Supervision apprised through the Gestalt Paradigm informing Mentoring in diverse Humanistic Professions:
## A Narrative Inquiry

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Professional Doctorate in Gestalt Psychotherapy (EAPTI-GPTIM)

Dedication

To the special persons who accompanied me in my life,

they made this trajectory and many other journeys possible.

Even when the mud of life was most predominant,

genuine accompaniment and moment to moment tenacity

are how the lotuses that grow in my life came to bloom.

Just like the lotus we too have the ability to rise from the mud, bloom out of the darkness and radiate into the world
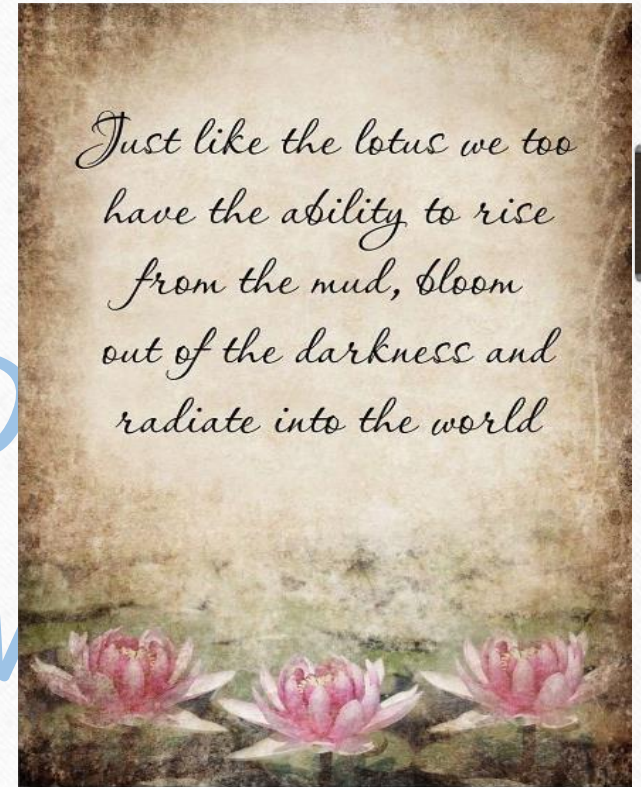
Rationale to the Study

❖ This narrative study portrays a longitudinal perspective through the professional years of experience that the participants have within their own field of practice.

❖ Primarily, this research explores the efficacy of supervision as experienced and perceived by seasoned Gestalt Practitioners and/or supervisors and its impact in contributing to their professional and personal wellbeing and growth.

❖ In turn, I analyse the efficacy of such support practices by means of mentoring apprised through the Gestalt paradigm, in the diverse humanistic fields that the second set of respondents come from.
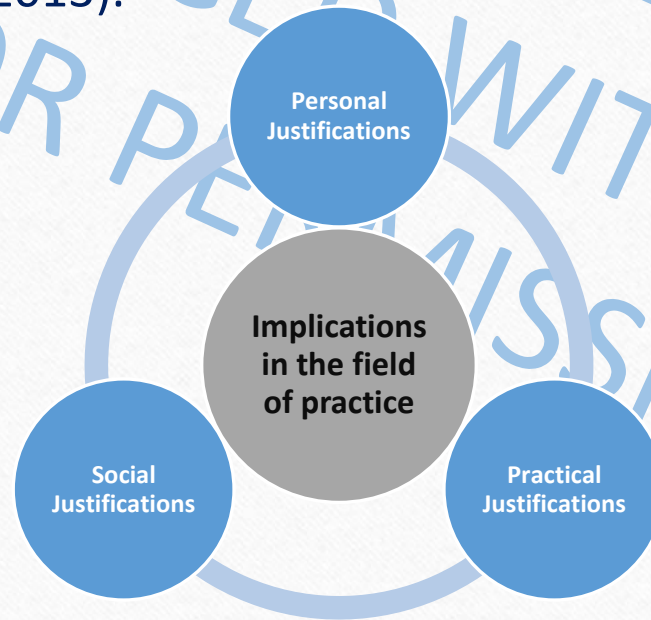
Main Objective, Research Question and Methodology of this study

❖ **Main Objective:** To evaluate effective supervision through the narratives and experiences of seasoned Gestalt therapists, and in turn, informed by the therapists' perspectives, analyse if such accompaniment through mentoring can enhance the personal and professional wellbeing of professionals within diverse humanistic fields as expressed through the latter's experiences.

❖ **Main Research Question:** *How can effective supervision apprised through the Gestalt paradigm inform mentoring in other diverse humanistic professions?*

❖ This research endeavour is made possible through **Narrative Inquiry**, as this methodology encompasses the **voice of the respondents**, together with the **reflexivity of the researcher**. In turn, Narrative Inquiry generates a transformative philosophical approach and a methodology with a clear rationale that is reflexive, thorough, and rigorous.
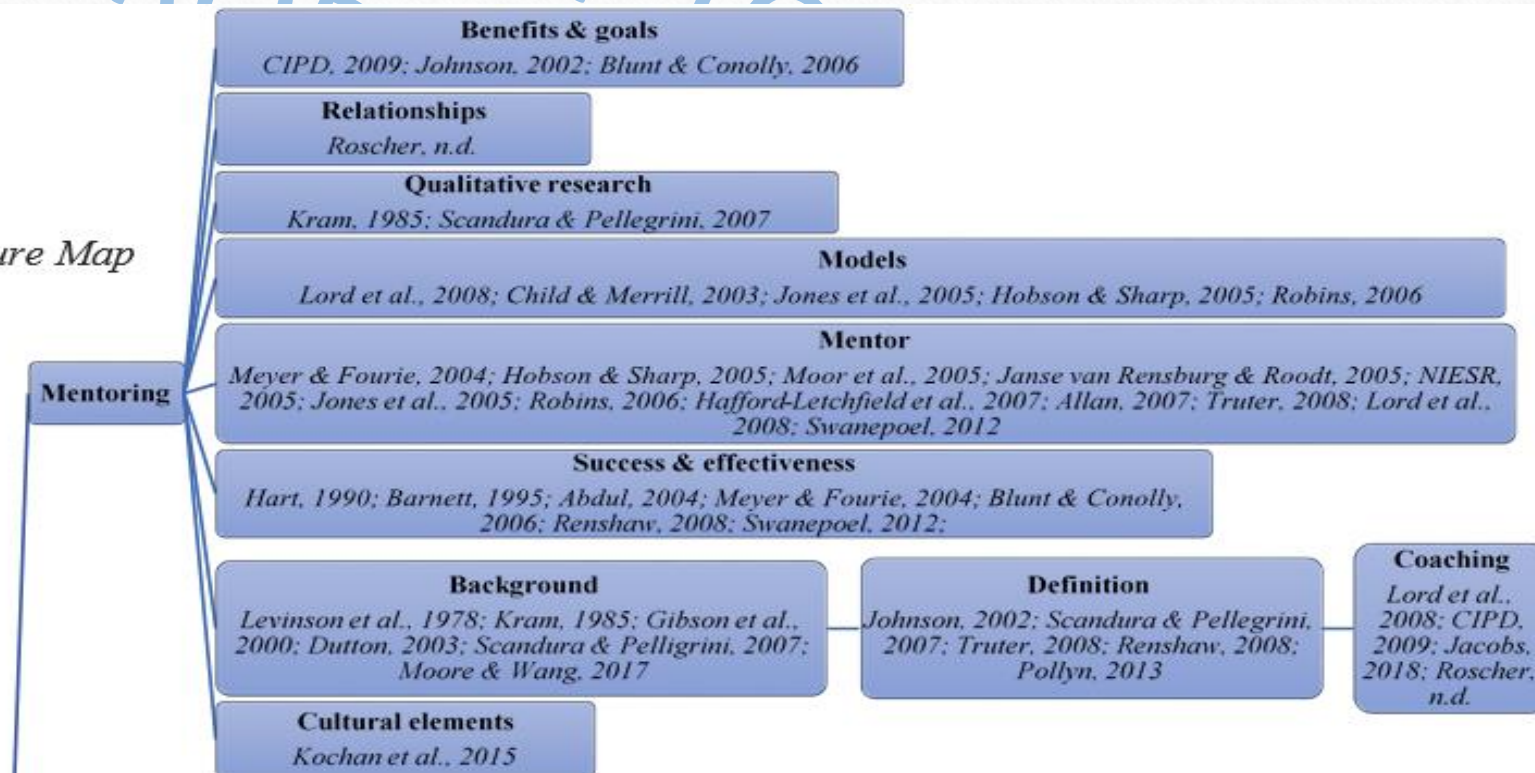
Inception of the Study

