

These 27 articles, which form the data set, have not previously been brought together in one research project. Including the work of both female and male psychoanalysts, the articles in the data set span across the decades from the works of Anderson, Heimann, and Munro, writing in the 1940s and 50s through to contemporary psychoanalysts writing in this century. By applying a thematic analysis to literature I can analyse and identify themes across psychoanalytic modalities. So for example, this

analysis brings together and identifies patterns or themes in articles written from a Kleinian perspective (Waska) and Mentalization Therapy perspective (Fonagy and Target). Other psychoanalytic modalities represented in the data set include Object Relations, Ego Psychology and Relational Psychology, through the work of analysts such as Alperin, Arlow, Brenman, Bouchard and Lecours, Carrere, Carpelan, Epstein, Fleming, Grotstein, Kogan, Levin, Levine, and Rosenfeld. Two articles by Reed and Reed and Baudry draw on the psychoanalytic ideas developed by Andre Green. While articles by American and British psychoanalysts form the bulk of the data set, a small number of the articles represent psychoanalysts from other parts of the world (for example, Garza-Guerrero; Gutwinski; Savvopoulos, Manolopoulos and Beratis; and Stein). An article by Australian social worker, Tracey, is included as her writing and work is psychoanalytically informed.

Approaching the Data

Based on my reading and understanding of the literature on thematic analysis, which largely referred to research based on interviews or clinical transcripts, I read and imagined my data, that is the clinical and case study material from the 27 articles, as though they were interviews I had done with the authors. Case studies, such as those which make up my data set, are not research *per se* (McLeod, 2001), but rather are constructed accounts based on and filtered through memory, theoretical frameworks, personal bias, the process of peer review, and innumerable other ways of meaning making. Case studies invariably represent the therapist's perspective and recall of the therapy. Clients, on the other hand, rather than having their own voice, are represented through the perspective of the therapist. Borrowing from McLeod, my approach was "*to develop an understanding of how the [therapy] world is constructed*" (2011, p. 3, emphasis in the original) particularly as it pertains to the internal persecutory experience. Treating the case studies as interviews was a way in which I held in mind that these were subjective accounts, not empirical data.

Lastly, my approach embraced the flexibility and "theoretical freedom" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78) which a thematic analysis allows. I was systematic and thorough in my approach and recording of the research process, as will be detailed in the rest of this chapter, but also held in mind McLeod's advice that the researcher be "as playful, imaginative, creative and sensitive as they can in generating all the *possible* meanings implicit in segments of text" (2001, pp. 143-144, emphasis in the orignal).

Segmenting the Text

Having established the data set, the next stage was to organise it in a way that was manageable, meaningful and *code-able*. Boyatzis reminds us that: "Observation precedes understanding. Recognising an important moment (seeing) precedes encoding it (seeing it as something), which in turn precedes interpretation" (1998, p. 1). Without some kind of manageable and workable system, the ability to recognise code-able moments is limited.

The first step was to divide the text into meaningful segments of all the text that was relevant to my topic. The case study and clinical material, which constitutes my data set, was carefully read. Where large amounts of theory or theory-building were included within the case study material, this was excluded. However, theory and theory-building, which was brief and close to the clinical material being presented, was included for the sake of maintaining a comprehensive account. Text segments could be as little as a fragment of a sentence or as much as a paragraph.

I created an Excel workbook, and developed an individual spreadsheet for each article. Spreadsheets were labelled by author surname, with date included for multiple works by the same author. The text segments from each article were cut and pasted into cells in the relevant spreadsheet.

Coding

Now that I had segmented the text into manageable and meaningful segments, I began the process of coding. A code identifies a specific, relevant feature of the data. Coding reduces the data into manageable segments to enable the data to be organised into meaningful groups which are then analysed for the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding needs to represent the particular data segment, without producing a profusion of idiosyncratic codes (Boyatzis, 1998).

As discussed in the previous chapter, one of the features of a thematic analysis is its flexibility. Through my reading about thematic analysis it became evident that this phase of a thematic analysis can be approached in a number of different ways. Coding can be deductive, or theory-driven whereby codes are generated based on prior knowledge of the topic or from the initial engagement with the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe & Yardley, 2004). Alternatively, coding can be inductive or data-driven (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that an inductive approach is best suited to analysing the data for overall themes, whereas a deductive approach is better suited to providing a detailed analysis of a specific aspect of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In order to address the research question, "what is the

experience of the internal persecutor in the therapeutic setting?" I chose an inductive approach to identify, code, and analyse the important themes across the data set, rather than providing a detailed analysis of a specific aspect, or theme within the data. Inevitably, as Braun and Clarke attest, this approach loses "some depth and complexity" (2006, p. 83). In order to retain the nuanced meanings from the original data my approach to the coding phase was to stay close to the language of the text.

Thematic analysis research sometimes refers to *meaning units* (for example, Meier et al., 2007). Meaning units are a means of further segmenting the text and are generally understood to represent a shift or change in the meaning of the text. As Boyatzis suggests, the researcher must define "what comprises a unit of meaning and how you discriminate between one meaning unit and another" (1998, p. 123).

As will be detailed in the following sections, I undertook the coding of my data in two phases. Having segmented the text as described in the previous section, I further reduced the text into meaning units. These meaning units were then brought together to form codes.

Meaning Units. Each text segment was carefully read to determine meaning units (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Boyatzis, 1998; McLeod, 2011; Meier et al., 2007). The meaning units I created were text-near; that is, each meaning unit remains close to the original language of the text. By doing so, I aimed to keep as much of the relevant information as possible so that the context was not lost (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This ensured that the meaning unit preserved enough information so that in the later phases of the thematic analysis, a meaningful analysis of the concept was possible (Meier et al., 2007).

As seen in the example in Figure 2, each meaning unit was given an identifier consisting of author initials and page number providing a link back to the original text. The purpose of this was efficiency, to be able to find the original source of the meaning unit during the theming and report-writing stages of the research.

	A	B	C
1	**Meaning Unit**	**Text Segments**	**Page**
2	(JG55) Painful that analysis could not satisfy all her needs	Early on in the analysis, Frau A had already said: 'Talking is not really the important thing for me; my problem is my body feeling, but of course you are not interested in that!' Then she asked me if I could recommend her a good masseur.1 I replied that it was painful for her to see that the analysis could not satisfy all her needs and that we were concerned here 'only' with understanding.	55
3	(JG55) Angry and accusatory	At this she became very angry, accused me of arrogance and finally averred that I was surely a bit too convinced of the validity of my method.	55
4	(JG55) Horror at how badly my words could hurt her (JG55) Failing to meet in a crucial area	Indeed, she succeeded increasingly in making me unsure of 'my method', firstly because I was horrified again and again to see how badly my words could hurt her, however much trouble I took to empathise and to formulate my interpretations cautiously, and, secondly, because I was beginning to sense that we really seemed to be failing to meet in a crucial area.	55
5	(JG55) 'I cannot feel myself anymore' (JG55) In a trap (JG55) In a life-and-death situation	I recalled that the first time the patient had telephoned, she had been weeping and had said in panic: 'I cannot feel myself any more!' The anxiety she was thereby conveying to me had something existential about it, as if she were in a trap, in a life-and-death situation.	55

Figure 2. Meaning units and text segments.

While my approach was an inductive form of coding, forming meaning units and codes from the data itself, my reading of the data set was no doubt influenced by my theoretical knowledge and personal experience, and so the meaning units I constructed and the code-able moments I perceived were inevitably influenced by my own biases and preconceptions (Joffe & Yardley, 2004). For this reason, developing codes by a research team it is often advised (Boyatzis, 1998; Joffe & Yardley, 2004; Meier et al., 2007). As this thematic analysis was undertaken for a dissertation study, I did the analysis as an individual researcher. In order to provide some transparency to my research process, I showed selections of the text segments and meaning units to my supervisor and supervision group and discussed my rationale and approach. This went some way towards bringing a multiple perspective approach to the study (Boyatzis, 1998).

Generating Codes. When the first stage had been completed, I had 3150 meaning units. The meaning units were now brought together to form codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I chose to print out and cut up the meaning units, so that each one was on an individual strip of paper. The meaning units for each article in the data set were stored in separate bags. Sorting the meaning units involved selecting a bag of meaning units and laying them out on the floor (Figure 3). The first meaning unit began the first pile. A second meaning unit was then selected and compared with the first and so on.

Figure 3. Generating the codes.

Rather than a matching process, I thought about this in terms of finding relationships between the meaning units. If a meaning unit related the contents of a pre-existing pile then it was added to this pile. If it related to more than one pile, then a duplicate was created and a copy was added to each pile. If no relationship could be found, then a new pile was formed. A miscellaneous pile was created for those meaning units that did not appear to relate to any other meaning units. At intervals the meaning units in the miscellaneous pile were compared against the other piles to see if any relationship could be found and if so, the meaning unit was taken out of the miscellaneous pile and added to the pile to which it related.

As this is a study into the experience of the internal persecutor in the therapeutic encounter, while I was engaged in the process of finding relationships between the meaning units, I did not differentiate 'who did what to whom,' that is, whether it was the therapist's experience or the client's experience (either as reported to the therapist or the therapist's perception), or the therapist's experience of the client. Thus, for example, the following meaning units were grouped together. The descriptors in square brackets have been added to demonstrate to the reader who is the subject in each descriptive code:

- (LE318) Feeling of having committed an unspeakable atrocity [the analyst's experience].

- (SM&B79-80) Provocative and destructive [the client's experience as reported to the analyst].

- (RW249) Violent internal reaction to experience of goodness [the analyst's perception of the client's experience].

- (MF33) Violent attacks on analyst's thinking [the analyst's experience of the client].

As more meaning units were added to each pile, this created ever-increasing layers of meaning within the pile. At times this necessitated piles being broken apart and redistributed as I identified different patterns across the data. At other times piles that had previously seemed distinct had sufficient overlap of meanings to justify being combined into one pile.

Finding relationships between the meaning units required a certain focus of attention, not dissimilar to the psychoanalytic concept of "evenly-suspended attention" (Freud, 1912, p. 11). Boyatzis (1998) wrote of the need for the researcher to remain open and flexible in order to be able to perceive patterns in the data. Certainly without this particular attunement, my capacity to recognise relationship patterns was limited. This was generally the result of fatigue and necessitated taking a break from the process before being able to continue.

As previously discussed, my approach to coding was inductive, with the aim of developing a "rich thematic description of [the] entire data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83), rather than applying a deductive method of coding to a specific aspect of the data. At this point in the research a number of the meaning units did not seem to easily relate to the code piles I was forming. These meaning units fit into three categories: life experiences outside the therapy room; analyst interpretations; and dreams (including dream associations/interpretations). I initially placed any meaning units fitting these categories into separate piles. When I had completed the process of putting all meaning units into piles, I reread through the three category piles to determine whether these meaning units could be incorporated into the other code piles. Reading the *interpretations* and *outside therapy experiences* piles I decided that the meaning units in these piles could meaningfully add to the codes. The meaning units in the *dream* pile were so radically different, I decided to keep these together as a code in their own right, rather than try to find relationships across the code piles. To continue with the previous example, the following two meaning units were added:

- (RS263) Violence interpreted as desire to reverse painful situation [interpretation made by analyst]

- (RW293) Hurting mother by having own life [client experience outside the therapeutic setting]

The meaning units were initially collated together into 151 code piles. I took a week away from the coding process before making one final revision. Having some time away from the process meant I returned with a fresh perspective. As I reread the meaning units in each pile I determined the actual name for the pile; that is, the code. Any meaning units that did not fit the code were reallocated to another code pile (or moved to the miscellaneous pile if no other suitable code pile could be found). If I was unable to find a word or phrase that captured the meaning of the pile, this indicated that the relationships were not strong enough to form a distinct code. In these cases, the pile was separated and redistributed. The final result was 112 distinct codes, plus a miscellaneous category of 14 meaning units. Table 3 shows an example of the meaning units that form the code *Absence of Meaning*.

Table 3.

Meaning Units forming the Code 'Absence of Meaning'

Identifier	Meaning Unit
(B&L886)	From one meaningless, haphazard crisis to another
(F&T36)	Desire to treat other as meaningless
(F&T37)	Therapist understanding had no meaning for the client
(F&T37)	Did not make sense to client to miss or be pleased to see therapist
(F&T39)	No understanding
(F&T43)	Little meaning attached to love and concern
(GR13)	Losing perspective
(GR14)	Absence of meaning
(GR14)	Searching for meaning: everything meaningless
(GR16)	Lack of discernible symbolic content
(IK733)	Unexpected fury and senseless resentment
(IK738-739)	Not able to trust senses
(LE17)	Initial denial of cause-and-effect on affect
(RA151)	Inability to process experience or make meaning of it
(RW246)	Unable to make sense of fury
(RW294)	Everything seems meaningless

The decision to name this phase as part of the coding phase (rather than considering it as part of the process of developing themes) was made after an extensive search of the available literature on thematic analysis and based on my understanding of that literature. Boyatzis, for example, suggested memorising the codes so as to free "the researcher to read the information and not be preoccupied with continually scanning the code" (1998, p. 10), something which is not possible with over 3000 codes. Immersed in this process as I was, I found that without any conscious effort on my part, I was able to hold the 112 codes in mind.

The final stage of this part of the process was to create a document and enter each of the codes. A selection of key words and phrases taken from the meaning units was included in bullet point form to provide a representation of the nuances of meaning contained in the code (Figure 4). This code document forms a modified version of a coding frame (as described by Attride-Stirling, 2001; Boyatzis, 1998; Joffe & Yardley, 2004) and if it was more fully developed, could be used to replicate this study, or to conduct a thematic analysis on this topic on another literature search, interviews, or even clinical transcripts. However, for the purposes of this single-researcher dissertation, I included only enough detail from the meaning units as I required to prompt my memory of the meanings contained in the code.

Uncertainty
• Not knowing
• Uncertainty as poisonous
• Ambiguous
Temporary
• Short-lived
• Not lasting
• Fading
• Tenuous
• Fluctuating
Misunderstood
• Exacerbated by challenge/contradiction
• Deaf ears
• Communication
• Contradictory

Figure 4. A screen shot of an extract of the code document.

Due to time constraints, it was not possible to return to the data set and apply the codes. However, given the thoroughness with which the initial meaning units were generated, it is questionable whether this would have been justified. As Braun and Clarke (2006) advise, there is no fixed end point to coding data or generating themes.

Ultimately, the researcher needs to make a decision that there are no further substantial gains to be made from continuing the process.

Generating the codes was labour intensive, time-consuming and frustrating. McLeod and others have commented on the qualitative researcher's experience of "frustrated, overwhelmed despair" (2011, p. 79) suggesting that it is a vital and necessary part of the interpretive process to enable the possibility of discovery (Joffe & Yardley, 2004; McLeod, 2011). Certainly my experience was one of intense frustration to the point of despair. Yet amidst this was the joy of discovery, as I began to recognise relationship patterns in the data set that had not previously been evident to me.

Developing Themes

Having completed the coding phase, the next stage was to develop the themes. Themes are described in the literature regarding thematic analysis as patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012). McLeod (2011) illustrates the concept of themes by drawing a comparison with the way themes are thought about in music, that is, a segment of melody, which forms part or even the whole of the piece of work. Musically, themes are used to good effect in movies and television, where variations of a specific musical theme are played in reference to a particular character or location. At an unconscious level we emotionally resonate with the various musical themes and this connects us to the character or scene we are watching. Hence we can *know* a scene will be threatening, or the battle won, almost before we have the visual cues. The reinterpretation of a musical theme can, for example, cue us to recognise that the hero is suffering, simply by changing the instrumentation or moving the theme into a minor key.

In a thematic analysis, developing the themes is a process of recognising the salient patterns in the coded data. As this is not a statistical exercise, the most important or significant themes are not necessarily those that are most prevalent across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Rather, the salient themes are those that establish something significant in relation to the research question.

Common amongst the approaches to thematic analysis is that there are two or more levels of themes. Some think about this as a theme hierarchy (Meier et al., 2007), while others refer to a thematic network (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Braun and Clarke (2006) wrote about sorting and collating data into themes, while Attride-Stirling suggests grouping together.

As evidenced in the literature, it can be difficult to find the language to describe this part of the process. Speaking about the theming process as though themes *emerge*

or are *identified* or are *unearthed* is misleading, as Ely, Vinz, Downing & Anzul (1997) suggest. As Ely et al. remind us, themes are not so much in the data waiting to be discovered, but rather themes "reside in our heads from our thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them" (1997, p. 206). This final section of this chapter represents my attempt to find the language to describe how I approached the process of developing themes in this thematic analysis.

In order to generate the themes, I printed out the previously mentioned code document and cut it up so that each code formed an individual *card*. These cards were laid out on the floor. In contrast with the process of developing the codes, I did not create piles this time, but rather moved the cards into *clusters* based on relationships I perceived between them (Figure 5 shows an early configuration of the clustering of the codes). This approach was modelled on Attride-Stirling's thematic network approach, in which she suggests a "web-like network as an organising principle and representational means" (2001, p. 387).

Figure 5. The theming process.

In essence, I was simultaneously clustering at two levels. Firstly, I was searching for relationships between the codes, either as similar, or as opposites. Indeed, this search for relationships was a key feature of the way in which I approached the thematic analysis. Some codes clustered together relatively easily, and some large clusters formed early on. Others codes sat between two clusters, not quite fitting either cluster. Other codes formed pairs, while others remained as single cards a long way into the process. Secondly, throughout the process I moved clusters around, forming

cluster groups that were in proximity to similar or related clusters, or were in proximity to their opposites, forming a dynamic tension.

As mentioned, it is difficult to describe this part of the process and an example of the clustering process may help to elaborate. The following codes were clustered together:

- Muddled and confused

- Chaos and confusion

- Uncertainty

- Madness

- Tangled

A second cluster, included the following codes:

- Overburdened

- Anxiety

- Intense, overwhelming, out-of-control affects

These two clusters were identified as related and were placed next to each other to form a cluster group.

The code clusters formed the beginnings of *organising themes*. Organising themes represent a cluster of related codes. Attride-Stirling (2001) suggests that organising themes provide a level of abstraction and a deeper insight into what the data reveals about the research question. Groups of organising themes form the *global themes*, which represent the principal patterns within the data set (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, organising themes simultaneously form and elaborate on the meaning of the global theme. These interlinked organising themes and global themes form a thematic network.

Similarly to the experience of developing the codes, I found the process of clustering and generating the themes could not be rushed and I was better served by approaching the clustering at regular intervals for short periods of time. Between times, I remained immersed in the process and let my mind imaginatively play with the relationships between the codes. This passage from Douglass and Moustakas illustrates something akin to my approach:

> Through persistent self-search and reflection, the researcher inquires as to where and how the theme is relevant and in what ways it might be shifted to reveal its components most effectively. In the process, a more definitive awareness is formed. A feeling of lostness and letting go pervades, a kind of being wide open in surrender to the thing itself, a recognition that one must relinquish control and be tumbled about with

the newness and drama of a searching focus that is taking over life.
(1985, p. 47)

This experience was one of letting it take as long as needed and being patient with myself and with the process of discovery. The realities of deadline did, however, somewhat circumvent this process. McLeod (2011), for example, postulated that in order to convincingly conceptualise the data from a qualitative study, the researcher may need as much as two years. This was far beyond the time I had for this dissertation, and the realities of an externally imposed time restriction is one of the limitations of this study.

The next stage of the process of developing themes began when I had formed the codes into 34 clusters and 8 cluster groups. These were entered into a document in order to conduct the final stages of this part of the analysis: *reviewing* the themes and *defining and naming* the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While Braun and Clarke describe this as two separate phases, my experience was that the two phases were conducted in tandem. Indeed as they themselves suggest, "analysis is not a *linear* process of simply moving from one phase to the next. Instead, it is a more *recursive* process, where movement is back and forth as needed, throughout the phases" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86, emphasis in the original).

The code cards were attached to the meaning unit piles to assist with the final stages of the analysis and the report writing. This enabled the process suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) of reviewing the collated data for each potential organising theme and global theme and evaluating if the data itself formed a coherent pattern. Through this process, some of the clusters that had previously seemed distinct showed a close relationship to each other and were combined into one cluster. As I began the process of defining and naming the clusters, I found that some were not coherent enough to be named, and these were broken apart and new relationships formed with other clusters. Similarly, the cluster groups changed as clusters were added or subtracted. The interrelationships between the cluster groups were an equally significant part of the analysis.

To return to the previous example, the first cluster of codes formed the organising theme *Confusion* and the second cluster of codes formed the organising theme *Overwhelm*. These two organising themes and the codes that formed them inform the global theme. According to Attride-Stirling the global theme "summarises the main claim, proposition, argument, assertion or assumption that the Organising Themes are about. . . . the Global Theme of the network [is] the core, principle

metaphor that encapsulates the main point in the text" (2001, pp. 392-393). I identified the global theme in this example as *Disorienting*. This process was repeated with each of the cluster groups, forming six thematic networks.

At the end of this stage I had clustered the codes into 25 organising themes, which had been grouped into six cluster groups that formed the six distinct thematic networks: Destruction and Desolation; Hidden/Disowned; Stuckness; Disorienting; Bridging; and Connection and Transformation. I will explore each of these thematic networks in depth in the following chapter.

Each thematic network comprises of a global theme and between two and six organising themes (see Appendix B for a table of the full thematic networks). The variation in size between the six thematic networks does not carry significance in the way it might were this a statistical analysis. The important feature of a thematic analysis is identifying themes and the relationships between the themes. Therefore, a thematic network with six organising themes has no greater or lesser significance than a thematic network with two organising themes.

The phases of the thematic analysis described in this chapter, from selecting the literature, segmenting the text, creating meaning units and codes, identifying themes and forming thematic networks, are the preliminary phases of the thematic analysis. In the following chapters I will analyse the themes. For me, this first phase of the research had a fragmenting, almost psychotic quality. There was a profound sense of relief at bringing together the fragmented text into a coherent whole. I finished this phase feeling a sense of excitement at the prospect of returning to the literature and analysing it through the thematic networks.

Summary

In this chapter I have provided a comprehensive report on my application of the method. I have demonstrated the steps I took to establish the data set, which consisted of clinical material found in psychoanalytic journal articles. I have explained that I approached the data as though they were interviews I had conducted with the authors, and that I embraced the flexibility, imagination, and creative mind-set that a thematic analysis allows for, and even requires.

I outline the process of generating codes, from segmenting the text, to creating meaning units, and lastly, formulating the codes. My development in understanding of this process is explored and justified. An examination of the process of generating themes and forming thematic networks concludes the chapter.

In the next chapter I will discuss the results of the thematic analysis, analysing the six thematic networks.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this dissertation is to address the question, "what is the experience of the internal persecutor in the therapeutic setting?" To answer this question, I have coded a selection of published case studies and clinical material and developed six thematic networks, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. These six thematic networks are comprised of six global themes, 25 organising themes, and 112 codes. This chapter is divided into six sections, one for each thematic network, and provides an analysis of the thematic networks. The six thematic networks I identified in the analysis are:

- Destruction and Desolation;
- Hidden/Disowned;
- Stuckness;
- Disorienting;
- Bridging; and
- Connection and Transformation.

A thematic analysis is a particular way of analysing data. Rather than a linear approach to the data, a thematic analysis enables the data to be read and analysed through the organising themes and global themes and offers a rich, in-depth exploration of the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Rather than simply establishing categories and analysing the frequency with which these categories appear across the data set, as is done in a content analysis for example, a thematic analysis enables the contextual meaning of patterns to be analysed (Joffe & Yardley, 2004; Polio & Ursiak, 2005). The six thematic networks will be explored and analysed in turn. Taking the thematic networks in turn enables a deeper reading of the texts in the data set, by exploring the patterns or themes that underlie and span across the texts within the data set (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

In order to firstly demonstrate the rigour of the research, and secondly, the evidence of the themes within the data, segments from the original data will form an important part of the analysis, linking the interpretation back to the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). As this thematic analysis is based on published literature, all segments from the original data include full citations. In conjunction with the previous chapter, which detailed the process of data collection and analysis, the use of citations adds to the transparency of the research that has been undertaken, one of the hallmarks of a quality thematic analysis (Joffe, 2012).

This long and detailed elaboration constitutes a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973, p. 6) of the experience of the internal persecutor. Each of the six networks will be described and explored in relation to the research question and the deeper meanings and patterns from across the data set will be analysed.

Thematic Network 1: Destruction and Desolation

The first thematic network, destruction and desolation, is comprised of six organising themes (see Figure 6). While all six organising themes in the thematic network form a pattern of meaning which illustrates the global theme of destruction and desolation, the first three organising themes are particularly concerned with the destructive aspect of this thematic network, while the final three organising themes relate most closely to the desolation aspect. As is evident from the global theme, this thematic network represents the destructive and desolating experience of the internal persecutor, but also concerns experiences of suffering and despair.
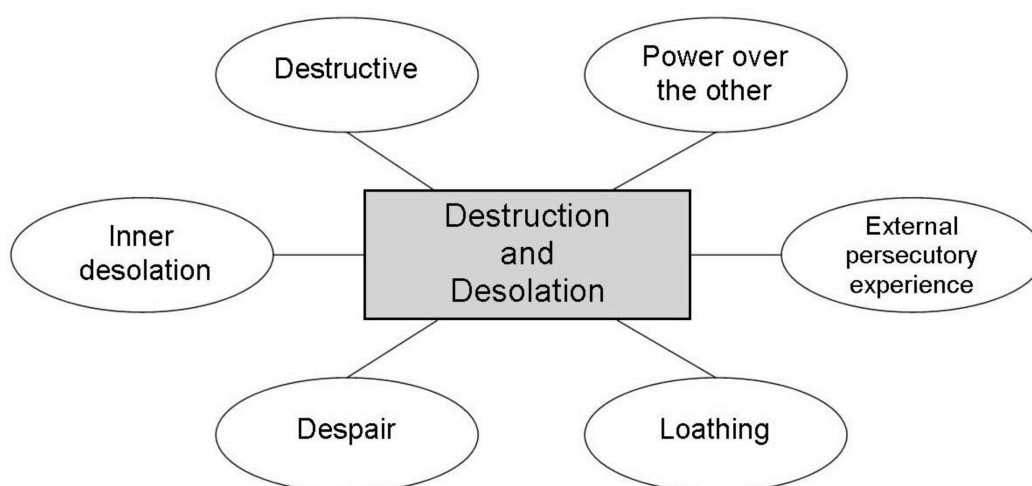
Figure 6. Thematic network for Destruction and Desolation.

Destructive. This organising theme encompasses the dangerous, deadly and destructive elements of the experience of the internal persecutor. The internal persecutory experience is characterised by a sense of danger. This danger is experienced both internally and externally; for example, being terrorised by the perceived destructiveness within the self and the other (Kogan, 2003; Munro, 1952; Savvopoulos, Manolopoulos, & Beratis, 2011; Stein, 1995), or the threat of "terrifying, hostile feelings" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p. 46), described by one client as "I start with the premise that everyone hates me and I work from there" (Waska, 2007, p. 323). For many, the world and those in it are experienced as terrifying, unpredictable and

dangerous: "Like feeding a starving wild animal and getting your arm torn off and eaten" (Waska, 2007, p. 325). This "ceaselessly present" (Reed, 2009, p. 12) threat of danger was evident in the transference, through the projection of an abusive past onto the analyst (Carrere, 2010; Grotstein, 1997), the perception of harm being done by the analyst (Epstein, 1999; Garza-Guerrero, 1998; Gutwinski, 1997; Levin, 2010; Rosenfeld, 1983), and the fear that the analyst wanted the client to fail (Stein, 1995). Analysts could be perceived as violent (Gutwinski, 1997), persecutory (Waska, 2002b) enemies (Reed, 2009).

The experience of something murderous or deadly, or the sense that "[there] is murder, death and unfair judgement in the air" (Tracey, 2000, p. 199), was evident throughout the data set. A "life-and-death" struggle (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 55; Reed, 2009, p. 13) permeates much of the writing in the data set. Many of the authors wrote of the sense of deadness within the clients or within the analysis (Grotstein, 1997; Munro, 1952; Reed, 2009; Waska, 2002b). Stein describes her countertransferential response to this deadness in her client as feeling "I was sinking under the burden of his emotional absence, his lifelessness: I felt I urgently needed some revitalising action" (1995, p. 273). For some patients, the deadly aspect of the internal persecutor took on a conscious or unconscious murderous wish (Carpelan, 1985; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Munro, 1952) or suicidal ideation (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Epstein, 1999; Heimann, 1942; Munro, 1952), such as the belief that "it would be best if I were dead, so as not to bother anyone anymore" (Garza-Guerrero, 1998, p. 208). The deadly internal persecutory experience also manifested as the fear that either the self or a loved one would die (Fleming, 2008; Gutwinski, 1997; Reed, 2009; Stein, 1995; Waska, 2002b).

The "intense self-hatred" (Epstein, 1999, p. 315) of the internal persecutory experience is evident throughout the data set in the form of destructive attacks on the self or the other (Alperin, 2001; Anderson, 1949; Arlow, 1982; Epstein, 1999; Fleming, 2008; Fonagy & Target, 2008; Grotstein, 1997; Reed, 2009; Reed & Baudry, 2005; Stein, 1995; Waska, 2004) such as Waska's patient who demanded of the analyst:

> Just kill me please. Please kill me, kill me, kill me. Or give me a house, a wife, lots of money, and leave me the fuck alone. I just wish someone would take me out in the woods and kill me. I would do it, but I am too chicken shit. (2004, p. 249)

There is a pervasive sense of stuckness in the descriptions of the destructive self-attacks, such as in the observation that "she imprisoned herself in the loop of feeling bad and attacks on herself for bad feelings" (Reed, 2009, p. 10) and the interpretation

"You are locked into a battle with yourself, the system inside of you" (Waska, 2004, p. 254). Many of the authors in the data set favoured these war-like analogies, referring to "fighting" (Waska, 2004, p. 254), "conflict" (Brenman, 1985, p. 425) and waging "war" (Stein, 1995, p. 272) internally and in the analytic "battleground" (Waska, 2002b, p. 289). Epstein highlights the process of working through the "deeply embedded complex of persecutory internal self-and-object relations" (1999, p. 323) and the need to gradually free the client from the "emotionally crippling consequences of having to use herself as the sole target of anger and hate" (1999, p. 322).

The violent, destructive impulses and desires of the internal persecutor are highlighted repeatedly throughout the data set, evident in passages such as, "a sadistic, destructive, and intolerant part of herself" (Waska, 2002b, p. 289), "deeply imbedded implosive defences" (Epstein, 1999, p. 324), and "both the agent and the victim of destruction" (Munro, 1952, p. 138). Many clients feared their capacity to damage others (Epstein, 1999; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Kogan, 2003; Stein, 1995; Waska, 2007) or felt guilty about their aggressive impulses (Kogan, 2003).

Destruction was identified in relation to attacks on the analyst's thinking. Munro wrote of the client's "violent attacks on my own capacity to think" (1952, p. 33). Authors in the data set observed the clients' resistance to talking and reflecting (Carpelan, 1985; Carrere, 2010; Epstein, 1999; Fleming, 2008; Gutwinski, 1997; Levin, 2010; Levine, 2004), closed thinking (Alperin, 2001), lack of thoughts (Gutwinski, 1997) and inability to symbolise cognitive and affective experiences (Alperin, 2001; Fleming, 2008; Waska, 2002b).

Power over the other. The organising theme of power over the other is evident in attempts to control, compel, seduce or demand. Attempts to control were identified in the attempt to create a sense of control in an uncontrollable situation in order to feel safe (Fonagy & Target, 1994; Munro, 1952; Tracey, 2000; Waska, 2007). A number of authors observed what Carrere describes as a "powerful capacity to 'compulse' [others]" (2010, p. 160; also, Brenman, 1985; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Waska, 2002b). Other authors wrote about a seductive aspect of their clients' interactions, for example "he urges and seduces me to be kind" (Brenman, 1985, p. 425) and references to the client's "seductive invitations" (Levin, 2010, p. 110). Attempts to exert power over the other also relate to the demanding quality of some client interactions (Brenman, 1985; Grotstein, 1997; Waska, 2004).

External persecutory experience. While the focus of this dissertation is on the experience of the internal persecutor, the internal persecutory experience is inextricably

bound up with an externalised persecutory experience as was described in the literature review. The external persecutory experience is evident throughout the data set and concerns experiences of enormous persecutory anxiety in which relationships are "characterised by exploitation, dependence, hatred, envy, clinging, or criticism" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p. 37). This organising theme is characterised by the devastating experience of "repeatedly facing persecutory . . . figures" (Munro, 1952, p. 141) and repeatedly reliving "real, imagined and anticipated attacks" (Levin, 2010, p. 108). The majority of the literature in the data set identified external persecutory experiences as being pervasive throughout the patient's life and in the transference: "[the patient] felt very strongly persecuted by me" (Carpelan, 1985, p. 5), "her view of me as a caregiver who repeatedly was either unresponsive to her emotional needs or insensitive to the point of being abusive" (Epstein, 1999, p. 321), and "I was held responsible for the regressive retrieval of painful memories that equated me with the original father who had committed the abuse" (Grotstein, 1997, p. 199). Gutwinski wrote of her confusion in response to the external persecutory transference she faced with her client:

> At first, she had predominantly identified me projectively with the perpetrators of violence. This occurred on such a massive scale that I felt unsure in my countertransference and became confused when I noticed how violently the patient actually experienced me. (1997, p. 57)

Fear of retaliation was another way in which this organising theme was evident, for example, in client statements such as: "No matter what I ever did, good or bad, he could turn into a monster" (Waska, 2007, p. 326) and "If you don't let him have control, he'll destroy you" (Reed, 2009, p.18). Not surprisingly, the fear of retaliation was evident in the transference with some clients experiencing anxiety or guilt at having negative thoughts about the analyst (Epstein, 1999; Fonagy & Target, 1994), while for others this fear was transformed into relief at being able to explore destructive fantasies with the analyst without being punished (Stein, 1995; Epstein, 1999).

Fault-finding, or the blaming of others or the self, was identified in much of the literature in the data set and further develops the organising theme of the external persecutory experience. Finding fault in others is mirrored by the belief in the self as innocent (Brenman, 1985; Grotstein, 1997; Munro, 1952, Stein, 1995; Waska, 2002b). Fault-finding could be directed towards the self (Waska, 2002b, 2007; Epstein, 1999) or towards others (Alperin, 2001; Anderson, 1949; Brenman, 1985; Grotstein, 1997; Kogan, 2003) - "critical of everybody and everything" (Savvopoulos et al., 2011, p. 80) - whereas other clients were themselves the recipients of criticism by others (Fonagy &

Target, 1994). Many of the authors wrote about their experience in the analysis of being berated by a "barrage of criticisms" (Alperin, 2001, p. 151), or being experienced as an "agent of fault" (Epstein, 1999, p. 319) for "inducing such terrible feelings" (Epstein, 1999, p. 320). For some clients, the external persecutor was experienced in the transference as suspicion and distrust that the analyst was trying to impose his or her thoughts to make the client think the same way as the analyst (Levine, 2004; Rosenfeld, 1983) or that the analyst was driving the patient mad (Munro, 1952). Other analysts were blamed for not having cured the patient quickly enough, such as Waska's patient who repeatedly asked, "Why haven't you fixed me yet?" (2004, p. 245).

     Loathing. The organising theme of loathing concerns an aspect of the affective experience of the internal persecutor, particularly in relation to feelings of worthlessness, humiliation, shame, and guilt. Loathing is underpinned by a "potent mix of self-punishment and cruelty" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p.37; also Arlow, 1982; Heimann, 1942), self-blaming (Anderson, 1949), and turning aggression against the self (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004).