❖ The inception of this study, its research theme, rationale, and objectives stem from what Narrative Inquiry terminology refers to as justifications encompassing: personal, practical and social justifications (Clandinin, 2013).

Personal Justifications
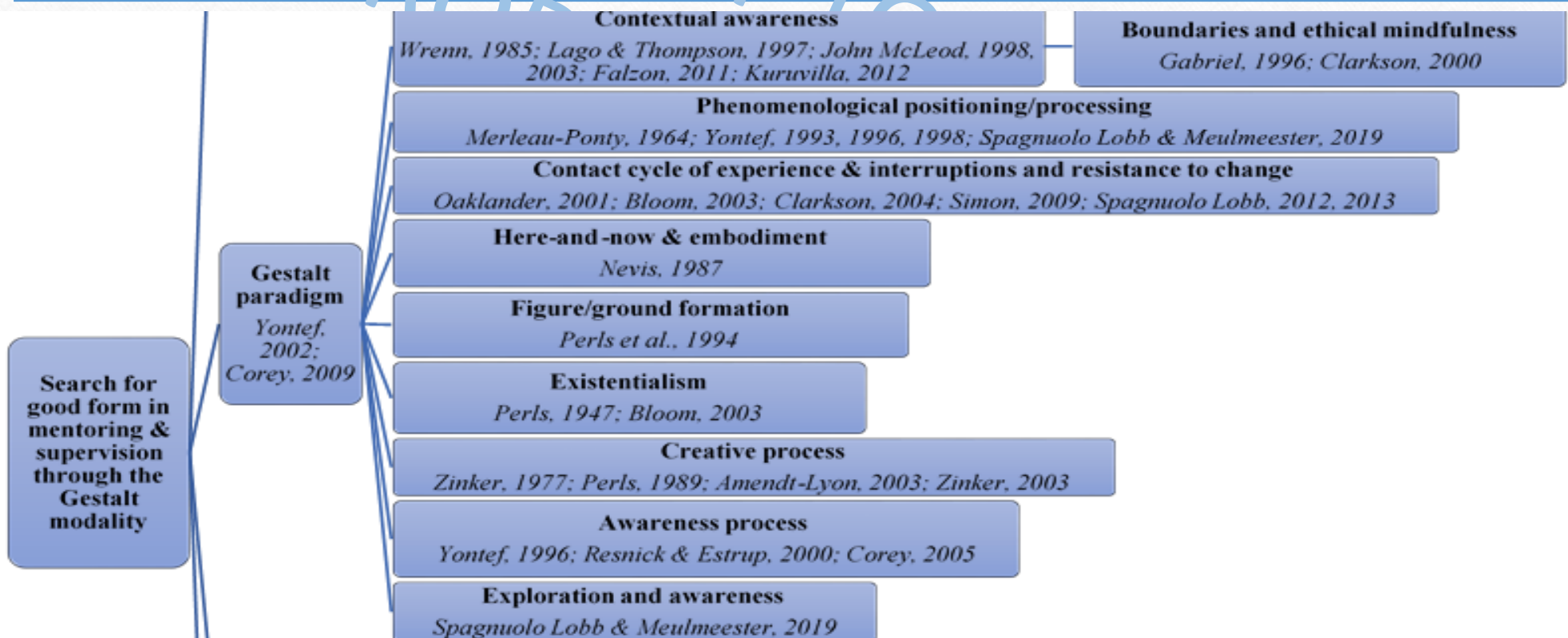
Implications in the field of practice

Social Justifications

Practical Justifications

Literature Review

Figure 2 – Literature Map

Benefits & goals
CIPD, 2009; Johnson, 2002; Blunt & Conolly, 2006

Relationships
Roscher, n.d.

Qualitative research
Kram, 1985; Scandura & Pellegrini, 2007

Models
Lord et al., 2008; Child & Merrill, 2003; Jones et al., 2005; Hobson & Sharp, 2005; Robins, 2006

Mentor
Meyer & Fourie, 2004; Hobson & Sharp, 2005; Moor et al., 2005; Janse van Rensburg & Roodt, 2005; NIESR, 2005; Jones et al., 2005; Robins, 2006; Hafford-Letchfield et al., 2007; Allan, 2007; Truter, 2008; Lord et al., 2008; Swanepoel, 2012

Success & effectiveness
Hart, 1990; Barnett, 1995; Abdul, 2004; Meyer & Fourie, 2004; Blunt & Conolly, 2006; Renshaw, 2008; Swanepoel, 2012;

Mentoring

Background
Levinson et al., 1978; Kram, 1985; Gibson et al., 2000; Dutton, 2003; Scandura & Pelligrini, 2007; Moore & Wang, 2017

Definition
Johnson, 2002; Scandura & Pellegrini, 2007; Truter, 2008; Renshaw, 2008; Pollyn, 2013

Coaching
Lord et al., 2008; CIPD, 2009; Jacobs, 2018; Roscher, n.d.