     Worthlessness (Fonagy & Target, 1994; Heimann, 1942; Reed, 2009; Stein, 1995), or a deep "sense of defectiveness" (Stein, 1995, p. 277), was written about by many of the authors in the data set and included terms such as "useless" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p.36; Waska, 2002b, p.288), "valueless" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p.36), and "essentially unlovable" (Waska, 2007, p.321). Others spoke of the experience of being not interesting (Epstein, 1999), not wanted (Levine, 2004), and disregarded (Reed & Baudry, 2005). Worthlessness was expressed by one client as "How can you be a worthwhile person when your own mother rejects you?" (Reed, 2009, p. 13). Other clients experienced the analyst and the analysis as worthless, useless or ineffective (Brenman, 1985; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Grotstein, 1997: Kogan, 2003). Brenman, for example, observed that, "This patient…would often revile the analysis as useless and ruining him financially and spoke of my wasting his time" (1985, p. 427).

     Loathing is evident in the analysts' observations of revulsion and disgust (Fonagy & Target, 1994; Reed, 2009), such as when Gutwinski wrote of "shuddering internally" (1997, p. 57) in response to the patient's reactions, or Stein's experience of "something in the ambience that made it unbearable" (1985, p. 273) to be with the client. Other clients felt themselves to be despised by others (Brenman, 1985; Fonagy & Target, 1994) or the object of disgust (Fonagy & Target, 1994).

     Shame, humiliation and guilt describe an aspect of the pain and distress of the internal persecutory experience and were identified through the analysis as pertaining to

the organising theme of loathing. As one patient explained, "I can't look the world in the face" (Reed, 2009, p. 13). Shame, humiliation and guilt were written about as mortifying, excruciating (Stein, 1995) unremitting (Stein, 1995), unbearable (Grotstein, 1997), and terrifying (Fonagy & Target, 1994).

Despair. The fifth organising theme of the destruction and desolation network of themes pertains to the experience of despair, grief and loss, pain and suffering, and depression. Despair was characterised by the sense of profound distress (Munro, 1952), entrenched misery (Stein, 1995), agony (Stein, 1995), anguish (Fleming, 2008), dismay (Gutwinski, 1997), helplessness (Reed, 2009) and hopelessness (Epstein, 1999; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Gutwinski, 1997; Munro, 1952; Waska, 2002b), articulated by one patient as, "It is hopeless, I will never get better, life is too difficult. So what is the use?" (Waska, 2004, p. 249). Authors in the data set wrote about the clients giving up in despair (Munro, 1952) or not having the will to try (Waska, 2002b). Nor are therapists immune from the desolating experience of despair. Epstein wrote of being brought "close to becoming emotionally convinced that I might actually be the wrong analyst for her" (Epstein, 1999, p. 323).

The organising theme of despair was identified in the data set in descriptions of painful (Kogan, 2003), profound, intense (Anderson, 1949) and genuine (Epstein, 1999; Fonagy & Target, 1994) feelings of loss and grief. Tracey, for example, wrote poignantly of her client's "loss upon loss" (Tracey, 2000, p. 197). Despair is further evidenced in the closely related experience of pain and suffering. The agonising experience of internal persecution is evident in the writings of a number of authors in the data set (Fleming, 2008; Gutwinski, 1997; Heimann, 1942; Reed, 2009). Suffering was described as unremitting (Carrere, 2010; Stein, 1995), intense (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Stein, 1995), and unbearable (Fleming, 2008). In some instances, analysts recognised the client's anger as a defence against suffering (Savvopoulos et al., 2011); "her old narcissistic wounds would not heal, but were constantly reinflamed and produced angry pus in her" (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 63).

Joylessness and depression were another way in which this organising theme was identified in the analysis. Authors in the data set wrote about the clients' experiences of being hopelessly depressed (Fonagy & Target, 1994), depressed and emotionally starved (Stein, 1995), depressed and alone (Waska, 2002b), depressed and stuck (Waska, 2002b) and depressed and paranoid (Waska, 2002b).

Inner desolation. The final theme in the destruction and desolation thematic network pertains to the angry, rageful, envious, hostile inner world of the internal

persecutor. Inner desolation pertains to clients' experience that "No matter how hard you try, I am beyond help" (Waska, 2004, p. 249). This hostile inner world is "internally haunted" (Grotstein, 1997, p.199) by a "gang" (Levin, 2010, p. 113) of internal persecutors. The sense of totality that is captured in the organising theme of inner desolation is evident in the writing about a violent, cruel, damaged, unforgiving, and harsh "persecutory core" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p. 36), or the observation that the client was internally persecuted "constantly and in ever-varying ways" (Heimann, 1942, p. 9). Inner desolation concerns the experience of being "threatened . . . in every way" (Tracey, 2000, p.199) and needing to keep a "constant watch" (Munro, 1952, p. 139) on internalised bad objects (Fonagy & Target, 1994; Gutwinski, 1997; Reed & Baudry, 2005).

Many authors in the data set wrote of the client's inability to internalise positive experiences or a good object (Alperin, 2001; Brenman, 1985; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Kogan, 2003; Levine, 2004; Reed, 2009; Waska, 2002b, 2004), such as the following passage from Levin in which he refers to a "psychic 'scorched-earth' policy in which [the client] in full retreat, would raze herself to the ground, torching fields of potentially nourishing experience and bridges of possible emotional relatedness" (2010, p. 110).

Inner desolation was further evidenced in the sense of experiencing the self as a burden, "insufferably repetitive and boring" (Epstein, 1999, p. 315), and intolerable to others (Epstein, 1999; Gutwinski, 1997; Reed, 2009; Waska, 2007, 2004).

Envy, hate, anger and rage were also identified in the analysis as relating to the inner desolation organising theme. A number of analysts experienced themselves as objects of the patient's envy (Fonagy & Target, 1994; Grotstein, 1997; Reed & Baudry, 2005; Savvopoulos et al., 2011; Stein, 1995), while for some patients, interpersonal relationships were generally characterised by envy (Fonagy & Target, 1994; Grotstein, 1997; Heimann, 1942; Kogan, 2003). Envy of others who were perceived to experience loving relationships was identified as prevalent across the data set (Kogan, 2003; Reed & Baudry, 2005; Stein, 1995; Waska, 2002b). Envious feelings could be defended against, such as Gutwinski's client who "imagined herself to be one with [the analyst], so that she did not need to feel any pain of separation, envy or jealousy" (1997, p. 57).

Like many of the aspects of the internal persecutory experience identified in this analysis, hate could be directed towards others or towards the self. The desolating experience of being "absolutely filled with hate" (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 64) was variously described as "terrifying, destructive, [and] very primitive" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p.38), "clamorous" (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 57), "unforgiving" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p.

43), "unconscious" (Anderson, 1949, p. 53), and "powerful" (Tracey, 2000, p. 199). As will be further explored in the stuckness thematic network, self-hatred was identified as a way of maintaining a bond to the internal persecutor (Reed & Baudry, 2005).

Anger was prevalent in the majority of the case studies in the data set. Anger could be scathing (Heimann, 1942; Tracey, 2000), bitter (Kogan, 2003), misplaced (Alperin, 2001), resentful (Fonagy & Target, 1994; Kogan, 2003; Tracey, 2000), inaccessible (Epstein, 1999), and silent (Epstein, 1999), but was also identified as life saving and vital (Gutwinski, 1997). Anger was linked with disappointment (Kogan, 2003), hurt (Epstein, 1999), and distrust (Alperin, 2001), and was in some instances identified as a defence against other feelings (Alperin, 2001; Savvopoulos et al., 2011). While anger could be directed towards the self (Munro, 1952; Waska, 2004), a number of authors wrote of the client's anger being directed towards the analyst (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Epstein, 1999; Reed, 2009; Waska, 2004). Reed's patient notices that she identifies with the aggressor, in that angry, aggressive feelings within herself "always reminded me of my brother. It was like being him" (2009, p. 17).

The closely related affect, rage, was equally prevalent across the data set. The intense hostility and destructive power of rage was evident in the many evocative descriptions, such as: "furious, mad with rage" (Kogan, 2003, p. 753), "seething with rage" (Stein, 1995, p. 269), "in a frenzy of rage" (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 61), "fuming," "gasping" and "bursting" with rage and despair (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 57), "snorting" and spitting with rage (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 60), "outraged" (Waska, 2002b, p. 289), "mad…all week" (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004, p. 885), and "explod[ing] with cold and self-righteous rage" (Levin, 2010, p. 110).

Summary of the thematic network: Destruction and Desolation. The destruction and desolation thematic network is central to the internal persecutory experience, pertaining to the dangerous, threatening and hostile aspects of the internal persecutor. Lifelessness, death and destruction pervade the therapeutic encounter as the internal persecutory experience is externalised. Destruction is conceptualised in this thematic analysis through the organising themes of the destructive, power over the other, and external persecutory experience, while desolation is conceptualised through the loathing, despair, and inner desolation themes.

Thematic Network 2: Hidden/Disowned

The second thematic network, hidden/disowned, highlights some of the ways in which the internal persecutory experience is hidden or concealed from the self and others. As will be taken up in the exploration of the thematic network below, the

concepts of hidden and disowned were identified in four organising themes: expelling, absence and disconnection; hiddenness, and somatic experience. The themes that form the hidden/disowned network are shown in Figure 7.
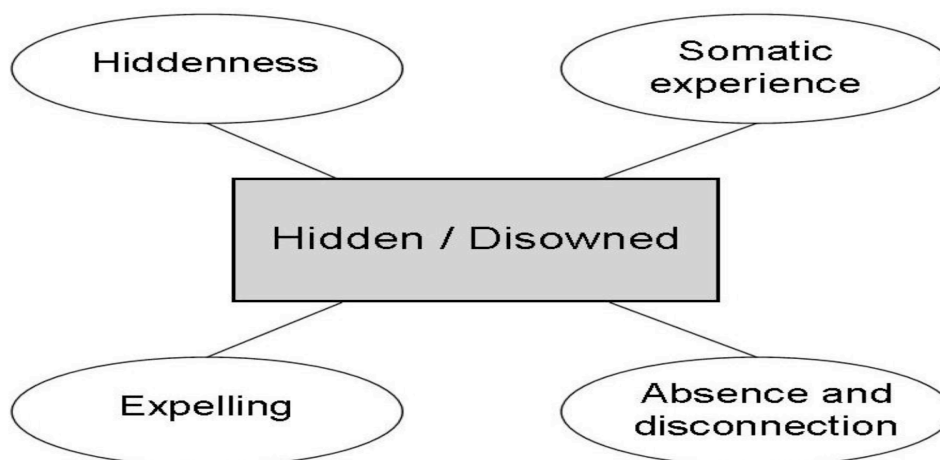

Figure 7. Thematic network for Hidden/Disowned.

Hiddenness. This organising theme provides part of the name for the global theme. The organising theme of hiddenness concerns the concealing and obscuring of parts and experiences of the self. Hiddenness refers to denial (Alperin, 2001; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Heimann, 1942; Savvopoulos et al., 2011; Waska, 2002b), concealing and hiding the self behind a false self or a facade (Alperin, 2001; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Grotstein, 1997; Savvopoulos et al., 2011; Waska, 2004), hiding achievements or accomplishments from the analyst (Rosenfeld, 1983; Waska, 2002b, 2007) or hiding the bad aspects of the self from the analyst by only being good (Carpelan, 1985). Hiddenness can be seen in attempts to deceive the analyst or themselves (Fleming, 2008; Munro, 1952), such as Waska's observation that it "became clear that she deliberately hid any growth or life-affirming thoughts from me and from this destructive part of herself" (Waska, 2002b, p. 290). Levin elaborates on this concept of hiding the self from the self:

> It was as if the part of him that was not supposed to know was . . . projectively identified with me . . . so that when another part of him actually told me . . . the information rebounded from me to the internal observer that I represented, and which had hitherto been imagined as out of the loop. Suddenly, [he] became aware of this internal observer and that it had always known. (2010, p. 112)

Hiddenness was identified in the data set in relation to the minimising of feelings (Fleming, 2008; Waska, 2007) or "an emotional cauterization" (Waska, 2007, p. 326), the denial and avoidance of feelings (Alperin, 2001; Fonagy & Target, 1994;

Waska, 2004), the desire to not feel painful feelings (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Levin, 2010), and emotional disconnection (Epstein, 1999; Kogan, 2003; Tracey, 2000).

Hiddenness was also experienced in the sense that the client was keeping a part of the self out of reach by trying to conform but simultaneously undermining the process (Savvopoulos et al., 2011), expressed by one client as "I know its crazy, but I am angry that you don't like all of me but I don't want to give you all of me either" (Waska, 2007, p. 323). Hiding the self was closely linked to a sense of shame at undesirable parts of the self being known (Levin, 2010), a sense of vulnerability at sharing the whole self (Waska, 2007), and a fear of intimacy and closeness (Alperin, 2001; Carrere, 2010; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Garza-Guerrero, 1988; Stein, 1995; Waska, 2007). As Fonagy and Target ask, "How can he [the client] trust me if he had never really trusted anyone?" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p. 48).

Somatic Experience. Somatising concerns the way in which the persecutory experience is hidden in bodily symptoms, where "emotional pain became physical" (Reed, 2009, p. 16), which was also described as thinking with the body rather than with the head (Gutwinski, 1997). While this organising theme was most fully developed in the article written by Gutwinski (1997), as her paper is specifically focused on a patient with somatic complaints, this organising theme is nevertheless prevalent across the data set, with many of the texts including references to internal states being expressed somatically, such as Brenman's patient who "first presented with crippling pains in his chest which he felt were 'like a vice gripping him'" (1985, p. 424) or another client who was "tormented by an unbearable 'burning sensation'" (Bouchard & Lecours, 1985, p. 886). Others linked aggression to somatic symptoms: "her attempts to defend against onslaughts of aggression through her body, her paralysis and inability to find words to understand and work through her tortured state" (Reed, 2009, p. 21) and Carrere's observation of the client's "imploded aggression turned against her body" (2010, p. 160). Therapists may also experience a somatic countertransferential response. Fleming for example, notices, "When she first consulted me . . . I felt enormous physical discomfort and an unpleasant sense of cold" (2008, p. 32). Gutwinski suggests the analyst's role is to find ways to understand and translate somatisations, creating links between the physical and psychological pain (Gutwinski, 1997).

Other authors wrote about enactment, or acting out the painful and persecutory experiences, for example, using substances to silence or paralyse the internal persecutor

(Carpelan, 1985; Heimann, 1942) or sexual enactment as a means to alleviate suffering (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004), or eating to provide security and satisfaction (Carpelan, 1985). For some patients, the persecutory experience took on a greedy, devouring quality (Savvopoulos et al., 2011), a yearning (Fonagy & Target, 1994) or nagging hunger (Waska, 2004), like a greedy, predatory animal (Stein, 1995).

      Absence and Disconnection. This organising theme links the two concepts of absence and disconnection. It concerns experiences of hiddenness or becoming invisible by being repeatedly deprived, ignored and forgotten, and the internalisation of this external experience to the extent that the self appears to no longer exist and is experienced as an absence or void.

      The experience of absence and disconnection was evident in the authors' writings about emptiness (Anderson, 1949; Carpelan, 1985; Fleming, 2008; Grotstein, 1997; Levin, 2010; Waska, 2002b, 2004). Fleming (2008) wrote of her countertransferential experience of feeling as if she was with a zombie; a mindless, animated corpse, empty of any humanity. Other authors refer to the client's experience of an inner void (Reed, 2009; Reed & Baudry, 2005), of a sense of something missing (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Epstein, 1999; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Gutwinski, 1997; Kogan, 2003; Savvopoulos et al., 2011), or of the client experiencing him or herself as not existing (Gutwinski, 1997; Reed & Baudry, 2005).

      Absence and disconnection was evident in the sense of meaninglessness, senselessness and deprivation that was written about in many of the articles in the data set (Alperin, 2001; Anderson, 1949; Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Reed, 2009; Waska, 2002b). Some of the texts wove the absence of meaning and disconnection together with the client's experience of not being believed or validated (Epstein, 1999; Kogan, 2003). Kogan, for example, observed her patient's disconnection with herself based on "years of being told that she was completely untrustworthy . . . [that] left her feeling that she could not trust her senses" (2003, p. 738). A number of authors wrote of a feeling of being deprived (Gutwinski, 1997; Reed & Baudry, 2005; Savvopoulos et al., 2011; Stein, 1995; Waska, 2004). The sense of deprivation can be experienced in the therapy as suspicion that the analyst is depriving the client of good experiences (Heimann, 1942) or the analyst being experienced as an unresponsive, withholding or deficient caregiver (Epstein, 1999).

      Absence and disconnection was also written about as disconnection and separation, which was experienced as being ignored (Alperin, 2001; Gutwinski, 1997; Levine, 2004; Savvopoulos et al., 2011; Waska, 2002b), disappearing (Reed, 2009), not

belonging (Levin, 2010), being overlooked (Carpelan, 1985; Fonagy & Target, 1994), or forgotten (Grotstein, 1997). Fleming wonders with her client if "Maybe the words are the discomfort and helplessness of a baby who is searching for the warmth of his mother's words and finds silence and shadows" (2008, p. 33); while Reed's client remembers that "home always felt bad, always sad. . . . I was always looking for somebody" (2009, p. 15). Separation was often experienced as unbearable (Fleming, 2008; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Gutwinski, 1997; Tracey, 2000), terrifying (Alperin, 2001; Reed, 2009), and persecutory (Carpelan, 1985; Stein, 1995; Waska, 2002b); a "treacherous wasteland" (Levin, 2010, p. 109).

As psychotherapists are well aware, persecutory feelings around separation can be triggered by breaks and even the ending of sessions (Fonagy & Target, 1994) and it is not uncommon for clients to withdraw first to avoid the fear of rejection (Alperin, 2001; Gutwinski, 1997; Stein, 1995; Waska, 2002b, 2007). For other clients there is the fear of a "double abandonment" (Reed, 2009, p. 22) or repetition of abandonment (Savvopoulos et al., 2011) which Kogan's client articulates as "I separated from a loving mother once before in my life. If she [the client's mother] had shown me affection, I would have had to go through another painful separation" (2003, p. 751). Stein reminds us of a possible countertransferential response, noticing that in response to her client's aloneness and experience of being ignored, she felt "lonely and doomed to be ignored by him [the client] forever" (1995, p. 273), whereas Epstein (1999) imagines a separation, sometimes wishing the client would end the therapy to spare both of them further anguish.

Expelling. This organising theme pertains primarily to the disowned aspect of the hidden/disowned network and includes many concepts that are familiar to psychotherapists: splitting, disavowal, projection, denial, and fragmentation.

Expelling was written about in a variety of ways across the data set. Many of the authors wrote about the persecutory experience of projection and reintrojection (Alperin, 2001; Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Levin, 2010; Savvopoulos et al., 2011; Stein, 1995), which was variously thought about as an emptying of the self (Carpelan, 1985), as a form of communication (Carpelan, 1985), as a means of avoiding confusion (Gutwinski, 1997), and as exorcising pain from the self into the therapist (Grotstein, 1997). Gutwinski evocatively described her patient as "spewing back in a high arc everything she had taken into herself in the previous few days" (1997, p. 60). The desire to get rid of parts of the self was in some instances experienced as not being able to bear the badness or aggression within the self (Carpelan, 1985; Heimann, 1942;

Waska, 2002b), while at other times it represented a desire to put important parts of the self into others (Carpelan, 1985) or getting rid of positive experiences because they were felt to be undeserved (Reed & Baudry, 2005).

Some authors spoke of the client externalising hate and aggression as a form of defence (Alperin, 2001; Heimann, 1942), while others wrote of the need for the analyst to "invite" (Carrere, 2010, p. 60) aggression away from the self and towards the analyst (Carrere, 2010; Epstein, 1999), or to "facilitate" (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004, p. 885) observing of the aggressive parts of the self, and to be able to use the analyst's failures to free the self from being the "sole target of anger and hate" (Epstein, 1999, p. 322). In other instances the client's needy self was seen to be externalised by attempts to care for others or excessive concern for the therapist's wellbeing (Carpelan, 1985; Epstein, 1999).

Fragmentation and disintegration were also identified as forming part of the cluster of codes in the organising theme of expelling. Fragmentation or disintegration can be thought about as an internal experience of expelling, where rather than projecting parts of the self outwards, parts of the self are split off and expelled within the self. Fragmentation and disintegration were identified in the thematic analysis as a lack of connection (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Gutwinski, 1997; Reed, 2009), disembodiment (Reed, 2009), a discontinuity of experience (Reed & Baudry, 2005), feeling divided (Waska, 2002b), and feeling "pulled in two" (Waska, 2002b, p. 293). Fragmentation and disintegration can be seen in Gutwinski's image of two versions of her patient, the healthy version and the "glass woman" (1997, p. 58) who could break at any moment, with no link between the two. Fragmentation was experienced by the analyst as the need to connect (Heimann, 1942), link (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004), integrate (Levin, 2010), and to hold or bind together (Carpelan, 1985; Heimann, 1942). Fragmentation was also evident in the patient's use of splitting (Alperin, 2001; Carpelan, 1985; Savvopoulos et al., 2011; Tracey, 2000; Waska, 2002b) by, for example, viewing others as entirely good or entirely bad (Heimann, 1942; Stein, 1995). The "extreme" (Heimann, 1942, p. 9) nature of the split or separation was sometimes experienced as difficult to comprehend (Reed, 2009) and difficult to stay with (Gutwinski, 1997).

Summary of the thematic network: Hidden/Disowned. The internal persecutory experience as hidden and/or disowned is prevalent across the data set and is explored here through the organising themes of expelling, absence and disconnection, hiddenness and somatic experience. Hiddenness can be a convoluted process in which the self attempts to hide from the self and from others and is closely related to the

disowning of unwanted parts of the self through processes such as projection and denial. Both the hidden and disowned aspects of the internal persecutory experience concern unwanted aspects of the self.

Thematic Network 3: Stuckness

The third thematic network, stuckness, is defined by the organising themes of stuckness, attachment to the familiar, constraints and limitations, impotence and fear of possibility. Similarly to the destruction and desolation thematic network, the stuckness thematic network illustrates the way in which the experience of the internal persecutor can be lifeless, immovable, hopeless, and unchangeable. Figure 8 shows the five organising themes and the global theme that form the stuckness thematic network.
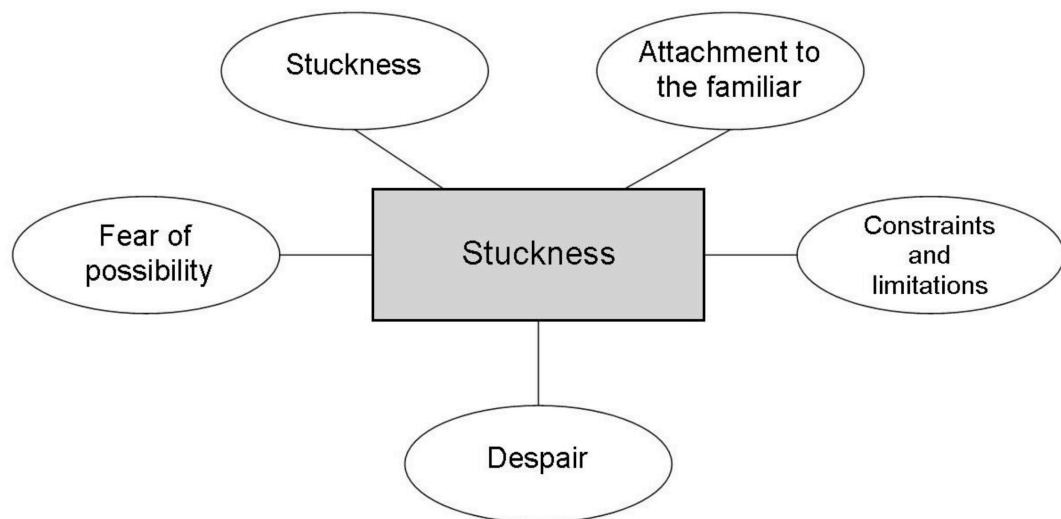
Figure 8. Thematic network for Stuckness.

Stuckness. The experience of stuckness was identified in the analysis of the data set as a state of being frozen or paralysed (Carpelan, 1985; Fleming, 2008; Waska, 2002b, 2004), being caught between a rock and a hard place (Fonagy & Target, 1994); being at a standstill (Carpelan, 1985; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Grotstein, 1997; Heimann, 1942; Stein, 1995; Waska, 2002b, 2004), or being at an impasse (Brenman, 1985; Gutwinski, 1997; Heimann, 1942; Savvopoulos et al., 2011; Waska, 2002b, 2004). Stuckness was sometimes underpinned by unwillingness (Grotstein, 1997; Tracey, 2000) or what Waska describes as a "No I won't" approach in the transference (Waska, 2004, p. 252). Stuckness captures a sense that "Nothing has changed. I don't see any difference in my problems. Why haven't you fixed me yet?" (Waska, 2004, p. 245). Stuckness is also evident in Grotstein's experience of the client as being "in a state of prolonged and weary resistance for some time" (1997, p. 193), and in Epstein's

reflection on the "long-term negative transference-countertransference matrix" (1999, p. 322) which permeated much of the analysis.

Stuckness pertains to the experience of being trapped (Epstein, 1999; Garza-Guerrero, 1988; Gutwinski, 1997; Savvopoulos et al., 2011; Waska, 2002b, 2004, 2007), the sense of being owned or used by the other (Fonagy & Target, 1994; Tracey, 2000; Waska, 2004), being scapegoated (Grotstein, 1997), or complying with a designated role (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Munro, 1952; Reed & Baudry, 2005) such as Tracey countertransferentially feeling "consigned to a role in a drama I had not created, in which I did not really belong and over which I had no control" (2000, p. 199). This organising theme was written about as being caught in a system that cannot change (Fonagy & Target, 1994) or as one patient expressed it, "you just say what you do because you have to" (Waska, 2002b, p. 289).

Stuckness was also evident in the sense of frustration written about by some of the authors in the data set; either feeling frustrated by the self (Munro, 1952) or frustrated by others or by circumstances (Gutwinski, 1997; Waska, 2002b).

Attachment to the familiar. The organising theme of attachment to the familiar was identified in the analysis of the texts and pertains to the preservation of attachments, experiences of merger, engulfment and identification, and the desire to be special. In common with the other organising themes in this thematic network, the organising theme of attachment to the familiar concerns therapists' and clients' experiences of the seemingly unchangeable.

In this organising theme, stuckness was conceptualised by the strong bond clients can exhibit to the internal persecutor. Fonagy & Target describe this in a number of passages such as "his bond to the persecutory inner object appeared to be, if anything, stronger than most normal bonds of affection" (1994, p. 42), and observations of how the patient "clung to this critical, persecuting part of himself, because without it he would feel bereft, isolated and in a mental void" (1994, p. 38) and that the threat of separation from the internal persecutor "provoked anxiety similar to . . . [a] child who is separated from the affectionate caregiver (1994, p.42). Reed also observes in her client a similar "desperate clinging to the bad objects" (2009, p. 21). She interprets her client's self-sabotaging as an attempt to become her parents and persecute herself in order to maintain her attachment to them. Attachment to the familiar was also evident in descriptions of an "extraordinary fear of change" (Stein, 1995, p. 280) or a fear of being worse off without the internal persecutory objects (Fonagy & Target, 1994; Munro, 1952; Savvopoulos et al., 2011; Waska, 2002b, 2004).

Attachment to the familiar was also identified in the reluctance to face an ending, experienced by one patient as: "Sometimes at the end of the session I feel dead. Where will I go?" (Savvopoulos et al., 2011, p. 86), and the difficulty of facing any change within the therapeutic relationship (Waska, 2002b).

Experiences of merger, engulfment and identification are prevalent across the data set and were identified in the analysis as forming a part of the organising theme of attachment to the familiar, such as Munro's observation that in an effort to avoid the pain and grief of loss the patient had internalised his mother to the extent that "Mother and baby had never been parted, they were still one" (1952, p. 142). Others wrote of the patient's fantasy of merging or fusing with another (Alperin, 2001; Fonagy & Target, 1994) in order to avoid the pain of separation (Alperin, 2001; Gutwinski, 1997). Merger was experienced by some analysts in their experience of no longer being able feel themselves in relation to their patient (Alperin, 2001; Gutwinski, 1997), or the patient's intolerance of a symbol of the analyst's independent existence (Gutwinski, 1997).

Similarly, the organising theme of attachment to the familiar was evident in many of the authors' writings about their clients' identification with the parent (Arlow, 1982; Munro, 1952), with the analyst (Alperin, 2001; Carpelan, 1985; Savvopoulos et al., 2011), with a superior, dominating other (Stein, 1995), or conversely with a sick or injured other (Carpelan, 1985; Reed & Baudry, 2005). For others, the attachment was manifest in the desire to be special (Brenman, 1985; Gutwinski, 1997; Kogan, 2003; Levin, 2010; Stein, 1995; Waska, 2007), wishing to be the analyst's only patient (Kogan, 2003), wanting to be the favourite patient (Waska, 2007), and needing to "be the good patient who works hard to solve their problems" (Waska, 2007, p. 323).

Constraints and limitations. In conjunction with the previous organising themes of stuckness and attachment to the familiar, this organising theme highlights another aspect of the global theme of stuckness. The stifling, stuckness of the internal persecutory experience is evident in the limited and constrained internal world of many clients written about in the data set (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Fleming, 2008; Heimann, 1942). The painful reality of limitations, such as the realisation that not all needs will be satisfied, even through analysis (Grotstein, 1996; Gutwinski, 1997; Waska, 2004), can become a "lifeless standoff" (Waska, 2004, p. 253). The devastating realisation of these limitations was expressed by one client as: "If I can't have it all, why live?" (Waska, 2004, p. 253).

Constraints and limitations are evident in the devaluing of others or of the self (Alperin, 2001) and in its mirror, idealisation (Carrere, 2010; Fleming, 2008; Kogan, 2003; Stein, 1995). Devaluing and idealising were variously seen as dismissive, contemptuous and patronising (Fonagy & Target, 1994), pompous and arrogant (Brenman, 1985), grandiose and omnipotent (Fonagy & Target, 1994; Grotstein, 1997; Heimann, 1942; Savvopoulos et al., 2011) or proud (Kogan, 2003). Some of the authors in the data set felt themselves to be devalued by their clients, feeling themselves to be dismissed as irrelevant (Stein, 1995) or incompetent (Epstein, 1999). Equally, devaluing could be turned back against the self, such as feeling less than other clients (Epstein, 1999), feeling guilty (Heimann, 1942) or self-critical (Brenman, 1985).

Within this constraining and limiting experience, many of the authors in the data set observed the limitations of empathy. For some this was experienced as having difficulty connecting emotionally with the client (Epstein, 1999; Fleming, 2008; Tracey, 2000) explained by Tracey as "I had sat through what should have been a harrowing story with no feeling whatever" (2000, p. 198). Others observed in their clients a lack of compassion for the self (Epstein, 1999; Waska, 2002b). In other cases, the client reacted powerfully against empathic interventions due to a lack of previous experience of empathy (Alperin, 2001; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Waska, 2002b). Empathy was therefore dismissed as fake (Alperin, 2001), futile, impossible (Fonagy & Target, 1994) ridiculous or disgusting (Waska, 2002b).

Impotence. In the organising theme of impotence, stuckness is conceptualised as helplessness (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Fleming, 2008; Munro, 1952; Savvopoulos et al., 2011; Stein, 1995), hopelessness (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Waska, 2007), powerlessness (Reed, 2009; Savvopoulos et al., 2011; Waska, 2002b, 2007) and futility (Fonagy & Target, 1994; Heimann, 1942). In the data set, impotence was closely linked to frustration (Alperin, 2001; Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Heimann, 1942; Kogan, 2003; Munro, 1952; Reed, 2009), despair (Gutwinski, 1997; Reed, 2009), and the inability to function (Carpelan, 1985; Heimann, 1942; Tracey, 2000) or change (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004). Some analysts noticed the sense of impotence within themselves, such as "I felt impotent, humiliated, vulnerable . . . that I had become totally useless to my patients" (Kogan, 2003, p. 752); "I felt incapacitated and lost" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p. 37); and "I felt turned into an absolutely impotent, helpless child" (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 60).

The organising theme of impotence illustrates the pervasive sense of ineffectiveness that is evident in internal persecutory experience and links closely to the

previous organising theme of limitations and constraints. A sense of impotence was evident in the failure of understanding to relieve psychic pain (Stein, 1995), insight and interpretations not being effective (Fonagy & Target, 1994; Grotstein, 1997; Reed, 2009; Savvopoulos et al., 2011), and in the ineffectiveness of reassurance (Anderson, 1949; Epstein, 1999).

Fear of possibility. The final organising theme in the stuckness network of themes is the fear of possibility. This organising theme encapsulates fear of self-discovery and fear of improving and relates closely to the previous organising themes of constraints and limitations and impotence. Clients' twin fears of self-discovery and of improving are significant aspects of the sense of stuckness that pertains to the experience of the internal persecutor.

For many clients in the data set there was a "dread of knowing [themselves], feeling too much too quickly, and going too deeply into things" (Carrere, 2010, p. 160) such that analysis is experienced as a "nightmare" (Stein, 1995, p. 268). This fear of self-discovery (Reed, 2009; Waska, 2002b) was seen in clients defending against thinking (Fleming, 2008), defending against feeling (Tracey, 2000), or hiding from themselves and their own minds (Levin, 2010).

Another aspect of the fear of possibility is the fear of improving. A number of authors wrote of the client's fear of what would happen if life improved (Grotstein, 1997; Reed, 2009) and the "massive forces rallied against progress" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p. 38). Progress in therapy also raised fears of abandonment: "Why would you let me come if I only had good things to report?" (Waska, 2002b, p. 289).

Summary of the thematic network: Stuckness. The theme of stuckness is evident throughout the data set and conceptualised in a variety of ways, all of which encompass the ubiquitous sense of something unchangeable or unmovable. The thematic network of stuckness is interwoven with the previous thematic networks of destruction and desolation and hidden/disowned. Stuckness is evident in the lifelessness and deadening effect of the internal persecutor explored in the destruction and desolation network. Insofar as the persecutory experience remains hidden from the self or disowned, the experience remains stuck and unchangeable.

Thematic Network 4: Disorienting

The fourth thematic network, disorienting, combines the two organising themes of confusion and overwhelm (Figure 9). This thematic network highlights the way in which the internal persecutory experience can leave therapist and client experiencing a lack of direction or clarity. As will be taken up in the exploration of the thematic

network below, this sense of disorientation was experienced as threatening and out of proportion. Confusion and overwhelm are closely related to each other in that the experience of one can lead to the experience of the other.
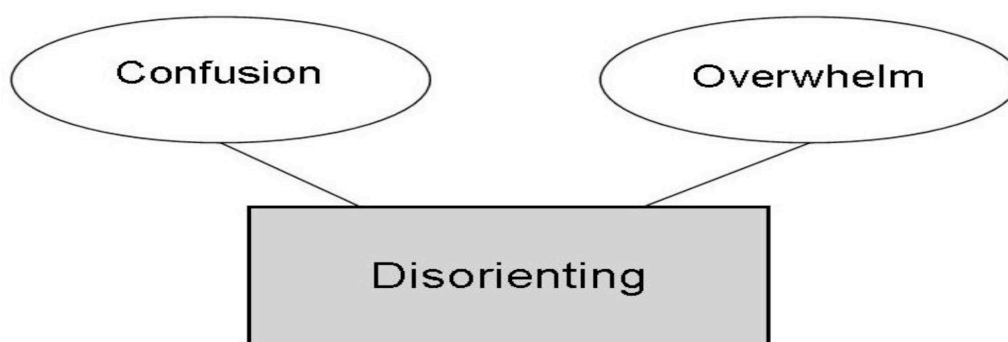

Figure 9. Thematic network for Disorienting.