Cultural elements
Kochan et al., 2015

Literature Review

Search for good form in mentoring & supervision through the Gestalt modality

Gestalt paradigm
Yontef, 2002; Corey, 2009

Contextual awareness
Wrenn, 1985; Lago & Thompson, 1997; John McLeod, 1998, 2003; Falzon, 2011; Kuruvilla, 2012

Boundaries and ethical mindfulness
Gabriel, 1996; Clarkson, 2000

Phenomenological positioning/processing
Merleau-Ponty, 1964; Yontef, 1993, 1996, 1998; Spagnuolo Lobb & Meulmeester, 2019

Contact cycle of experience & interruptions and resistance to change
Oaklander, 2001; Bloom, 2003; Clarkson, 2004; Simon, 2009; Spagnuolo Lobb, 2012, 2013

Here-and-now & embodiment
Nevis, 1987

Figure/ground formation
Perls et al., 1994

Existentialism
Perls, 1947; Bloom, 2003

Creative process
Zinker, 1977; Perls, 1989; Amendt-Lyon, 2003; Zinker, 2003

Awareness process
Yontef, 1996; Resnick & Estrup, 2000; Corey, 2005

Exploration and awareness
Spagnuolo Lobb & Meulmeester, 2019

Literature Review

Supervision

Models
Hawkins & Shohet, 1985, 2012; Worthington, 1987; Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987; Page & Woskett, 1994; Inskipp & Proctor, 1995

Supervisor
Casement, 1985, 1990; Coles, 2003; Falzon, 2011

Relational domain
Clarkson, 2000

Tasks and objectives
Proctor, 1988; Copeland, 2005

Literature Review

Paradoxical theory of change
Beisser, 1970; Polster, 1995

Ethical considerations
Illieva-Koleva, 2015; Roscher, n.d.

Dialogic relationship
Yontef, 1993

Relational approach and contact
Erving & Miriam Polster, 1973; Yontef, 1981, 2002; Nevis, 1987; Latner, 2002; Simon, 2009

Mentoring, Supervision & Gestalt paradigm

Process aspect
Parsloe, 1992, cited in Simkins et al., 2006; Patridge & Spoth, 2018

Field theory
Yontef, 1996; Amendt-Lyon, 2003; Spagnuolo Lobb & Meulmeester, 2019

Search for good form
Amendt-Lyon, 2003

Mentoring & supervision in the humanistic fields
Baker, 2002; Lim, 2009; Scott, 2010; Robinson, 2013; Rhodes & Fletcher, 2013; Herring et al., 2016; Paice et al., 2017; Moore & Wang, 2017; Spagnuolo Lobb, 2019; Roscher, n.d.

Need to study:
Supervision apprised through the Gestalt paradigm informing mentoring in diverse humanistic professions

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Literature Review: Mentoring

❖ According to Renshaw (2008), mentoring is: …a development process, including elements of coaching, facilitating and counselling, aimed at sharing knowledge and encouraging individual development. It has a longer-term focus [than coaching] designed to foster personal growth and to help an individual place their creative, personal and professional development in a wider cultural, social and educational context… (Renshaw, 2008, p. 11)

❖ Throughout this research, I consider and refer to mentoring as including the same aspects alluded to in the above quote, as well as the normative, formative, organisational and contextual facets, and restorative and supportive aspects of supervision.

❖ All these formerly mentioned facets may be applied to mentoring in diverse humanistic professions.

Research Methodology, Methods and Ethical Considerations

- **Philosophical Research Positioning**

Ontological	Delineating the nature of the research and reality as perceived.
Epistemological	Concerning all aspects of the validity of what constitutes acceptable knowledge, scope, and methods of acquiring knowledge.
Axiological	Defining the value and ethical assumptions underlying the study, encompassing the effect of one's own values on the research process.

Research Methodology, Methods and Ethical Considerations

Adapted from Research Methods for Business Students, by Saunders et al., 2019, p. 130. Pearson Education Limited.
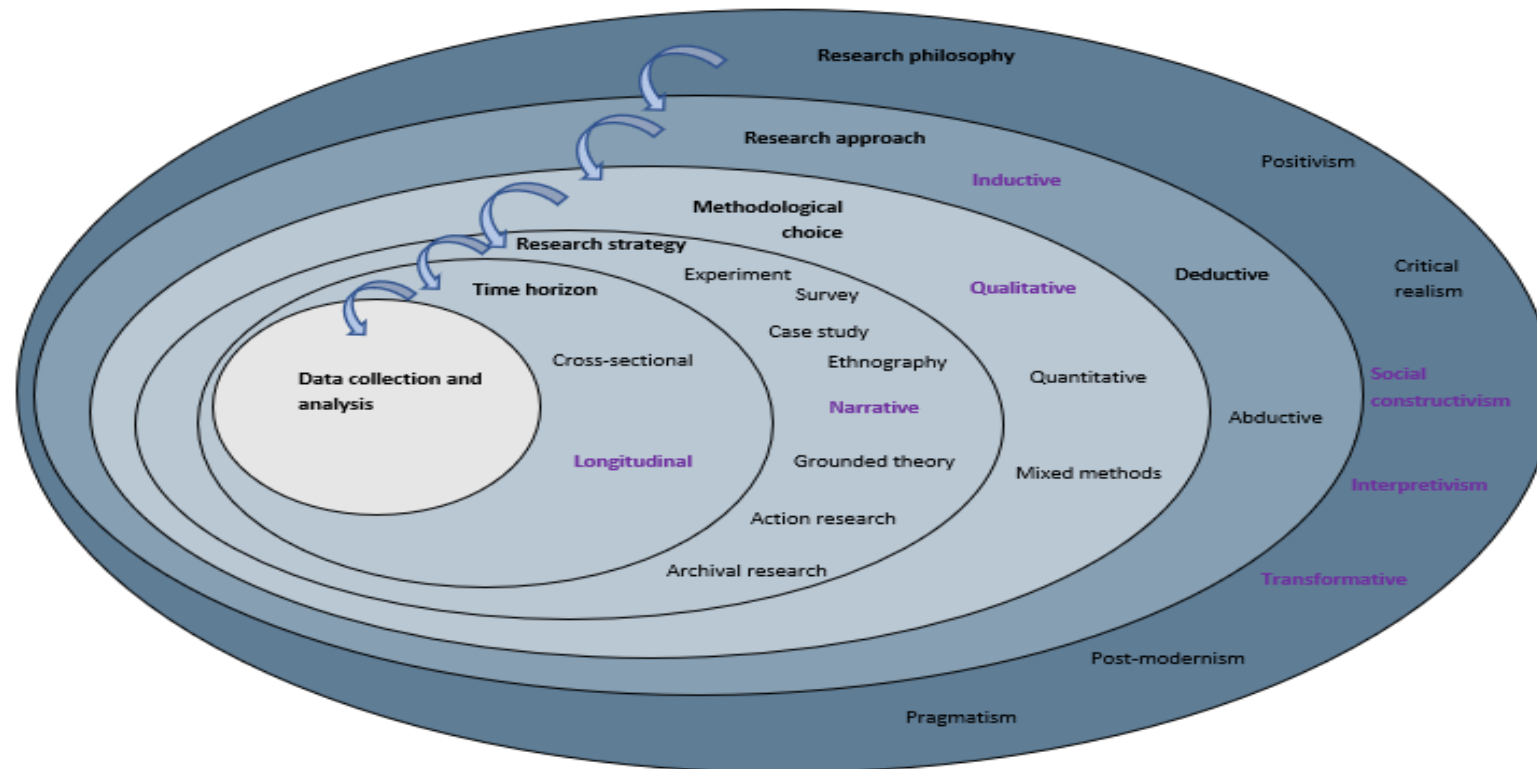
Research Methodology, Methods and Ethical Considerations

❖ **Narrative Inquiry** enables the researcher to *write from the inside* (Ellis, 1995).

❖ Voice and meaning emerging from participants' seasoned experiences.

❖ Hence, this methodology is not a means to collect stories but a collaborative process that attends to the participants' embedded experiences (Clandinin, 2016, p. 204).

Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Common Spaces

Temporality: The past, present and future of people, places, things, and events under study.

3 Commonplaces

Place: Connelly and Clandinin (2006) define place as "the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and "all events take place some place" (p. 481).

Sociality: 1st Dimension: Personal conditions and social conditions in terms of cultural, social, institutional and linguistic narratives. **2nd Dimension:** The relationship between researchers' and participants' lives. Narrative inquireers cannot subtract themselves from the inquiry relationship.

Additional Methodological Standpoints

❖ **Practitioner Researcher**

❖ **Reflexivity**

❖ **Autoethnographic stance**

Research Design: Sampling Method and Narrative Interview Process

❖ **Purposive Sampling:** recruiting participants who can provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation.

❖ Semi-Structured Narrative Interviewing. **Narrative Interviewing** adopted for this research was a discursive and collaborative in-depth practice, giving space to conversation where interviewees developed narrative accounts.

❖ **Interview Guide** for Gestalt Practitioners' Interviews and in turn for Non-Therapeutic Professionals' Interviews

Data Collection and Analysis

Focus Group

Interviews with Gestalt Practitioners

Interviews with Humanistic Practitioners

Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Research

❖ Procedural ethics, Situational ethics, and Relational ethics (Tracy, 2010)

❖ Information given to participants, Informed Consent, Confidentiality and Safety

❖ Data Collection (Covid situation), Storage and Withdrawal

❖ Additional Ethical Considerations: Relational Ethics, Trust Ethics and Ethical Mindfulness

Narrative Analysis and Thematic Narrative Analysis

❖ Polkinghorne (1995) differentiates between two methods of analysis when using narratives: **Narrative Analysis and Analysis of Narrative**, whereby in both these methodologies, the stories are considered as true representations of the person's reality.

❖ **Narrative Analysis** where the narrative itself in its entirety is the analytic component. The **analysis of narratives** uses narratives as data to gain access to the narrator's world, seeking "to locate common themes or conceptual manifestations among the stories collected as data" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 13).

❖ Thematic Narrative Analysis was used for this research to seek out resonances, divergences and liminalities.

Key components to ensure quality in the research process

❖ **Validity and Trustworthiness**

❖ **Credibility**

❖ **Dependability and Reliability**

❖ **Confirmability**

❖ **Transferability**

Data Collection and

Thematic Narrative Analysis

The Focus Group
(single case model)

Focus Group Main Emergent Themes

- The Focus Group was conducted as a pre-research informative process, in order to apprise me about the Gestalt Respondents' Interview Guide
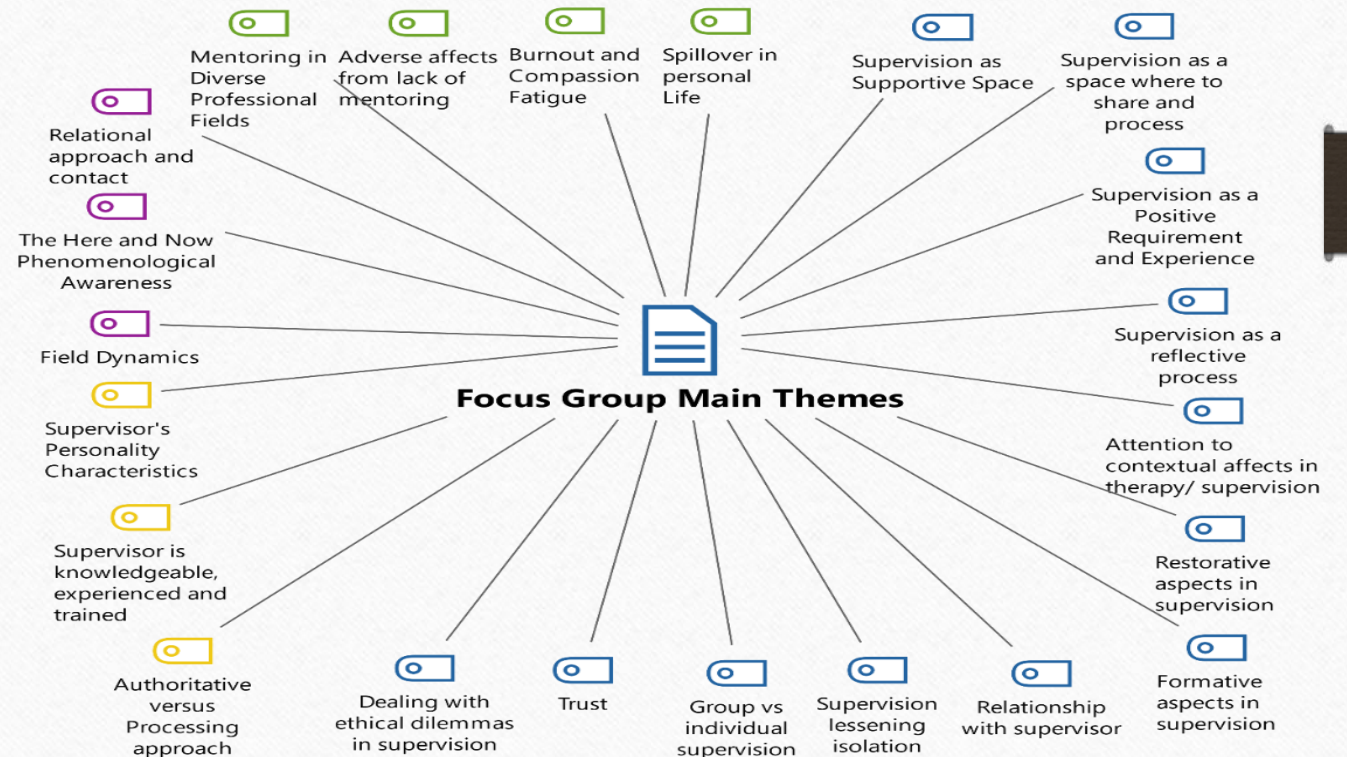
Narratives: The Heart of the Study

❖ Narratives emerging from the data collected presented through Analysis of Narrative approach: Thematic Narrative Analysis

❖ The Final Narrative is made out of collaborative discursive practices, field and interim texts and researcher reflexivity

Narrated Experiences - Thematic Narrative Analysis emerging from the collaborative narratives with Gestalt Practitioners