Confusion. The organising theme of confusion was experienced by clients and therapists and pertains to experiences of uncertainty and not knowing. In this context, confusion was experienced as overpowering, threatening, chaotic and potentially maddening.

The sense of uncertainty was particularly evident in analyst interpretations of patient experiences such as, "You are not sure if you are hurting all of us or if we are picking on you and controlling you" (Waska, 2002b, p. 293), or client fears that "I don't know what to do, what the correct approach would be" (Waska, 2004, p. 251), "I don't know which direction to take" (Waska, 2002b, p. 288), and "I don't know what my feelings are" (Reed, 2009, p. 15). The sense of confusion and uncertainty was experienced in response to the therapy itself; for example, becoming confused in response to an interpretation (Fonagy & Target, 1994), feeling uncertain if the therapist was "the right therapist for her" (Alperin, 2001, p. 148), or the therapist feeling uncertain if the client would return to therapy (Epstein, 1999). Feeling that the therapist was the source of the confusion was seen to elicit feelings of suspicion in the client:

> She occasionally admitted that she did not tell me anything which
> mattered to her because either I would make it bad, or take it away or
> cause her feelings about it to disappear. She was trying to sort things out
> in her mind and I was muddling it all up. (Rosenfeld, 1983, p. 262)

Some of the authors spoke of their own overpowering sense of confusion. Gutwinski suggests the confusion she felt was a "massive" (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 57) projective identification in which she became the person her client needed her to be – bad and confused.

Many authors spoke of their experience of the client and the client's inner world as complex (Arlow, 1982; Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Waska, 2007). Waska reflects on the client's self-destructive patterns as "making a jungle out of treatment" (2002b, p. 290) evoking the image of a wild, tangled, bewildering and potentially threating landscape. Likewise, Munro wrote about the client's inner world as "a confused, brutal and war-stricken one" (1952, p. 140). A sense of overwhelming confusion was evident in much of the data, with many authors writing about the sense of chaos (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Fleming, 2008; Munro, 1952; Reed, 2009; Tracey, 2000), and the client's fear of going mad (Brenman, 1985; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Gutwinski, 1997; Munro, 1952).

Overwhelm. The organising theme of overwhelm is closely related to the previous organising theme of confusion. Overwhelm encompasses the experiences of being overburdened or anxious, or the experience of intense or out of control affects.

This organising theme is prevalent across the data set and was evident through the analyst's impressions that the client felt overburdened by the demands of life (Brenman, 1985), which was also expressed as feeling obligated to others (Reed & Baudry, 2005), and imposed on by others (Savvopoulos et al., 2011). The client's overwhelming struggles can take on "titanic" proportions (Munro, 1952, p. 134) and can be accompanied by a tremendous rage and hatred at the unjustness of the overwhelming demands (Tracey, 2000; Waska, 2004). Equally, the sense of being overburdened can be a cause of fear and anxiety in clients: "I fear the unbearable, that they will overwhelm me" (Fleming, 2008, p. 33), or indeed, fear itself can underlie the sense of being overburdened: "[she] was encumbered by tremendous fears" (Kogan, 2003, p. 735). Analyst's may become aware of the sense of overwhelm in the client's life from their own, possibly fleeting, countertransferential sense of responsibility (Grotstein, 1997).

Overwhelming affect was another way in which this organising theme was written about. Many of the authors of articles in the data set referred to intense or "out-of-control affects" (Reed & Baudry, 2005, p. 147), such as, "he reported what seemed like minor incidents at home with his wife, before it became clear they involved highly charged affects" (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004, p. 886); and "she would either reject my ideas explosively and indignantly . . . or she would dissolve into a bottomless weeping" (Gutwinski, 1997, pp. 56-57). The client's dread and fear of being affectively overwhelmed was also evident: "her dread of . . . feeling too much too quickly" (Carrere, 2010, p. 160); and "her depressive mood swings made her feel despairing that

she would ever achieve a stable level of well-being" (Epstein, 1999, p. 314). By contrast, Munro linked the client's experience of strong feelings to a lessening of projection and denial, reminding us that for some clients, the experience of strong emotion can represent a dramatic shift in their inner experience: "Painful though these emotions were, he derived great satisfaction from them, feeling for the fist time that he had something of his own" (1952, p. 141).

Other analysts noticed their own sense of overwhelm in response to their clients: "I was overwhelmed [by the client's depression]" (Tracey, 2000, p.198); "I was flooded by [her] obsessive thinking, angry and helpless to stop it" (Kogan, 2003, p. 751); and "I felt the full extent of my fear of the boundlessly penetrating sharpness of her 'ray of vision'" (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 64).

Overwhelm was also expressed as a pervasive sense of anxiety (Brenman, 1985; Carpelan, 1985; Gutwinski, 1997; Savvopoulos et al., 2011; Waska, 2002b, 2004, 2007); nervousness (Waska, 2004); fear (Fleming, 2008; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Gutwinski, 1997; Savvopoulos et al., 2011); terror (Reed, 2009; Savvopoulos et al., 2011; Stein, 1995); and panic (Waska, 2004). Many of the writers added descriptors such as "extreme" (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Carpelan, 1985; Stein, 1995); "overpowering" (Waska, 2002b, p. 292); "raw" (Stein, 1995, p. 265); "perpetual" (Reed, 2009, p. 19) or even the simple "very" (Waska, 2004, p. 251) to convey the intensity of the affective experience. Some clients conveyed their sense of overwhelm through the use of evocative metaphors of being spun around: "I felt like I was spinning out of control, faster and faster; I couldn't stop" (Reed, 2009, p. 9); and "I feel like I am a child's top being spun by enormous and unseen figures" (Munro, 1952, p. 134).

Summary of the thematic network: Disorienting. The relationship between confusion and overwhelm was central to the global theme of disorienting. While confusion is conceptualised and identified as bewildering and jumbled, overwhelm is identified in the analysis as a sense of being inundated by experiences or affect, and the sense that the experience was too much, and ultimately unbearable. Both confusion and overwhelm can lead to disorientation and both underlie the experience of disorientation.

Thematic Network 5: Bridging

The fifth thematic network, bridging, brings together the two organising themes of traversing and communication (Figure 10). As will be demonstrated, this network concerns the therapeutic process in relation to the internal persecutory experience.
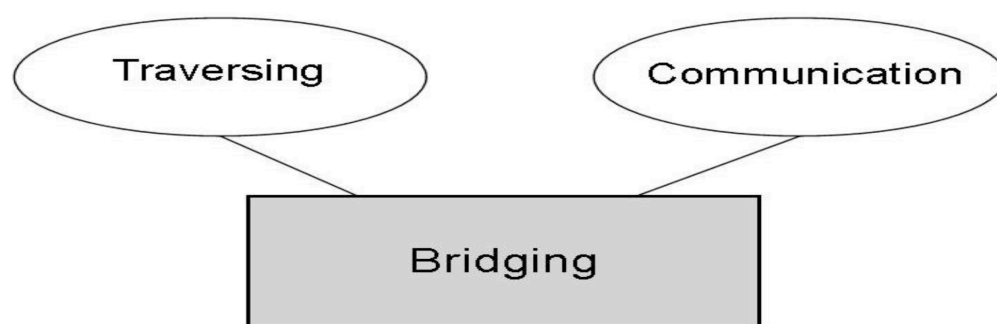
Figure 10. Thematic network for Bridging.

Traversing. This organising theme is characterised by concepts such as seeking, engaging, exploring and deepening. The seeking aspect of the traversing organising theme refers to the seeking of help and support from others which Levin envisioned as a "search for an antidote to the strangeness of one's own internal world" (2010, p. 112). Seeking also encompasses the seeking of protection (Levin, 2010; Stein, 1995), such as Waska's patient who "depends on my superego as a less harsh and less demanding object than his own superego" (2002b, p. 294), and the hope of rescue (Garza-Guerrero, 1988; Grotstein, 1997; Stein, 1995), such as Stein's patient who "was desperate and imagined himself being in a pool of fire and screaming to me for help" (1995, p. 264).

Exploring, interpreting, challenging, confronting and analysing were identified in the analysis of the data set as forming part of the traversing organising theme. These aspects of the therapeutic process are a means by which the analyst offers an alternative to the internal persecutory experience; for example, in the analyst's observation that through "offering confrontation followed by interpretation, I tried to create a sense that understanding was possible outside his relationship with a harsh superego" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p. 42). Exploring captures experiences of exploring thoughts and feelings (Epstein, 1999), learning or relearning "the language of feelings" (Kogan, 2003, p. 733) and developing the capacity to endure previously unmanageable feelings (Heimann, 1942).

References to interpreting and analysing were many and varied across the data set. By way of example, interpretations could be gradual and small (Carpelan, 1985), constantly offered (Waska, 2004b) or guided by the analyst's countertransference (Fleming, 2008). Interpretation was used to provide meaning and undo an extended regression (Savvopoulos et al., 2011). Other authors noted the limitations of interpretations, such as, "I felt that my interpretation had fallen on deaf ears, that I was

not really touching her" (Kogan, 2003, p. 737) and "[my] interpretations seemed reasonably accurate but did not penetrate" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p. 40).

Traversing was also identified in the data set as holding, containing (Alperin, 2001; Carpelan, 1985; Fleming, 2008; Grotstein, 1997), tolerating (Gutwinski, 1997), enduring, surviving and withstanding (Alperin, 2001; Carrere, 2010; Epstein, 1999; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Gutwinski, 1997; Savvopoulos, 2011; Stein, 1995), evident in analyst reflections that "I wanted to meet her aggression and remain alive and vital" (Carrere, 2010, p. 161), "listening . . . and receiving her anxiety and projections" (Carpelan, 1985, p. 10) and "the patient opted for change and for enduring the painful reality" (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 63).

Traversing refers to the deepening process that is a cornerstone of psychotherapy. The conceptualisation of therapy as an "ongoing, deepening process" (Stein, 1995, p. 278) is prevalent across the data set. Through this deepening process unconscious or hidden material is raised to conscious awareness (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004) and the process of working through is enabled (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Munro, 1952; Stein, 1995; Waska, 2002b). Working within the context of the analytic frame (Carrere, 2010; Fonagy & Target, 1994), analysts wrote of carefully (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004 Fonagy & Target, 1994), systematically (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004), persistently (Epstein, 1999) and repeatedly (Waska, 2004) going back to the point of psychic pain (Gutwinski, 1997); "reaching deeper into the nucleus of his paranoid grandiosity changed the picture of his feelings of persecution" (Stein, 1995, p. 277). Other authors highlighted the sense of shared discovery (Kogan, 2003), the importance of the recovery of good aspects of self and others (Fonagy & Target, 1994) and the developing of a symbolic representation of the persecutory experience (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004).

Communication. The second organising theme in the bridging network concerns both direct and indirect means of communication in relation to the therapeutic space and, specifically, in relation to the internal persecutory experience. Communication is embedded in the process of psychotherapy and, by extension, much of what has already been explored in the previous thematic networks concerns communication. This discussion will be limited to a few key aspects, which were identified in the analysis of the data set in relation to communication. One aspect that will not be explored in this discussion, as it is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but nevertheless worthy of mention is the significance of dreams as a means of

communication. The analysis of dreams and what they were communicating was a significant feature of many of the case studies presented in the data set.

Communication was at times noted as happening indirectly. Gutwinski saw an initial confusion around appointment times as the "staging of an important communication" (1997, p. 56). Exaggerating (Gutwinski, 1997), manipulating (Gutwinski, 1997; Fonagy & Target, 1994), aggression (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004), and projective identification (Waska, 2004b) are just a few of the indirect forms of communication that authors in the data set explored. Communication was also identified in the analysis as pertaining to the exploration of the transference (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Epstein, 1999; Fonagy & Target, 1994; Grotstein, 1997; Munro, 1952; Waska, 2002b). Part of the traversing process was identified in the data set as the bridging of these indirect communications by, for example, encouraging the client to "translate . . . feelings into words" (Kogan, 2003, p. 734), or through the use of "images and metaphors, as possible elaborations and translations" (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004, p. 887).

Silence was identified in the analysis of the data set as relating to the cluster of codes in the communication organising theme. Silence could be thoughtful (Fonagy & Target, 1994), depressed, unbearable (Epstein, 1999), dumbfounded (Kogan, 2003), a disruption (Epstein, 1999), or used as a threat (Gutwinski, 1997).

Misunderstandings were also identified as part of the communication organising theme. Misunderstandings represent a failure in communication and are evident in the data in statements such as, "[the patient] would exclaim on those occasions that I did not understand, that I was stupid and on the wrong path" (Grotstein, 1997, p. 199), that "nobody understood her, everything she said fell upon deaf ears" (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 61) and similarly the sense that "nobody can help me or understand me" (Fleming, 2008, p. 33).

Summary of the thematic network: Bridging. The thematic network, bridging, is formed around the concepts of traversing and communication. Traversing is identified as seeking, exploring, and deepening, while communication is understood as the primary means by which bridging takes place in the therapeutic engagement. Communication is thought about in terms of direct and indirect communication as well as the failure to communicate. Traversing and communication underpin the bridging aspect in regard to the experience of the internal persecutor in the clinical setting.

Thematic Network 6: Connection and Transformation

Similarly to the previous thematic network, bridging, this final thematic network, connection and transformation, further explores the therapeutic process in relation to the internal persecutor. Connection and transformation is comprised of the six organising themes: connection, aliveness, tender, struggle, sense of self, and transformation. Figure 11 shows the themes that form this thematic network.
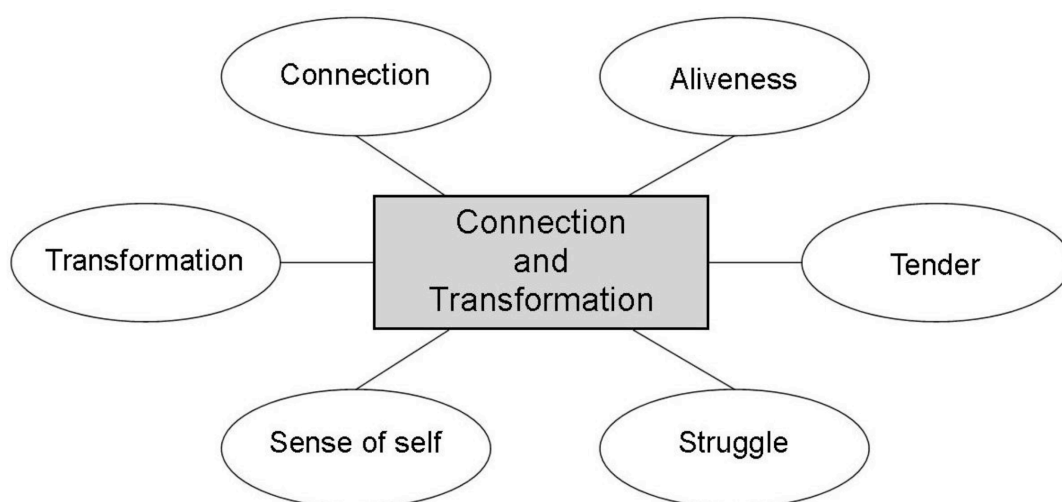

Figure 11. Thematic network for Connection and Transformation.

Connection. The organising theme, connection, provides part of the name for the thematic network. This organising theme concerns experiences in the therapeutic setting of emotional connection, reparation, and love.

Many of the authors in the data set wrote about the desire for close and connected emotional relationships (Savvopoulos et al., 2011; Waska, 2004) and the importance of the therapeutic relationship (Gutwinski, 1997; Kogan, 2003; Reed & Baudry, 2005). Emotional connection was identified in the data set in client statements such as, "I do notice that I've started to try and talk with people more and reach out a bit" (Waska, 2002b, p. 294), "I have an enormous need to talk about what I am experiencing and what has happened to me. Speaking about it helps" (Carpelan, 1985, p. 7), and in the analyst's observation that "[the patient] said he indeed felt my great emotional investment in him" (Stein, 1995, p. 271). Persecutory aspects in relation to emotional connection were also apparent in statements such as "[the patient's] attempts at destroying our real relationship are balanced with periods of genuine contact" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p. 45) which was expressed by another client as "My hope is to get closer to my girlfriend. . . . And I am interested in you and what you do. But, for some reason all I can think of is how you both will hate me" (Waska, 2004, p. 251). In

the context of the internal persecutory experience, connecting can involve a "long and painful journey of emotional opening up" (Stein, 1995, p. 274). Connection was also identified in the data set as being concerned with holding together, such as the analysts' observations that "I served as a container for [her] projective identifications" (Waska, 2002b, p. 288) and "I attempted to perceive [her] as a whole person" (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 59). Analysts worked in the "here-and-now" (Fleming, 2008, p. 33), "closely matching [the] moment-to-moment affective state" (Waska, 2002b, p. 292). For some clients this provided the first experience of "the immediacy and spontaneity . . . and the mutual emotional impact" (Stein, 1995, p. 280) of genuine connection.

Safety was identified as underlying the experience of connection. Safety pertained to feeling cared for, contained and understood, expressed by Fleming's client as: "I feel you understood me . . . suddenly I felt safe" (2008, p. 33). Facilitating the "good enough anaclitic transference relationship" (Savvopoulos et al., 2011, p.80) so that the patient feels safe enough to engage in the therapeutic process is one of the main tasks of therapy (Epstein, 1999) and then "relations between the self and the object can take on much more hopeful, safe, and reachable levels of expectation" (Waska, 2004, p. 250).