GESTALT RESPONDENT PSEUDONYM	PROFESSIONAL DOMAIN & NARRATIVE (Gestalt Impact on one's life)
Astrid	Professional in the Educational field; Example-Impact in the education field due to the lack of supervision and support. One cannot give from what one does not have
Beatrice	Professional in the Health field; Example- the processing of existential issues particularly in an oncological setting, that renders wide ripple personal and professional effects
Ivy	Professional in the Legal and Addiction fields; Example- responsibility in such fields that lead to law aspects and their impact on practitioners and in turn on their clients; even life impactful decisions
Faye	Professional in the Addiction field; Example- Relational and processing aspects needed in the field and especially in the sometimes-mechanistic professional world.
Donna	Professional in the Social Welfare and Education fields; Example- Different experiences from supervision and its application in the needed mentoring field. Fine line between the personal and professional
Selina	Professional in the Management field; Example- The difficulties of the managerial role and how this can seriously deplete the leader who in turn affects the whole system. Mentoring needs to be seriously promoted.
Peter	Professional in the Spiritual field; Example- Need to work on oneself and inform oneself better on enhanced ways to support the people he gave service to. Umbrella and aura of spirituality that cannot detract from the Importance of multi-layered wisdom development and processing the experiences encountered.
Madelyn	Professional in the Mental Health field; Example- How trauma experienced with the client is embodied and impacts the practitioners in humanistic fields.

Narrated Experiences - Thematic Narrative Analysis emerging from the collaborative narratives with Humanistic Practitioners

HUMANISTIC RESPONDENT PSEUDONYM	PROFESSIONAL DOMAIN
Linda	Professional in the Educational field; Example- personal and professional multi-layered effects on diverse practitioners, mentoring needing to become part of the workplace culture. Training and CPD needed for mentors
Nathalie	Professional in the Medical field; Example- Depth of impact in fields where you need to soldier on and developing distance and desensitization, Better services can be give, impact of personal on professional realm and Vice versa
Cheryl	Professional in the Law and Probation field; Example- expectation of not to be effected by narratives of service users, the client life impact of certain decisions through lack of professional reflexivity. Mandatory mentoring integration
Soraya	Professional in the Addiction field; Example- Importance of the reflective practitioner for continuous personal and professional growth particularly in sensitive fields.
Tina	Professional in the Social Welfare field; Example- the deep impact of trauma embodied by practitioners and loosing key people in certain fields
Anna	Professional in the Management field; Example- Impact on leaders: isolation, loneliness and responsibility felt. Immediate need for mentoring in such roles so as not to leave ripple effects and employees leaving
Noel	Professional in the Spiritual field; Example- The need for integration of training in the spiritual fields as these can offer isolating structures
Vera	Professional in the Mental Health and Management field ; Main Themes. KC: the need for genuine support and CPD. Multi-faceted influences in the field; work demands, union demands, employee demands all impacting the work done

Findings and Analysis through MAXQDA

MAXQDA: a software program designed for computer-assisted qualitative and mixed methods data, text and multimedia analysis

❖ The narrative themes depicted in Chapters 4 and 5 were further analysed to capture the resonances, divergences, and any emergent liminal spaces.

❖ In order to be rigorous and thorough in compiling the resonances and divergences, MAXQDA was used, and an excerpt is found hereunder.

❖ Analysis by comparison to the literature to consolidate the discussion.

❖ MaxMaps: Single Case Models (coded segment), Single Case Models (code hierarchy), Two Cases Model (comparision)

Gestalt Respondents: Main Emergent Themes Model
(single case model: code hierarchy)
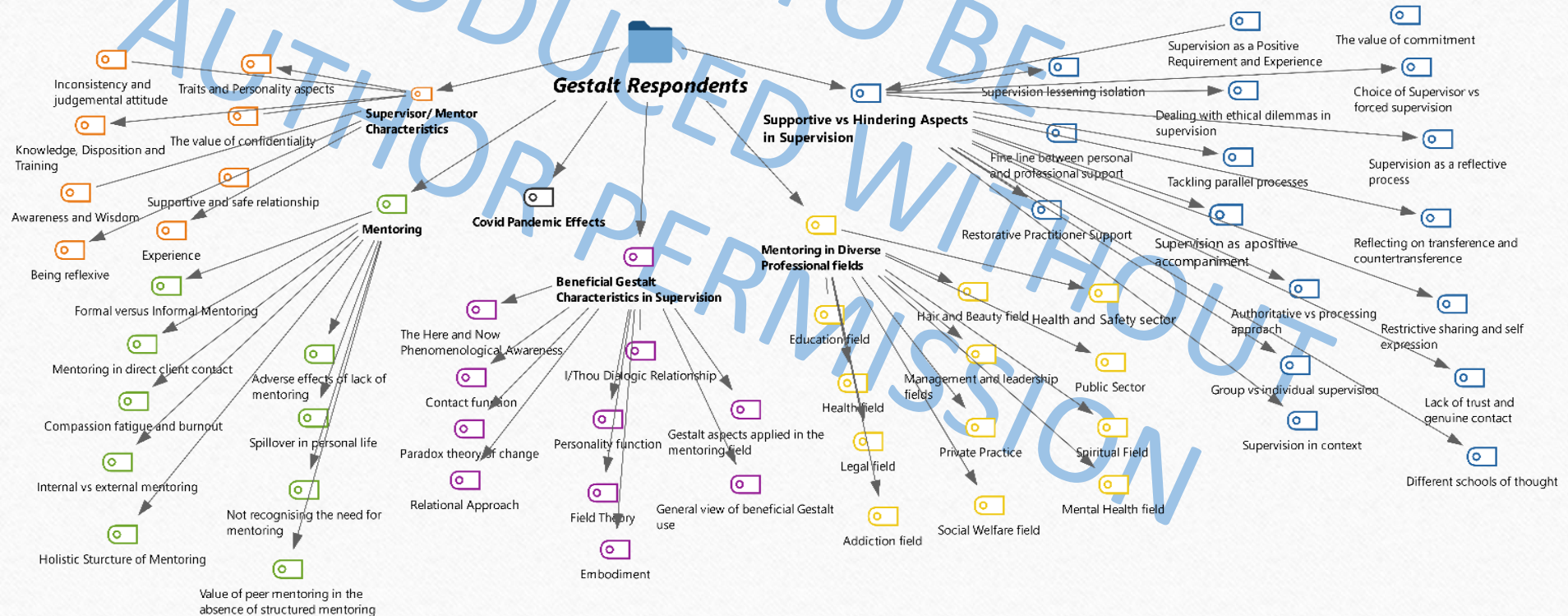
Humanistic Practitioners Main Emergent Themes Model

(single case model: code hierarchy)
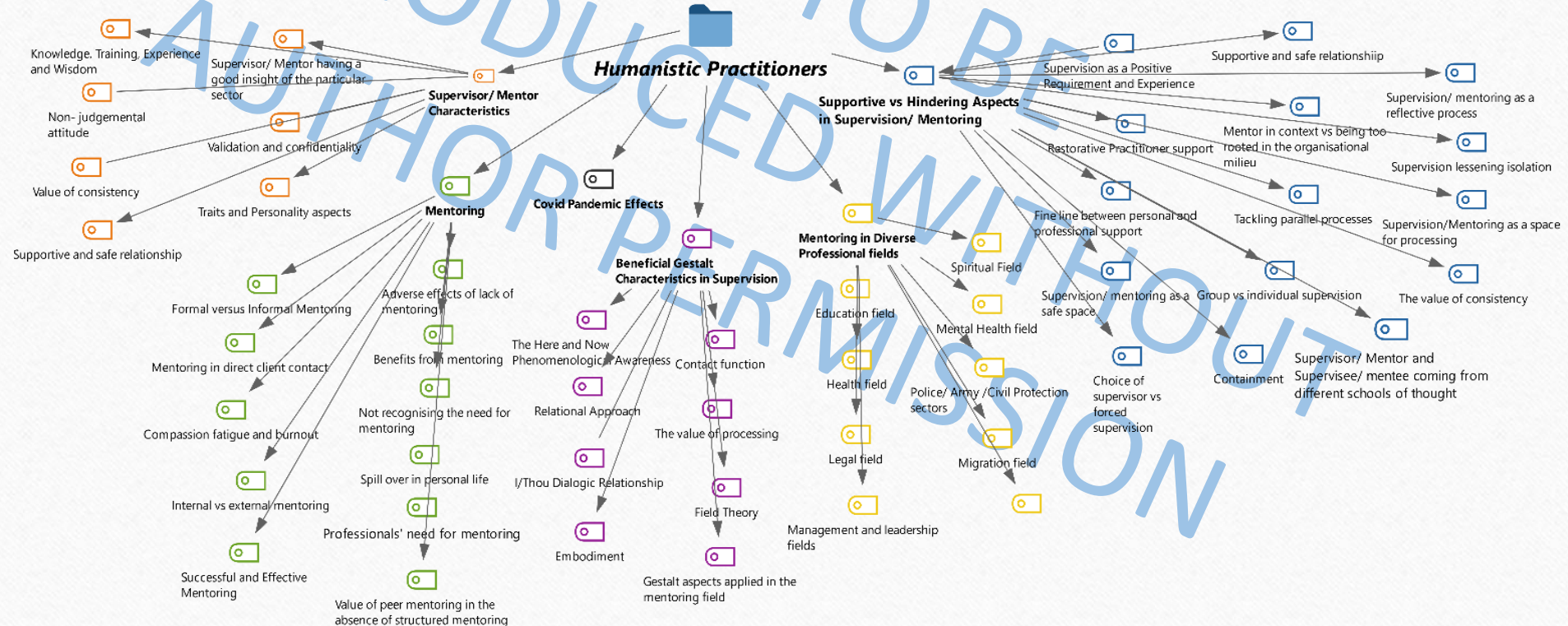
Example of two case model:
Addiction Practitioners Comparison Model
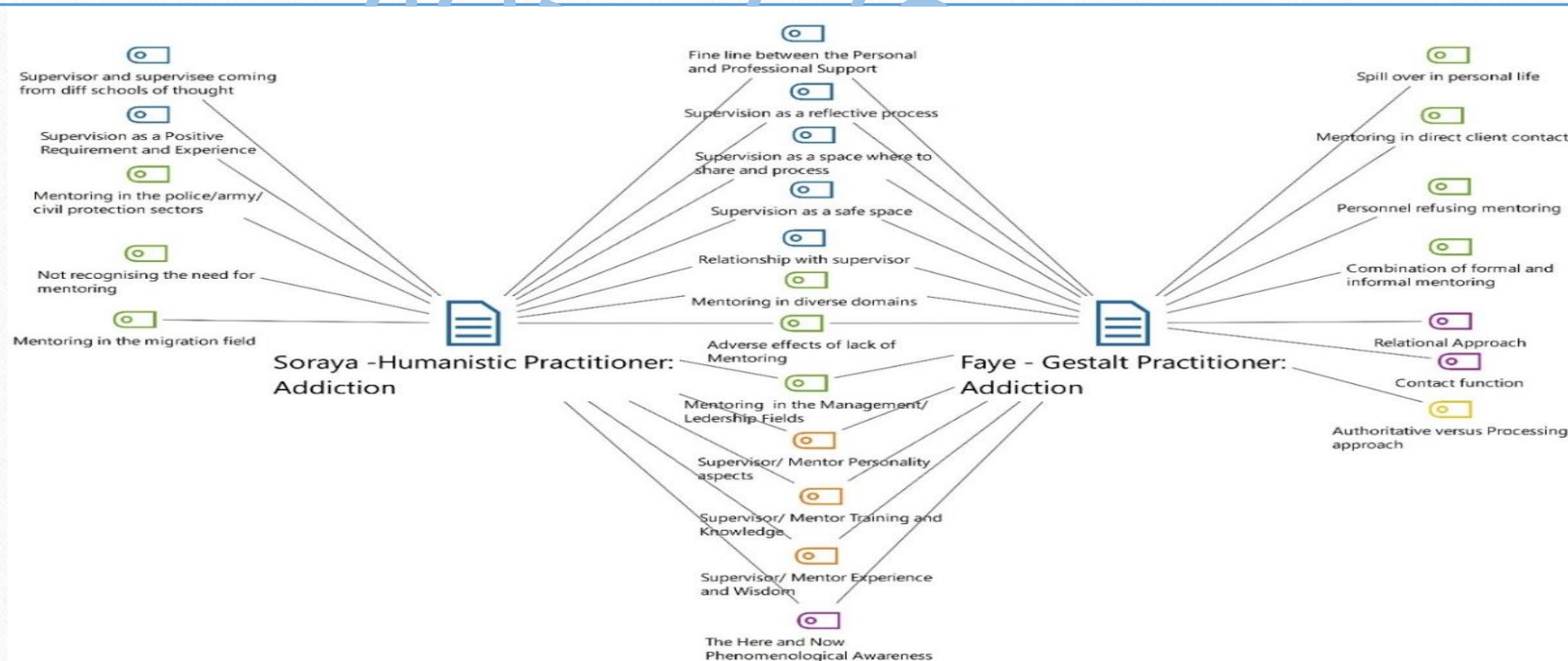
Discussion of emergent themes' similarities, divergences and liminalities between the Focus group, Gestalt and Humanistic Respondents
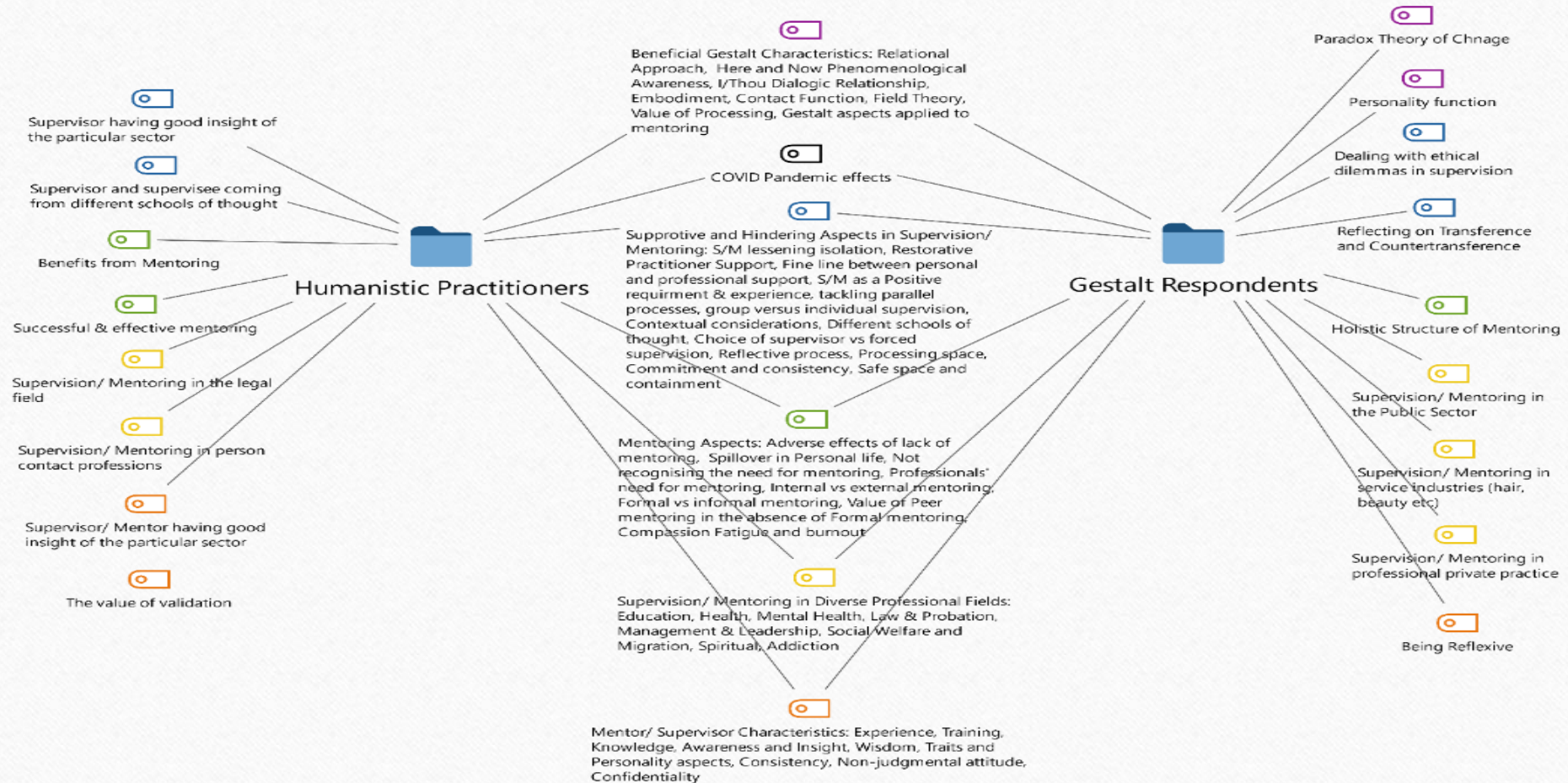
Concluding Main Results