A significant aspect of connection is the capacity to understand and accept limitations, weaknesses, and imperfections in others, such as when the client "could grasp for the first time that I was (only) a human being and that I had my weaknesses" (Stein, 1995, p. 270). The emergence of a "healthier, more integrated image of [the self] and others" (Alperin, 2001, p. 152), was linked to what Heimann describes as the capacity to "maintain feelings of love even to a not perfectly good person" (1942, p. 9). Self/other differentiation was identified in the analysis of the data set in the ability to express care and concern for others (Alperin, 2001), the capacity to comfortably assert the self in relation to others (Carrere, 2010), as well as achieving and tolerating a differentiation between the self and others (Gutwinski, 1997; Kogan, 2003). The genuine connection found in the healthy expression of self/other differentiation is captured in Heimann's reflection on her client's achievements in analysis:

> She mixes well with people of different types and has an open and keen interest in actual events. Her capacity for sympathy and helpfulness has developed. She takes a lively part in the world around her, and – what she values most of all – has attained to real creative power. (1942, p. 9)

The reparative aspect of connection was evident in the "onset of the capacity for mercy and forgiveness" (Grotstein, 1997, p. 204). While reparation was often written about in respect to relationships with others (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Carrere, 2010;

Epstein, 1999; Gutwinski, 1997; Waska, 2007), Heimann also wrote about the internal process of reparation:

> the biggest advance in the development of the patient's personality was shown, not only when she became capable of restoring her objects out of love instead of compulsive necessity, but when she began to struggle to do something for herself at the same time. (1942, p. 13)

Connection and transformation was also identified as pertaining to love. While some clients had early and positive experiences of being loved (Epstein, 1999; Kogan, 2003), for others, love was confusing (Grotstein, 1997), something to be snatched or stolen (Stein, 1995), or virtually impossible to attain: "I feel I will have to give up everything to be loved and accepted" (Waska, 2002b, p. 293). Love was experienced by some clients as persecutory:

> So far the rose had been interpreted as an external persecutor, but it also had aspects of an internal one. . . . the intolerable red rose also had something to do with love, which was probably harder for the patient to endure than hate. (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 63)

Love can be regained in the therapeutic relationship (Gutwinski, 1997) even if only experienced belatedly (Stein, 1995). The analytic process was also seen as providing an opening to love and compassion towards the self: "This interpretation . . . opened a space for him to turn compassionately to his self-image of the small, injured boy and to replenish his masculine gender identity" (Stein, 1995, p. 274).

Aliveness. The organising theme aliveness pertains to analyst and patient experiences of warmth and vitality. This organising theme represents the heart of the connection and transformation thematic network and is the diametric opposite of the destruction and desolation thematic network. Aliveness is evident in statements such as, "For the first time in a very long time, she felt alive and not persecuted by anyone" (Carpelan, 1985, p. 11) and "she enjoys it all with a wonderful lust for life" (Kogan, 2003, p. 756). Aliveness was found in experiences such as "the warmth that animated our shared laughter" (Levine, 2004, p. 952) and "Your voice sounds warm, I just let myself be caressed by it" (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 57). Aliveness was also identified in the data set as pertaining to a patient's emerging creative capacities (Heimann, 1942; Kogan, 2003), to the emergence of positive and tender feelings and memories (Alperin, 2001; Kogan, 2003; Levine, 2004; Savvopoulos et al., 2011) and positive transference (Alperin, 2001; Gutwinski, 1997), and developing self-acceptance and enjoyment of life (Heimann, 1942; Waska, 2002).

Tender. The organising theme tender concerns the vulnerable and fragile side of the connection and transformation thematic network. The experience of connection

and transformation as something fragile was identified in the data set in analyst descriptions such as "However carefully I tried to touch her, she would break to pieces in my hands in nearly every session, and between the sessions she would really fall apart" (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 56). Fragile parts of the self may be projected onto others or onto the analyst: "She projected her uncertainty, mistrust, and fear of the object's stability and then felt like the object's love was fragile and easily lost" (Waska, 2007, p. 322). In the transference this fragile projection can "easily shift into a persecutory experience of abandonment and annihilation" (Waska, 2004, p. 250). Others point to the hope that it is possible to become "less afraid of hurting me or being hurt by me in the transference" (Kogan, 2003, p. 733) and that while the loss of connection may be feared, it becomes possible to believe "it could be saved" (Waska, 2004, p. 247).

Tenderness was also identified in the data set as pertaining to vulnerability, dependency and need. For many clients, vulnerability, dependency and need were experienced as dangerous (Fonagy & Target, 1994; Waska, 2004) and something to be avoided (Alperin, 2001; Stein, 1995), fought against, destroyed, denied (Alperin, 2001; Waska, 2002b) or belittled (Carpelan, 1985); "I do not need nobody and nobody can help me or understand me" (Fleming, 2008, p. 32-33). Authors noted that, "Gradually we started to gain access to the part . . . which was most vulnerable" (Fonagy & Target, p. 43). Epstein identified the potential for the analyst's emotional vulnerability to "provide the patient with a deep and enduring corrective emotional experience" (1995, p. 324), while others linked increased capacity for mentalization with the acknowledgement of dependency and vulnerability (Carrere, 2010).

Struggle. The organising theme struggle takes up the sense of striving and effort that was identified in the data set as an aspect of connection and transformation. Stein, for example wrote about her "struggle to understand" (1995, p. 268) her patient while Kogan's patient described herself as " struggling to know, to understand. I am struggling to live" (2003, p. 749). The sense of struggle was evident in references to analysis as "a slow and difficult path that took many years" (Waska, 2004, p. 250) and the experience that "progress often seemed to come to a standstill or would be slow and begrudging" (Grotstein, 1997, p. 195). Gutwinski noticed this slow and even laboured process within herself, observing that "I gradually came to understand" (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 57) and "Very gradually I succeeded in not allowing my attention to be broken off" (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 59). Hard won gains in therapy could be temporary and short-lived (Fleming, 2008; Gutwinski, 1997; Waska, 2002b) and the sense of connection experienced only fleetingly, such as this analyst's experience with the patient in which

"[he] agreed and was thoughtful for some minutes. This did not last. I became useless again" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p. 174).

The sense of struggling against reality was prevalent across the data set. Reality could be shattering (Levin, 2010), threatening (Tracey, 2000), unbearable (Waska, 2004), irreconcilable and intolerable (Gutwinski, 1997). For others there was the experience that, "Reality hit and it hit hard" (Waska, 2007, p. 326). While some clients were seen to defend against the painful reality of their situations (Gutwinski, 1997; Tracey, 2000) others began the "slow integration of reality" (Waska, 2004, p. 255). This process was not without difficulty and risk (Epstein, 1995; Fleming, 2008; Reed, 2009). As Bouchard and Lecours suggest:

> The patient's recurring defensive posture (hopelessness and impotence) when faced with the clear possibility of rearranging things with his inner parents is typical of a resistance to . . . taking . . . a relative but certainly fuller and more active responsibility. It illustrates the difficulty in any form of maturing. (2004, p. 892)

Alongside the sense of struggle came the "hesitant hope" (Stein, 1995, p. 275) of "[daring] to bring into the transference what . . . had [previously been] warded off by projection" (Gutwinski, 1997, p. 63).

Sense of self. This organising theme concerns sense of self, evident in the data set through such experiences as asserting the self, the capacity to observe the self and positive experiences of the self.

Asserting of the self was identified in the analysis in a variety of ways, and it represents the opposite of the experiences of merger and engulfment that were discussed in the stuckness thematic network. Asserting the self is concerned with both the testing of boundaries in the analytic setting and in interpersonal relationships (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Fonagy & Target, 1994) and in setting boundaries (Epstein, 1995), both of which are evident in Carrerer's intervention with a client who refused to pay for a session: "I'll consider that you owe it to me and you can consider that you won't pay it" (2010, p. 161). Asserting the self was also identified in references to feeling freer and safer to express anger (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004), speaking without fear of losing the self (Levine, 2004), identifying what is needed and wanted for oneself (Carrere, 2019; Kogan, 2003; Waska, 2007), and developing "a more robust 'I'" (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004, p. 886). Asserting the self also pertains to analytic goals such as gaining "an enduring sense of agency and empowerment vis-à-vis the persecutory objects of both her internal and external worlds" (Epstein, 1999).

A sense of self was also identified in the literature as concerning "reflecting on and trying to understand [his or her] experience" (Reed, 2009, p. 14). Several of the authors in the data set referred to the self persecutory aspects of the observant self, such as "a sadistic, destructive, and intolerant part of herself that kept close watch for any level of defiance" (Waska, 2002b, p. 289) or that "no matter what was going on in her life, in her mind there was always a part of her that was coolly observing what transpired, detached from what was going on" (Levin, 2010, p. 106). The transformative aspect of this observing self from persecutory to something alive and vital was evident in the literature in observations such as "Now everything seemed changed and [the client] was . . . three dimensional and alive and dared to look at herself" (Carpelan, 1985, p. 11-12).

Sense of self in the context of connection and transformation was seen in emerging positive experiences of the self; for example, "in a situation . . . that would previously have led her into self-recrimination, a downward spiralling mood, and plummeting self-esteem, she had experienced a surge in self-confidence, along with a certain tolerance and empathy for herself" (Levine, 2004, p. 952), or as another patient expressed it, "There is an 'I', and to feel that difference, like my way of being and accepting it as it is" (Fleming, 2008, p. 33). Authors in the data set wrote of gains in internal freedom, independence (Heimann, 1942), resilience (Carrere, 2010), and developing a more realistic picture of the self through the process of internalisation (Carrere, 2010; Waska, 2004). Emerging creative activity was identified by some authors as reinforcing "self-worth and self-confidence" (Kogan, 2003, p. 756; also Heimann, 1942; Reed & Baudry, 2005).

Transformation. Alongside the connection organising theme, this organising theme names the thematic network. The process of transformation was identified in passages such as: "For the first time in a very long time, she felt alive and not persecuted by anyone" (Carpelan, 1985, p. 11); "she shifted to using food as sustenance and no longer as a pawn in her persecutory inner life" (Carrere, 2010, p. 161); and "These [life] changes were the result of internal shifts in her object relations. [She] no longer lived within an intrapsychic battle-zone" (Waska, 2002b, p. 291). In psychoanalytic terms this was identified as the patient "beginning to take a more active role toward the hostile superego component of his internal world" (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004, p. 892). Authors in the data set identified the "experience of analysis" (Heimann, 1942, p. 11) as a transformation process which "open[s] up more of a vision" (Waska, 2007, p. 323) of the persecutory process in relation to the self and others.

The transformation process was identified in the data set as pertaining to a subsiding, reducing, or lessening of the persecutory experience. Authors wrote of the persecutory experiences lessening, reducing (Savvopoulos et at., 2011; Waska, 2002b), diminishing (Epstein, 1999), subsiding (Fonagy & Target, 1994), or disappearing (Heimann, 1942). A number of authors wrote of their patients no longer tormenting or attacking themselves (Carrere, 2010; Heimann, 1942; Waska, 2002b), or giving up a "tug-of-war approach to life" (Waska, 2004, p. 255), expressed by one patient as: "I no longer feel trapped" (Fleming, 2008, p.33). Transformation was evident in the context of patients' "recognition and owning" (Stein, 1995, p. 275) of their particular conflicts and persecutory experience; for example, "Through the analyst's transference interpretations they [the patient's conflicts] acquired meaning, and this reduced his need to make extreme use of splitting" (Savvopoulos et al., 2011, p. 82).

The sense of internal and external changes or shifts in the client's life and within the therapy itself is a significant aspect of this organising theme. These changes were evident, for example, in patients becoming more trusting and therefore more able to use the analysis productively (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Fonagy & Target, 1994), gaining confidence in the self (Waska, 2002b), becoming more aware of the self (Carpelan, 1985; Kogan, 2003; Reed, 2009), becoming increasingly emotionally resilient (Carrere, 2010; Epstein, 1999; Fleming, 2008; Heimann, 1942), and "progressing in all areas of functioning in . . . life" (Epstein, 1999, p. 322). Analysts observed their patients becoming increasingly able to "highlight [the] internal persecutory experience" (Waska, 2002b, p. 288) and developing a "growing curiosity about the way [the client's own] mind worked" (Levin, 2010, p. 107). With improved insight (Savvopoulos et al., 2011) and a developing awareness that "unwanted thoughts and feelings were being aggressively projected onto others and then reintrojected in persecutory ways" (Levin, 2010, p. 107) patients began to contain and integrate their affective responses (Fleming, 2008; Kogan, 2003; Reed & Baudry, 2005; Waska, 2002b), to integrate the good and bad in self and others (Alperin, 2001; Gutwinski, 1997; Savvopoulos et al., 2011), and to transform persecutory symptoms into genuine expressions of the self (Alperin, 2001; Heinemann, 1942; Kogan, 2003). Others observed the patient's growing capacity to tolerate, allow (Carrere, 2010; Fleming, 2008), feel (Waska, 2002b), express and name (Carrere, 2010; Epstein, 1999; Reed & Baudry, 2005) "an ever-widening range of ongoing thoughts, feelings, impulses, longings, fantasies, needs, and desires . . . with a decreasing sense of risk" (Epstein, 1999).

Transformation was identified through the analysis of the data set in the emerging capacity of clients to think what had previously been unthinkable by enabling thoughts and feelings to be symbolised and put into words (Epstein, 1999; Fleming, 2008; Gutwinski, 1997; Savvopoulos et al., 2011). Gutwinski suggests that:

> only when the subject succeeds in tolerating, integrating and hence deeming thinkable that which is unwantedly present and that which is unwantedly absent, can a process commence that permits the existence of thoughts, which confer meaning on experiences and help us to form symbols that will make the world mentally accessible, comprehensible and tolerable for us. (1997, p. 64)

The analyst draws attention to unconscious processes, "showing . . . that meaning, coherence and identity [can] be retained even under conditions of terror and mental torture" (Fonagy & Target, 1994, p. 46-47). Epstein (1999) suggests that persistently asking the patient to speak about thoughts and feelings, whether or not they are believed, inevitably allows "unwelcome thought[s]" (1999, p. 317) to emerge, while Waska suggests the analyst facilitates this process of transformation by being a "maternal envelope to take in and translate the contents of [the patient's] mind" (2002b, p. 290).

Many of the authors in the data set wrote about the patient's longing and desire. This was often identified early in the therapeutic work and was identified in the thematic analysis as essential to transformation. Deep longings (Grotstein, 1997; Kogan, 2003; Stein, 1995) for "warm, generous relationships" (Stein, 1995, p. 279) or "for an ideal set of parents and an ideal analyst who would provide him with all the love and comfort he needed" (Waska, 2004, p. 253) were interpreted as hidden in the unconscious (Grotstein, 1997). Munro, for example, interpreted the patient's attempts to "deceive himself and me about the sexual wishes which were concealed behind his desires to be an actor" (1952, p. 135). Longings and desire were seen as having been corrupted by the persecutory experience to the extent that any evidence of such desire was destroyed (Waska, 2002b) which Stein described as a "conflict between letting himself be in the contact he desired with me . . . and withdrawing" (1995, p. 277).

Transformation was identified in the analysis of the data set as pertaining to the productive use of the therapy or the therapist, such as Levine's observation that "she had an experience that demonstrated how she had taken me (or the interaction between us) into her mind in a way that she could use productively" (2004, p. 952) and client experiences that "[the] fact that you looked at the reality I experienced through my eyes gave me a lot of strength" (Kogan, 2003, p. 754) and "I thought, 'I am very glad that I

am here' [in analysis]. This is probably the best thing I have done for myself in my life'" (Reed, 2009, p. 19).

Summary of the thematic network: Connection and transformation. This thematic network explores the transformative capacity of the therapeutic encounter as it pertains to the experience of the internal persecutor. Connection and transformation are part of an enlivening and revitalising encounter within the context of an emotionally safe environment. Through the development of genuine acceptance of the self and others, the experience of deep emotional connection and love becomes possible. The progress towards connection and transformation is frequently identified as being a difficult and lengthy struggle, but a struggle characterised by hope.

Summary

This chapter is a thorough and detailed analysis of the six thematic networks that were developed in the thematic analysis of psychoanalytic literature on the internal persecutor. The six thematic networks: Destruction and Desolation; Hidden/Disowned; Stuckness; Disorienting; Bridging; and Connection and Transformation are each interpreted and analysed in turn. The experience of the internal persecutor in the clinical setting is examined through the exploration of the clinical material that makes up the data set. The clinical material is analysed through the global themes and organising themes of each of the six thematic networks demonstrating the salient themes within the data set. The validity and voracity of the analysis is demonstrated by means of citations and quotations from the original data.

The following chapter will develop a discussion of the six global themes, locating these within the context of the wider psychoanalytic literature and considering the clinical implications. The significance and limitations of these findings will be evaluated.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This dissertation, by means of a thematic analysis, identified the salient themes from a clearly defined selection of psychoanalytic literature pertaining to the experience of the internal persecutor in the therapeutic setting. Through this interpretive hermeneutic inquiry of the text I identified 25 organising themes and six global themes. As detailed in the results chapter, six thematic networks were formed from these organising and global themes: Destruction and Desolation; Hidden/Disowned; Stuckness; Disorienting; Bridging; and Connection and Transformation. This chapter begins a discussion on these findings in relation to the wider theoretical context and considers implications for clinical practice. The chapter concludes with a critical discussion on the method as applied in this dissertation, particularly as it relates to research in the field of psychotherapy. The limitations of this particular study and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

Findings in a Broader Context and Clinical Implications

As demonstrated in the literature review, the concept of the internal persecutor has been extensively developed in psychoanalytic theory. The findings from this research offer a unique perspective on the clinical experience of the internal persecutor. Undertaking an interpretive hermeneutic approach to the literature, by means of a thematic analysis, enabled a deep engagement with the text. In this research I have searched for the latent, underlying patterns of meaning within the articles in the data set. While a full critical engagement with these themes in relation to the wide body of relevant psychoanalytic literature is beyond the parameters of this research, in keeping with the interpretive hermeneutic framework underpinning this study, this chapter syntheses the findings and begins a discussion of the global themes within the wider theoretical context.

Destruction and Desolation. My analysis identified destruction and desolation as a central theme in the literature on the internal persecutory experience. The internal persecutory world is dangerous, violent, angry, hostile, harsh, and cruel. This brutal, war-stricken inner world is overwhelmingly destructive, of both the self and the other. The self is both terrorised and terrorising.