- **Research Participants Comments**

- A. Succinct Main findings: Supportive and Hindering aspects in supervision/mentoring

- B. Succinct Main findings: Beneficial Gestalt characteristics for supervision and mentoring

- C. Succinct Main findings: The need for beneficial and professional mentoring in diverse humanistic fields

- D. Succinct Main findings: Mentor/Supervisor characteristics needed for constructive supervision/mentoring

- **Recommendations for the application of workplace mentoring**

- **Models emerging from the collaborative and reflexive voice in the narratives and consequent analysis**

Research Participants Comments

One of the highlights of this research was to receive the respondents' comments after I handed the interim narrative back to them for feedback. (a reflexive process, that gives voice and meaning to their experiences)

❖ *This is a beautiful narrative that gives credit to all that I and my colleagues go through as professionals and as human beings.*

❖ *Thank you for inviting me to be part of your research; I really hope that people in authority will take your valuable reflections on board.*

❖ *I really appreciate this narrative and it is wonderful to see it written so vividly, depicting my and my work mates' struggles in a realistic and humane way.*

❖ *This process was a reflexive process for me too. I realised, I rarely give myself the time to reflect on how the work is affecting me. I simply drive myself on and continue.*

❖ *The reflexive narrative helped me focus on the experiences at work and to reflect on the meaning I am experiencing and lack of it in some cases.*

A. Succinct Main findings: Supportive and Hindering aspects in supervision/mentoring

Many supportive and hindering aspects mentioned by all respondents also concurred with literature, amongst which are for supervision/mentoring to act as a:

❖ Supportive and positive space for practitioners to lessen the professional isolation, burnout and compassion fatigue, while enhancing professional satisfaction

❖ Positive accompaniment in a journey which is characterised by professional responsibility

❖ Containing and validating space of one's personal and professional identity

❖ Safe and genuine space where to share and process, considering the normative, formative, restorative, organisational (both supportive aspects and hindering ones where mentees experience judgmental conditions and toxicity in the workplace) and contextual aspects

❖ Mutual willingness place to share and learn

B. Succinct Main findings: Beneficial Gestalt characteristics for supervision and mentoring

What was most positively surprising was that many of the above aspects were mentioned by both the Gestalt Respondents as well as the Humanistic Respondents, denoting the need for Gestalt aspects consideration in the training provided for supervisors and mentors.

❖ I/Thou dialogic relationship

❖ Relational aspect of supervision and mentoring

❖ Focus on what is being experienced and lived in the here and now

❖ Awareness and in-depth processing

❖ Presence through embodiment

❖ Field theory and field dynamics

❖ Contact functions and interruptions

❖ Paradoxical theory of change

C. Succinct Main findings: The need for beneficial and professional mentoring in diverse humanistic fields

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❖ All respondents mentioned the importance of **having the option** to choose/ accept/ reject an internal supervisor/mentor, and the combination of individual and group supervision/mentoring, formal and informal supervision/mentoring, and peer mentoring.

❖ **Some of the fields** mentioned as benefitting from supervision/mentoring were amongst others: education, health, mental health, management and leadership positions, the spiritual realm where leading or supporting people is involved, the addiction realm, social welfare, probation, law, civil protection, migration, and service provision fields where direct contact with clients may subject the service provider to secondary trauma due to the experiences shared.