The findings highlight the way in which the internal persecutory experience is the experience of the therapeutic dyad. The destructive aspect of the self is so overwhelming that the individual attempts to rid the self of the experience through projection. The ravaged and depleted self cannot imagine a compassionate, accepting other, but rather through projective identification experiences the other as abusive and

persecutory. As indicated in the results, this can be an overwhelming and confusing experience for the therapist as he or she becomes projectively identified as a perpetrator of violence and persecution. This represents a complex and destructive attack on the therapist and the therapy.

The internal persecutor threatens and attacks the therapy in a multitude of ways, but it is arguably the attacks on thinking which are the most destructive. As psychotherapists, our capacity to symbolically represent cognitive, affective and somatic experiences is the central aspect of our work. As seen in the literature, when this capacity is attacked, the dyad is vulnerable to being overwhelmed by the despairing lifelessness of the persecutory experience. In his seminal paper describing attacks on linking, Bion suggested that destructive attacks on linking originate in disrupted containment in infancy resulting in "a severe disorder of the impulse to be curious" (Bion, 1959, p. 314). Restoring the links and thereby restoring the capacity for curiosity in the dyad will be taken up again in the bridging theme.

Hidden/Disowned. My analysis identified hidden/disowned as one of the core themes in relation to the experience of the internal persecutor. I was surprised and interested to discover this theme. Whereas aspects of the destruction and desolation theme were evident even from my initial readings of the articles in the data set, the hidden/disowned theme remained hidden from me until well into the analysis of the themes. It was not until I was trying to find the relationships between the meaning units and codes that I began to recognise the hidden and disowned pattern embedded in the persecutory experience.

From my analysis I suggest the origins of the hidden and disowned aspects of the persecutory experience can be found in early experiences of absence and disconnection. According to Winnicott, if the caregiver is absent for longer than the child can tolerate, or fails to provide an "alive and real and good enough (not too persecutory)" presence (Winnicott, 1971, p. 9), this is experienced as a deadly, terrifying emptiness. Lacking the ability to symbolise early and repeated experiences of neglect or emotionally or physically absent caregivers, the child internalises the absence, experienced as a psychic void (Reed & Baudry, 2005). The findings from this research suggest this terrifying emptiness is a pervasive persecutory experience that permeates the therapeutic encounter.

What is hidden and disowned can be seen as a way of attempting to avert the terrifying emptiness of the inner void. As evidenced in the results chapter, the ways of disowning this terrifying internal experience and hiding from the self and from the other

are many and varied, providing a constant challenge to us as psychotherapists as we attempt to bring what is unconscious (or hidden) into conscious awareness. All the more so when we consider that we as psychotherapists are not exempt from the experience of the hidden and disowned.

An underlying assumption in the literature is that it is the analyst's role to discover and interpret or translate the hidden meaning in the patient's thoughts, feelings, experiences, and actions; an assumption that underlies the results of this thematic analysis. While not disagreeing with this, Reed and Baudry (2005) do, however, suggest that psychic voids may in fact be unknowable, a challenging notion worthy of further investigation and research.

Stuckness. As identified in the analysis of the literature, stuckness is a core aspect of the experience of the internal persecutor. Most obviously, stuckness refers to the sense that nothing has changed and nothing can change. Stuckness is perhaps one of the most clinically frustrating aspects of the internal persecutory experience. Entering therapy is invariably an expression of a desire to change some aspect of the self. Stuckness stems from the parts of the self that resist change and renders the therapeutic dyad impotent.

As seen in the results, the unbearable feelings of stuckness are projected on to the analyst who is blamed for the patient's entrenched misery and lack of improvement. For psychotherapists, who are usually attracted to the profession out of a desire to work with their clients towards a more fully lived life, a pervasive experience of stuckness is potentially wearying and despair inducing. All the more so if the therapist becomes projectively identified with being held solely responsible for the impasse in the therapeutic encounter.

The research findings identify stuckness as a form of attachment to the familiar, even when what is familiar is persecutory. I suggest this attachment is primarily defensive. It is unconsciously experienced as preferable, even desirable, to maintain the persecutory attachments rather than face the threat of change. As Fairbairn wrote, "the child not only internalises his [*sic*] bad objects because they force themselves upon him and he seeks to control them, but also, above all, because he needs them" (Fairbairn, 1952, p. 67). Patients cling to the internal persecutor. To do otherwise is to face the terrifying threat of the psychic void within.

The attachment to the internal persecutor stands between the therapist and client, forming a barrier to developing an intimate therapeutic relationship. Alperin suggests the capacity to develop and maintain intimate relationships with others may indicate

"that the patient's major problems have been resolved" (2001, p. 153). Certainly in relation to the findings in this research, the capacity to develop an intimate, emotionally connected relationship with the therapist would indicate a significant shift away from the suffocating grasp of the internal persecutor.

Disorienting. The theme of disorienting pertains to the confusion and overwhelm of the internal persecutory experience. The ceaselessly terrifying and threatening internal persecutory experience, as explored through the destruction and desolation and hidden/disowned themes, is intrinsically overwhelming. This disorienting experience sets up an endless cycle. Overwhelmed by the destructive power of the internal persecutory experience and, in the absence of any means to manage the terrifying effects of the internal desolation, the individual becomes trapped or stuck in a devastating cycle of persecution. Klein similarly recognised the vicious circle that can arise when she wrote that "if persecutory fear . . . [is] too strong, the ego is not capable of working through the depressive position. This in turn forces the ego to regress to the schizoid position and reinforces the earlier persecutory fears" (Klein, 1946, p. 105). Through projective identification, the therapeutic couple can become entangled in this overwhelming and confusing persecutory cycle.

While the confusion and overwhelm associated with the disorienting theme can perpetuate an endless cycle of internal persecution, this theme does, however, contain a more hopeful element. To be disoriented is to have lost one's bearings. It implies movement and is thus the dialectic opposite of the stuckness theme. To be disoriented suggests a rudimentary, tentative shift in the internal persecutory experience. I suggest that it is when the internal persecutory experience becomes disoriented that escaping the persecutory cycle becomes possible.

Bridging. While the final two themes identified in this research appear at first glance to be of a different order from the previous four themes, they nevertheless represent a principal global pattern that was identified in the literature pertaining to the experience of the internal persecutor. The bridging theme, like the previous themes, is an aspect of the internal persecutor experienced by the therapeutic dyad.

Bridging begins when a client chooses to enter therapy, but as seen in this study, the initial capacity for bridging is limited, compromised by the hostile, persecutory aspects of the self. As discussed in the destruction and desolation theme, the internal persecutory experience is characterised by sustained self and other directed attacks. Bridging, which encapsulates such therapeutic processes as holding, containing, exploring, challenging, interpreting, and deepening, is an on-going process of working

through these persecutory attacks. To return to the ideas of Bion (1959), bridging describes the process by which the therapist and client begin to restore the destroyed links. As evidenced in the literature from the data set, this is a slow, lengthy process with inevitable setbacks. However, as long as the bridging process is sufficient to enable the therapy to continue, even these setbacks can be a significant aspect of working through the internal persecutory experience.

Through the process of projective identification, the therapist's own internal persecutory elements are an inevitable, if uncomfortable, aspect of the therapeutic encounter (Josephs, 1998) and these too, must be bridged in order to free the therapeutic couple from the deadly grip of the internal persecutory experience.

Connection and Transformation. The close relationship between the theme of connection and transformation and the bridging theme is readily apparent. A bridge serves to connect two previously unconnected points. Bridging is the means by which connection and transformation take place. While connection and transformation suggests a successful working through of the internal persecutory experience, it does not represent a static state. Connection and transformation is an on-going therapeutic process.

Freud suggested that the work with a self-persecuting patient is to bring the experience into conscious awareness and to "[attempt] the slow demolition of the hostile super ego" (1940, p. 57). The findings from this thematic analysis challenge Freud's destructive phrasing. Rather than a destruction of the internal persecutor, the findings of this research emphasise that the therapeutic task is to provide a consistent, supportive, containing, and loving presence. Rather than a demolition process, the work of the therapeutic dyad involves symbolising experience, putting feelings into words instead of actions, transforming painful, unbearable experience into tolerable thoughts, and "joining the patient in a journey of exploration into unknown parts of him- or herself, collaborating with the patient in creating meaning where meaning has been destroyed" (Reed & Baudry, 2005, p.130).

While it can be easy to criticise Freud or to confine his work to historical curiosity, in keeping with the interpretive hermeneutic approach of this dissertation I will briefly consider what Freud might contribute to this discussion. In my interpretation of the themes developed in this thematic analysis, I found a relationship between the fragility and vulnerability of the internal persecutory experience and the experiences of connection and transformation. If we only pay attention to the powerfully destructive aspects of the internal persecutor our unconscious response may

well be a desire to destroy it. Perhaps when we take into account the more vulnerable and fragile aspects of the internal persecutory experience we are inclined to conceptualise the therapeutic work in more supportive and collaborative language. While this may be a more comfortable conceptualisation of what we do in our therapeutic work, Freud perhaps helps to remind us of our darker and more destructive impulses and countertransferential responses to the experience of the internal persecutor.

Interrelationships Between the Themes

Thematic analysis represents a complex interweaving of themes. Exploring these interrelationships takes us deeper into the analysis, and I would suggest it is the relationships between the themes that represents the heart of the thematic analysis. In relation to the themes identified in this thematic analysis, these interrelationships move the analysis beyond a static exploration of the concept to show the interplay between the themes in relation to the internal persecutory experience.

The themes identified in this thematic analysis were interwoven throughout the clinical descriptions. Figure 12 illustrates one way of considering the interrelationships between the six global themes that were identified in this study.
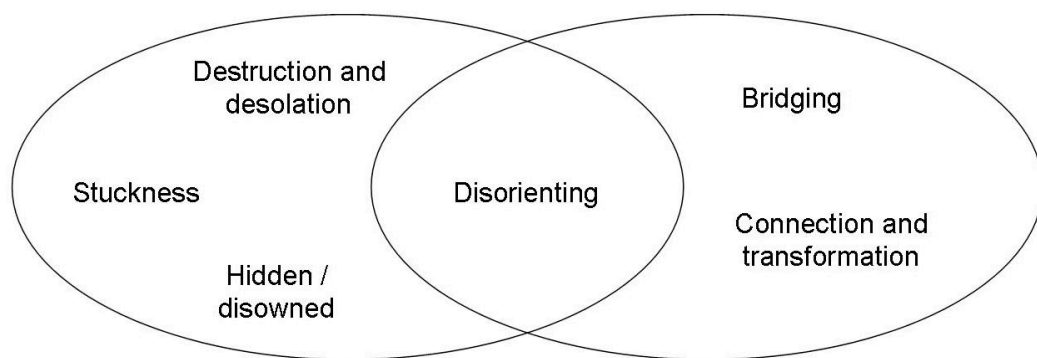
Figure 12. Theme interrelationships.

As illustrated in the theme interrelationships diagram, the internal persecutory experience can become stuck in an endless destructive cycle. The deadly, destructive internal persecutor ceaselessly and aggressively attacks the self and the other. Through projective identification, the other is experienced as a vicious perpetrator. Lacking the means to defend the self from the internal and external threats, the self attempts to hide. In a desperate attempt to manage the overwhelming persecutory anxiety, the unwanted aspects of the internal persecutory experience are disowned through splitting, denial,

and projection. In this hostile internal and external environment persecutory experience is endlessly projected and reintrojected.

Disorientation is located in the intersection between the two circles. The overwhelming experience of disorientation forces the self back into the destructive internal persecutory cycle. However, as suggested in the previous section, to become disoriented in the internal persecutory experience is a movement out of the lifeless emptiness and stuckness of the destructive cycle. Because of the strong attachment to the familiar persecutory experience the individual can easily become overwhelmed, reactivating the internal persecutory experience. The intervention of the therapeutic process repeatedly bridges the disorientation and provides an alternative to the internal persecutory experience, translating the hidden meaning in the persecutory thoughts, feelings, and experiences and restoring damaged internal and external connections. Through the therapeutic process the internal persecutory experience can be gradually worked through and transformed into a genuine expression of the self, creating the opportunity for genuine emotional connection.

Critical Reflections on the Method

In order to conduct this thematic analysis, I critically reviewed the available literature on this method and devised a version of the method that was suited to my way of working and suitable for the material that formed the data set. The decisions I made regarding the application of a thematic analysis to published psychoanalytic literature have been detailed in previous chapters. Here I highlight some of my key reflections on the method, specifically as a research tool for psychotherapy.

One of the key features of a thematic analysis is its flexibility. Unlike some qualitative research methods that are firmly rooted in a particular theoretical framework, a thematic analysis can be undertaken across a range of theoretical approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For the purposes of this dissertation I have taken advantage of the flexibility of a thematic analysis as a method, undertaking a thematic analysis within an interpretive hermeneutic approach and applying this method to articles published in peer-reviewed journals. This represents a departure from the more usual application of this method. In adapting the method to previously published material which was not written with my research purposes in mind, I found that a thematic analysis is best suited to experience-near material such as case studies, vignettes, and reflections on clinical work. That said, articles written for journal publication are scholarly works written to elaborate and develop theoretical ideas. It is reasonable to assume that the

accounts that made up my data set were more theoretically constructed, and used less experience-near language than interviews may have yielded.

I made a choice to retain the original wording from the text for as long as possible by adopting an inductive approach to coding, that is coding from the data itself, rather than searching the data for pre-determined codes. Coding all 27 articles in this way was a lengthy and time-consuming process. Arguably, this was necessary as the articles were from multiple authors representing different psychoanalytic modalities and the terms used can differ depending on the theoretical leanings of the author. Developing a coding frame from a cross section of articles and applying this to the entire data set would have been more time efficient (Meier et al., 2007, provides an example of such an approach in their thematic analysis of transcripts from psychotherapy sessions with a depressed client), however, I believe the depth and complexity of the multi author data set would have been lost had this approach been taken. Inductive coding, by first developing meaning units which stayed close to the language of the original text, enabled a deep engagement with the nuances of meaning in the text and I believe this resulted in codes which were richer and retained the more subtle layers of meaning from the original text, ultimately enriching the resulting themes.

Thematic analysis, a method that enables a deep engagement with the data in order to analyse and interpret patterns of meaning found within that data, appears to have great potential as a research method for psychotherapy. While thematic analysis has more usually been applied to interview transcripts, I would suggest that future psychotherapy researchers consider beginning a thematic analysis by developing a coding frame from existing published material, such as demonstrated in this dissertation, and then conducting interviews and applying the coding frame to the resulting interview transcripts. Bringing together existing knowledge from psychotherapy literature with focused interviews has the potential to generate insightful and compelling findings.

The deep engagement with the data which a thematic analysis supports makes it well suited to analysing the intricacy and complexity of a relatively small data set. A thematic analysis enables the researcher to identify patterns and connections that are not immediately evident from an initial reading of the text. This process of going beyond the surface level of meaning to discover more abstracted meanings within the data is perhaps the greatest strength of a thematic analysis.

Limitations of this Study and Suggestions for Further Research

This research has been limited to the study of previously published psychoanalytic literature. As discussed in the previous section, a thematic analysis does not easily apply to theoretical material. Articles published in journals are generally expected to develop theoretical and conceptual arguments and have necessarily been through a rigorous editing process in order to reach publication. While a number of the articles in the data set included verbatim material, I nevertheless found that much of the clinical material utilised for this study was substantially theorised. Undertaking interviews with therapists has the potential to explore material that is less filtered through theoretical constructs and closer to the experience, complementing and augmenting the findings from the more theorised published material. As such, this study represents a useful beginning that would be enhanced by undertaking focused interviews with psychotherapists about the internal persecutory experience as it relates to clinical work.

The six thematic networks developed in this thematic analysis do, however, provide a unique insight into the clinical experience of the internal persecutor, based on the published work of psychoanalysts across a range of psychoanalytic modalities. Rather than simply providing a semantic description of the manifest content in the literature, these thematic networks are a rich and complex exploration of the latent, or underlying, patterns of meaning in the data. A particular limitation in this study is that the requirements of the dissertation do not allow for a more full discussion of the findings and of the interconnections between the themes. Further research conducting a broader study of existing theoretical concepts and critically and more fully examining the thematic networks in relation to these existing theories could offer new insight into this clinically significant concept.

The scope of this study was limited to a focus on the clinical experience of the internal persecutor, by undertaking an analysis on psychoanalytic literature. Further study on the experience of self-persecution within the psychoanalytic literature, by applying different search terms, could provide a useful comparison with the findings from this research. A study into the literature from other psychotherapy modalities (for example, trauma therapy) could also provide an interesting comparison into the ways in which clinicians working from other frames of reference understand and work with clients who are torturing themselves.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This dissertation explored the experience of the internal persecutor in the therapeutic setting. A thorough and systematic search process identified 27 articles meeting the research criteria. By applying a thematic analysis to the clinical material from these articles, the latent patterns, or themes, within the data were identified, generating 25 organising themes and six global themes. Six thematic networks were constructed from these themes. On the basis of this textual analysis, the experience of the internal persecutor in the therapeutic setting was interpreted through six distinct and interrelated thematic networks: Destruction and Desolation; Hidden/Disowned; Stuckness; Disorienting; Bridging; and Connection and Transformation.

The harsh, brutal and terrifying aspects of the experience of the internal persecutor were explored through the Destruction and Desolation thematic network. The destructive experience of the internal persecutor was identified as both self and other directed. The Hidden/Disowned thematic network was seen in attempts to hide from the self and from the other in an attempt to escape the persecutory experience and in attempts to disavow the unwanted aspects of the self. Stuckness described the unchanging and seemingly unchangeable aspects of the internal persecutory experience. Disorienting pertains to the experiences of confusion and overwhelm which perpetuate the internal persecutory experience. Disorienting was also identified in this analysis as indicating movement and therefore as the opposite of the Stuckness thematic network. Bridging was identified in the analysis as referring to all aspects of the therapeutic process that connect or link, while the thematic network Connection and Transformation refers to the enlivening and revitalising aspects of the therapeutic encounter in relation to the internal persecutory experience. Connection and Transformation was identified as an on-going process of transforming persecutory thoughts, feelings and actions into genuine expressions of the self. Taking each of the themes in turn, I began a discussion in relation to some of the major psychoanalytic theorists, considering how the themes identified in this research inform and are informed by their theories.