D. Succinct Main findings: Mentor/Supervisor characteristics needed for constructive supervision/mentoring

❖ The ability to create healthy ethical boundaries

❖ Relational mindfulness and the ability to include open dialogue in a collaborative approach

❖ Trust and genuine reciprocal care and relational contact

❖ Genuineness, authenticity, good listening skills and good ethical principles, the ability to be personally and professionally nourishing, the ability to be encouraging and understanding, possessing decision-making skills particularly in ethical dilemmas, the ability to provide holding, the ability to create safety and trust, the ability to provide sound and informed discernment, the ability to challenge in a constructive way and use immediacy, and the ability to journey collaboratively with the supervisee/mentee

❖ Personality traits

❖ All respondents mentioned the need for experience, wisdom, being knowledgeable, and well-trained including aspects of personal and professional formation rather than solely attending a short course, or merely having experience in the field of practice.

Recommendations for the application of workplace mentoring

❖ Make **supportive mentoring mandatory** and possible for all humanistic professionals in the diverse entities. Mentoring needs to reflect the contextual and professional needs to be beneficial for the respective practitioners.

❖ Establish a mentoring requirement for humanistic professionals who provide their services through **private practice**, as otherwise the development of the professional and the quality of the services rendered might be diminished. This mirrors the ethical requirement for supervision in the talking therapies professions.

❖ Provide **training in supervision and mentoring** that is informed by the Gestalt modality for professionals in humanistic organisations and/or fields. This training requires both personal and professional formation, with the background of wisdom provided by experience and the reflexive personality of the mentor/supervisor in training and the personnel facilitating the training.

❖ Give humanistic professionals the option to choose their mentor or, at least, to accept/decline mentoring from a designated mentor. This will support the **relational ethic and trust** ambience to support the mentoring process. If it is not possible to offer the option for humanistic professionals to choose their own mentor, identify and match mentors and mentees according to their levels of experience and wisdom.

Recommendations for the application of workplace mentoring

❖ Inform organisations about the **diverse mentoring approaches** and be able to offer formal, informal, internal, and external forms of mentoring according to the need and requirements of the particular profession and entity.

❖ Inform humanistic organisations and/or fields about the **benefits of mentoring provision** for employees. Such organisations and/or fields are to be made aware of long-term, not only short-term, benefits for their employees and for the organisation/field.

❖ Ensure that the mentor, in turn, is **supported** through mentoring/supervision encompassing personal and professional growth and continuous professional development.

❖ Mentoring/supervision is to be in depth and enhance processing within the field of practice, comprising the **normative, formative, supportive, organisational, and contextual considerations.** These render personal and professional support to the professionals, and in turn, have the ripple effect of better organisation relationships, employee retainment and the provision of a more beneficial and compassionate service to service users.

Models emerging from the collaborative and reflexive voice in the narratives and consequent analysis

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❖ According to evidence from the Gestalt aspects discussed by all respondents, one of the most suited models for mentoring/supervision is the **Seven-Eyed Supervision Model**, developed by Hawkins & Shohet (1985) and named as such by Inskipp & Proctor (1995).

❖ The model is based on seven aspects of the supervision process, fitting particularly well with the depth of the multi-layered Gestalt processing that can be adopted to mentoring.

Seven-Eyed Mentoring Model using the Gestalt paradigm

- **The Mentee**: The primary focus starts with the mentee, the mentee's state of wellbeing and presented content in the here and now.

- **The Mentor's Interventions**: The focus is on the mentor and what the mentor is reflecting upon, and the perception of techniques, approaches, strategies, and interventions that are utilised by the practitioner, and also their effectiveness.

- **The Relational Field between the Mentor and the Mentee**: The attention is on the contact being created between the mentor and the mentee, and mindfully on the overt and implicit interactions between the two of them, so that both the mentor and the mentee gain better awareness, understanding and insight of the dynamics and field of the mentoring relationship. This relationship constitutes the base of agentive change for the mentee's service users or work domain.

- **The Mentor**: The focus is on the mentor's own experience as an embodied instrument for assimilating what is happening beneath the surface of the mentee system. The focus shifts towards the process, including the mentee's feelings, emotions, sensations, perceptions, observations, and behaviours that emanate from one's work. Therefore, in this stage the mentor supports the mentee's awareness about oneself and also when working with clients.

- **The Parallel Process**: The prior reflection can also reflect parallel processes occurring personally or in the place of work for the mentee. Whatever happens within the mentoring room may be subsequently happening as a parallel process in the mentee's fields outside mentoring. Furthermore, other parallel processes might belong to the wider context and are manifested in the mentoring relationship. (including defence mechanisms and lack of contact)

- **The Mentor's Foreground and Background Experience**: This refers to the foreground of self-reflection that is based in the background of personal formation, training, knowledge, and experience. The focus is the mentor's here and now deeper experience with the mentee and how this can be used to shed light and further insight on the mentor-mentee relationship and dynamic, and to possibly evoke transformative change. Thus, the mentor acts as a reflective collaborative partner with the practitioner through acting as a mirror on the mentee's way of being and one's practices.

- **The Wider Context**: The focus is on the wider organisational, social, cultural, ethical, and contractual context within which the mentoring is taking place.

Mentoring Implementation Process Model

Obtain autonomous and anonymous feedback from staff for the mentoring support needed

Set the objectives based on the feedback given

Plan the envisaged mentoring process according to the mentoring objectives and organisational context

Get leadership feedback and consensus and in turn, that of the employees who are identified as potentially benefiting from the mentoring programme

Promote the programme

Plan a small scale programme to test efficacy with the identified participants

Match mentors and mentees

Implement the mentoring programme with clear boundaries and regular feedback

Collect follow-up feedback on the programme's consistency and relational matching between mentor and mentee

Implement any changes emerging from the feedback reflexivity

Test efficacy of the programme in context

Execute any changes needed or enhancements to be implemented for wider implementation

Launch a wider programme to reach more employees

Test efficacy

Training in in-house mentoring for internal support systems

Strengths and Limitations
(one example of each)

❖ This research provided further knowledge about supervision in the Gestalt domain and knowledge about the need for mentoring and its implementation in diverse humanistic fields, rich data collected, holistic analysis, application through recommendations and models.

❖ It would have been an even richer study if it encompassed more voices from further humanistic fields. However, this was not possible due to word count limitations of this dissertation.

Recommendations for further research and implications for further scholarship

❖To enhance this study by incorporating increased numbers of respondents and other humanistic fields.

❖To deepen the study in particular humanistic sectors to research the needs in that particular domain.

❖To develop a *Manual for Training* for supervision and mentoring using the Gestalt paradigm by following the information derived from the themes that emerged from the respondents' experiences.

Final Conclusion

❖ **Research is Evidence based** through the respondents' narratives

❖ The **bridging of Gestalt outside the therapeutic room**; this research strongly attests to the applicability of the Gestalt modality in a wider field than the therapeutic and practitioner supervision realm

❖ This study also reiterates that **mentoring based on Gestalt practices** and implemented in diverse humanistic fields supports the professional and personal experiences of diverse professionals

❖ **Training** in supervision and mentoring is necessary and vital

❖ The **implementation of mentoring practices**, though understandably laborious, is worth serious consideration

❖ The **bridging and association to practices in many humanistic professions.** *In a world of divide we can create links of meaning and understanding*