The six thematic networks were discussed in terms of the interrelationships between them. This was thought about in terms of being trapped in a destructive persecutory cycle. The therapeutic process was identified as bridging and transforming the experience of the internal persecutor.

This dissertation has detailed my approach to applying a thematic analysis within an interpretive hermeneutic framework to published literature. A thematic

analysis is a deep engagement with the research material, enabling a rich exploration of the data. The application of a thematic analysis to clinical and case study material is a promising research method for the field of psychotherapy, particularly if the results of a textual thematic analysis can be analysed in conjunction with data collected in interviews.

Appendix A: Coded Articles from the "internal persecutor*" Search

Alperin, R.M. (2001). Barriers to intimacy: An object relations perspective. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, *18*, 137-156. doi: 10.1037/0736-9735.18.1.137

Anderson, C. (1949). Aspects of pathological grief and mourning. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, *30*, 48-55.

Arlow, J.A. (1982). Problems of the superego concept. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, *37*, 229-244.

Bouchard, M., & Lecours, S. (2004). Analyzing forms of superego functioning as mentalizations. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, *85*, 879-896. doi 10.1516/0AYK-3DCT-UQ87-WH4L

Brenman, E. (1985). Hysteria. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, *66*, 423-432.

Carpelan, H. (1985). Container function deficiency and massive projective identification. *Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review*, *8*, 3-15.

Carrere, R. (2010). Psychoanalysis conducted at reduced frequencies. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, *27*, 153-163. doi: 10.1037/a0019415

Epstein, L. (1999). The analyst's "bad-analyst feelings": A counterpart to the process resolving implosive defences. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, *35*, 311-325. doi 10.1037/a0019415

Fleming, M. (2008). On mental pain: From Freud to Bion. *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, *17*, 27-36.

Fonagy, P., & Target, M. (1994). Understanding and the compulsion to repeat: A clinical exploration. *Bulletin of Anna Freud Centre*, *17*, 33-55.

Garza-Guerrero, C. (1988). Ego and superego alterations in borderline structures: Their effect on the process and outcome of treatment. *International Journal Psycho-Analysis*, *69*, 205-220.

Grotstein, J.S. (1997). Why Oedipus and not Christ?: A psychoanalytic inquiry into innocence. Human sacrifice and the sacred - Part I: Innocence, spirituality, and human sacrifice. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, *57*, 193-218.

Gutwinski, J. (1997). Hypochondria versus the relation to the object. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, *78*, 53-68.

Heimann, P. (1942). A contribution to the problem of sublimation and its relation to processes of internalization. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, *23*, 8-17.

Kogan, I. (2003). On being a dead, beloved child. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, *72*, 727-766.

Levin, C. (2010). The mind as a complex internal object: Inner estrangement. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, *79*, 95-127.

Levine, S.S. (2004). To have and to hold: On the experience of having an other. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, *73*, 939-969.

Munro, L. (1952). Clinical notes on internalization and identification. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, *33*, 132-143.

Reed, G.S. (2009). An empty mirror: Reflections on nonrepresentation. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, *78*, 1-26.

Reed, G.S., & Baudry, F.D. (2005). Conflict, structure, and absence: André Green on borderline and narcissistic pathology. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, *74*, 121-155.

Rosenfeld, H. (1983). Primitive object relations and mechanisms. *International Journal Psycho-Analysis*, *64*, 261-267.

Savvopoulos, S., Manolopoulos, S., & Beratis, S. (2011). Repression and splitting in the psychoanalytic process. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, *92*, 75-96. doi: 10.1111/j.1745-8315.2010.00363.x

Stein, R. (1995). Analysis of a case of transsexualism. *Psychoanalytic Dialogue*, *5*, 257-289.

Tracey, N. (2000). Thinking about and working with depressed mothers in the early months of their infant's life. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, *26*, 183-207.

Waska, R.T. (2002). Three phases of treatment with borderline and psychotic patients. *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, *11*, 286-295.

Waska, R. (2004). I hear you knocking, but you can't come in: Two reasons to refuse the good object. *Psychoanalytic Review*, *91*, 239-256.

Waska, R. (2007). When patients face the dual threat of depressive and paranoid phantasies. *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*, *21*, 315-329. doi 10.1080/02668730701698350

Appendix B: From Codes to Themes

Theme Network 1

Codes	Organising Themes	Global Theme
Dangerous Murderous, deadly Attacks on self or other Malignancy Horror Hostile encounters Violence and destructiveness Attacks on thinking	Destructive	
Satisfaction in disturbing the other Controlling, compelling, seducing	Power over the other	
External persecutors Fear of retaliation Suspicion and distrust Fault finding Innocent, suffering martyr	External persecutory experience	Destruction and Desolation
Worthless Revulsion and disgust Demanding Self-punishing Shame Guilt Humiliation	Loathing	
Despair Depression Grief and loss Pain and suffering Joyless	Despair	
Hostile inner world Psychic 'scorched-earth' policy Burdening Hate Envy Anger Rage	Inner desolation	

Theme Network 2

Codes	Organising Themes	Global Theme
Hidden, concealed, obscured Buffering, censoring, minimising feelings Keeping part of self out of reach Fear of intimacy, closeness	Hiddenness	
Somatising Enactment Greedy, hungry, gluttonous, devouring	Somatic experience	
		Hidden/ Disowned
Emptiness Absence of meaning Deprivation Disbelief Sense of something missing Separation Disconnection	Absence and disconnection	
Evacuating, getting rid of Externalisation of need Externalisation of persecutory experience Externalisation of internal hate Fragmentation Inability to bear ambivalence	Expelling	

Theme Network 3

Codes	Organising Themes	Global Theme
Trapped Frustrating Stuckness	Stuckness	
Desire to be special Preservation of attachments Pain of letting go Merger, engulfment, identification	Attachment to the familiar	
		Stuckness
Limitations Devaluing Idealising Empathic failure	Constraints and limitations	
Powerless, helpless, impotent Ineffectiveness	Impotence	
Fear of self-discovery Fear of improving	Fear of possibility	

Theme Network 4

Codes	Organising Themes	Global Theme
Muddled and confused		
Chaos and confusion		
Uncertainty	Confusion	
Madness		
Tangled		Disorienting
Overburdened		
Intense, overwhelming, out-of-control affects	Overwhelm	
Anxiety		

Theme Network 5

Codes	Organising Themes	Global Theme
Seeking protection and guidance		
Exploring affect		
Interpreting, challenging, analysing, confronting	Traversing	
Meeting, engaging and enduring		Bridging
On-going, deepening process of discovery		
Dreams		
Indirect/exaggerated communication	Communication	
Replaying, repeating, reliving		
Silence		
Misunderstandings		

Theme Network 6

Codes	Organising Themes	Global Theme
Emotional connection		
Reparation		
Holding together		
Immediacy	Connection	
Safety		
Self/other differentiation		
Love		
Warmth	Aliveness	
Vitality		
Fragility		Connection and
Vulnerability	Tender	Transformation
Dependency and need		
Slow going, hard won		
Temporary	Struggle	
Reality		
Risk, struggle, hesitant hope		
Asserting self		
Observing self	Sense of self	

Positive experience of self

Transformation	
Thinking the unthinkable	
Change, shifting	Transformation
Subsiding, reducing, lessening	
Productive	
Longing and desire	

References

Alperin, R. M. (2001). Barriers to intimacy: An object relations perspective. *Psychoanalytic Psychology, 18*, 137-156. doi:10.1037/0736-9735.18.1.137

Anderson, C. (1949). Aspects of pathological grief and mourning. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 30*, 48-55.

Arlow, J. A. (1982). Problems of the superego concept. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 37*, 229-244.

Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research, 1*, 385-405. doi:10.1177/146879410100100307

Bion, W. R. (1959). Attacks on linking. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 40*, 308-315.

Bott Spillius, E., Milton, J., Garvey, P., Couve, C., & Steiner, D. (2001). *The new dictionary of Kleinian thought*. East Sussex, England: Routledge.

Bouchard, M., & Lecours, S. (2004). Analyzing forms of superego functioning as mentalizations. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 85*, 879-896. doi:10.1516/0AYK-3DCT-UQ87-WH4L

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (n.d.). *Frequently asked questions about thematic analysis*. Retrieved 7 June, 2013, from http://www.psych.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/frequently-asked-questions-8

Brenman, E. (1985). Hysteria. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 66*, 423-443.

Carpelan, H. (1985). Container function deficiency and massive projective identification. *Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review, 8*, 3-15.

Carrere, R. (2010). Psychoanalysis conducted at reduced frequencies. *Psychoanalytic Psychology, 27*, 153-163. doi:10.1037/a0019415

Chessick, R. D. (1990). Hermeneutics for psychotherapists. *American Journal of Psychotherapy, 44*(2), 256-273.

Corradi, R. B. (2009). The repetition compulsion in psychodynamic psychotherapy. *Journal of American Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry, 37*, 477-500.

Douglass, B., & Moustakas, C. (1985). Heuristic inquiry: The internal search to know. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 25*, 39-55. doi:10.1177/0022167885253004

Eigen, M. (1995). The destructive force within. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 31*, 603-616.

Ely, M., Vinz, R., Downing, M., & Anzul, M. (1997). *On writing qualitative research: Living by words*. London, England: The Falmer Press.

Epstein, L. (1999). The analyst's "bad-analyst feelings": A counterpart to the process resolving implosive defences. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 35*, 311-325.

Fairbairn, W. R. D. (1952). *Psychoanalytic studies of the personality*. London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Fleming, M. (2008). On mental pain: From Freud to Bion. *International Forum of Psychoanalysis, 17*, 27-36.

Fonagy, P., & Target, M. (1994). Understanding and the compulsion to repeat: A clinical exploration. *Bulletin of Anna Freud Centre, 17*, 33-55.

Frank, J. D. (1987). Psychotherapy, rhetoric, and hermeneutics: Implications for practice and research. *Pychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 24*(3), 293-302. doi:10.1037/h0085719

Freud, A. (1936). *The ego and mechanisms of defense*. London, England: Karnac Books.

Freud, S. (1912). Recommendation to physicians practising psycho-analysis. In *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 12, pp. 109-120). London, England: Hogarth Press.

Freud, S. (1920). Beyond the pleasure principle. In *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 18, pp. 1-64). London, England: Hogarth Press.

Freud, S. (1923). The ego and the id. In *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 19, pp. 1-66). London, England: Hogarth Press.

Freud, S. (1940). An outline of psycho-analysis. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 21*(27-84).

Garza-Guerrero, C. (1988). Ego and superego alterations in borderline structures: Their effect on the process and outcome of treatment *International Journal Psycho-Analysis, 69*, 205-220.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Grotstein, J. S. (1997). Why Oedipus and not Christ?: A psychoanalytic inquiry into innocence. Human sacrifice and the sacred - Part I: Innocence, spirituality, and human sacrifice. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis, 57*, 193-218.

Gutwinski, J. (1997). Hypochondria versus the relation to the object. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 78*, 53-68.

Heimann, P. (1942). A contribution to the problem of sublimation and its relation to processes of internalization. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 23*, 8-17.

Joffe, H. (2012). Thematic analysis. In D. Harper & A. R. Thompson (Eds.), *Qualitative research methods in mental health and psychotherapy: A guide for students and practitioners* (pp. 209-223). Chichister, England: John Wiley & Sons.

Joffe, H., & Yardley, L. (2004). Content and thematic analysis. In D. F. Marks & L. Yardley (Eds.), *Research methods for clinical and health psychology* (pp. 56-68). London, England: Sage.

Josephs, L. (1998). The mutual regulation of self-criticism. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 34*, 339-357.

Kernberg, O. F. (2001). Object relations, affects, and drives: Towards a new synthesis. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry, 21*(604-619).

Klein, H. K., & Myers, M. D. (1999). A set of principles for conduction and evaluating interpretive field studies in information systems. *Management Information Systems Quarterly, 23*(1), 67-88. doi:10.2307/249410

Klein, M. (1946). Note on some schizoid mechanisms. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 27*, 99-110.

Kogan, I. (2003). On being a dead, beloved child. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 72*, 727-766.

Levin, C. (2010). The mind as a complex internal object: Inner estrangement. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 79*, 95-127.

Levine, S. S. (2004). To have and to hold: On the experience of having an other. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 73*, 939-969.

Loewenthal, D. (2007a). Introducing relational research. In D. Lowenthal (Ed.), *Case studies in relational research* (pp. 1-18). Hampshire, England: Palgrave MacMillan.

Loewenthal, D. (2007b). Relational research, ideology and the evolution of intersubjectivity in a post-existential culture. In D. Loewenthal (Ed.), *Case studies in relational research* (pp. 221-240). Hampshire, England: Palgrave MacMillan.

Martin, J., & Thompson, J. (2003). Psychotherapy as the interpretation of being: Hermeneutic perspectives on psychotherapy. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology, 16*, 1-16. doi:10.1080/10720530390117830

McLeod, J. (2001). *Qualitative research in counselling and psychotherapy*. London, England: Sage.

McLeod, J. (2011). *Qualitative research in counselling and psychotherapy* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McWilliams, N. (1994). *Psychoanalytic diagnosis: Understanding personality structure in the clinical process*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Meier, A., Boivin, M., & Meier, M. (2007). The treatment of depression: A case study using theme-analysis. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 6*(2), 115-125. doi:10.1080/14733140600718877

Meissner, W. W. (1980). A note on projective identification. *Journal of American Psychoanalytic Association, 28*, 43-66.

Munro, L. (1952). Clinical notes on internalization and identification. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 33*, 132-143.

Polio, H. R., & Ursiak, M. J. (2005). A thematic analysis of written accounts: Thinking about thought. In C. T. Fischer (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods for psychologists* (pp. 279-298). Burlington, MA: Academic Press.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (2000). Psychological inquiry and the pragmatic and hermeneutic traditions. *Theory Psychology, 10*, 453-479. doi:10.1177/0959354300104002

Reed, G. S. (2009). An empty mirror: Reflections on nonrepresentation. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 78*, 1-26.

Reed, G. S., & Baudry, F. D. (2005). Conflict, structure, and absence: André Green on borderline and narcissistic pathology. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 74*, 121-155.

Rennie, D. L. (2012). Qualitative research as methodical hermeneutics. *Psychological Methods, 17*(3), 385-398. doi:10.1037/a0029250

Rosenfeld, H. (1983). Primitive object relations and mechanisms. *International Journal Psycho-Analysis, 64*, 261-267.

Savege Scharff, J. (2003). Sources of persecutory anxiety: Death instinct or bad objects? In J. Savege Scharff & S. A. Tsigounis (Eds.), *Self hatred in psychoanalysis. Detoxifying the persecutory object.* (pp. 23-45). London, England: Brunner-Routledge.

Savvopoulos, S., Manolopoulos, S., & Beratis, S. (2011). Repression and splitting in the psychoanalytic process. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 92*, 75-96. doi:10.1111/j.1745-8315.2010.00363.x

Smythe, E., & Spence, D. (2012). Re-viewing literature in hermeneutic research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 11*(1), 12-24.

Stein, R. (1995). Analysis of a case of transsexualism. *Psychoanalytic Dialogue, 5*, 257-289. doi:10.1080/10481889509539065

Stein, R. (2002). Evil as love and as liberation. *Psychoanalytic Dialogue, 12*, 393-420.

Thompson, A. R., & Harper, D. (2012). Introduction. In D. Harper & A. R. Thompson (Eds.), *Qualitative research methods in mental health and psychology* (pp. 1-8). Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons.

Tracey, N. (2000). Thinking about and working with depressed mothers in the early months of their infant's life. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy, 26*, 183-207.

Tsigounis, S. A. (2003). Detoxification possible and impossible. In J. S. Scharff & S. A. Tsigounis (Eds.), *Self hatred in psychoanalysis. Detoxifyig the persecutory object*. London, England: Brunner-Routledge.

Tsigounis, S. A., & Savege Scharff, J. (2003). Introduction to the persecutory object. In J. Savege Scharff & S. A. Tsigounis (Eds.), *Self hatred in psychoanalysis. Detoxifying the persecutory object.* (pp. 3-21). London, England: Brunner-Routledge.

Vidal, J. (2012, November 17). Cubic view captures world's biodiversity. *New Zealand Herald,* p. 17.

Waska, R. (2002a). Mutilation of self and object: The destructive world of the paranoid-schizoid patient and the struggle for containment and integration. *Psychoanalytic Review, 89*, 373-398.

Waska, R. (2002b). Three phases of treatment with borderline and psychotic patients. *International Forum of Psychoanalysis, 11*, 286-295.

Waska, R. (2004). I hear you knocking, but you can't come in: Two reasons to refuse the good object. *Psychoanalytic Review, 91*, 239-256.

Waska, R. (2007). When patients face the dual threat of depressive and paranoid phantasies. *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy, 21*, 315-329. doi:10.1080/02668730701698350

Wilson, H. S., & Hutchinson, S. A. (1991). Triangulation of qualitative methods: Heideggerian hermeneutics and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research, 1*, 263-276. doi:10.1177/104973239100100206

Winnicott, D. (1965). *The maturation processes and the facilitating environment: Studies in the theory of emotional development*. London, England: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis.

Winnicott, D. (1971). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena. In *Playing and Reality* (pp. 1-25). London, England: Tavistock.

Woodmansey, A. C. (1966). The internalization of external conflict. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 47*, 349-355.

Zack, D. (2005). Projective identification, conflict, and psychic change. *Canadian Journal of Psychoanalysis, 13*, 230-241.