

“Not getting it”: A personal insight into Asperger’s Syndrome in a therapeutic relationship.

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Asperger's Syndrome (AS)

What is AS?

- “Asperger syndrome is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how people perceive the world and interact with others” (NAS, 2017).
- Characterised by Wing & Gould's (1978) triad of impairments.
- Recently redefined under DSM-V (DSM-V Update, 2016).

Leo Kanner & Hans Asperger

- Kanner's negative view of Autism - A debilitating condition.
- Asperger's positive view of Autism - Behaviours seen as a great potential in their future.

Leo Kanner



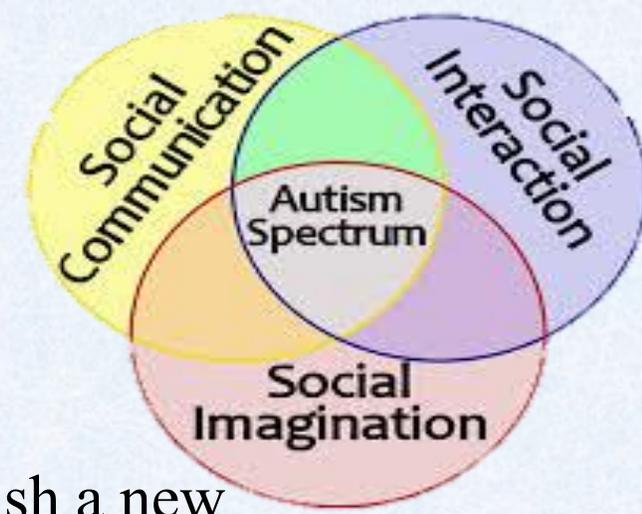
1894 - 1981

Hans Asperger



1906 - 1980

Why AS & Therapy



Literature

- In counselling someone with AS “we are attempting not only to establish a new relationship, but asking the person to discuss their thoughts and feelings.” (Anderson & Morris, 2006: 294).

Research Aims

- As an individual with Asperger’s Syndrome, I want to explore other’s experiences.
- What communication is needed specific to people with Asperger's Syndrome?
- Evaluate what makes counselling effective for people with Asperger's Syndrome.

The Research

Procedure

- Applying for ethics.
- Recruited three adults with AS.
- Conducted voice recorded, semi-structured interviews, lasting up to 90 minutes.

Analysis

- Transcribed each interview.
- Analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al. 2009).

IPA

- Close links with Person-Centred Therapy.
- Focusses on feelings and meanings of experience.
- A place for me in the research.

Stages of IPA

1. Reading and re-reading.
2. Initial noting.
3. Developing emergent themes.
4. Searching for connections across emergent themes.
5. Moving to the next case.
6. Looking for patterns across cases.

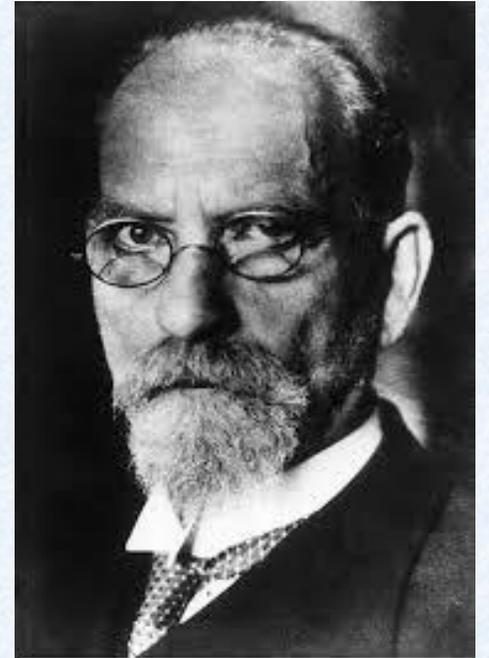
Bracketing Interviews

What is a bracketing interview

- The aim is to highlight the interviewer's prior experience in more detail, aiding a transparent perspective while conducting the research.
- A bracketing interview goes deeper than a reflective journal, by identifying what we are not aware of (Ahern, 1999 in Rolls & Relf, 2006).

Reasons for conducting my bracketing interview

- My insider status.
- Exploring hopes and anxieties for the research.
- Creating a transparent perspective.

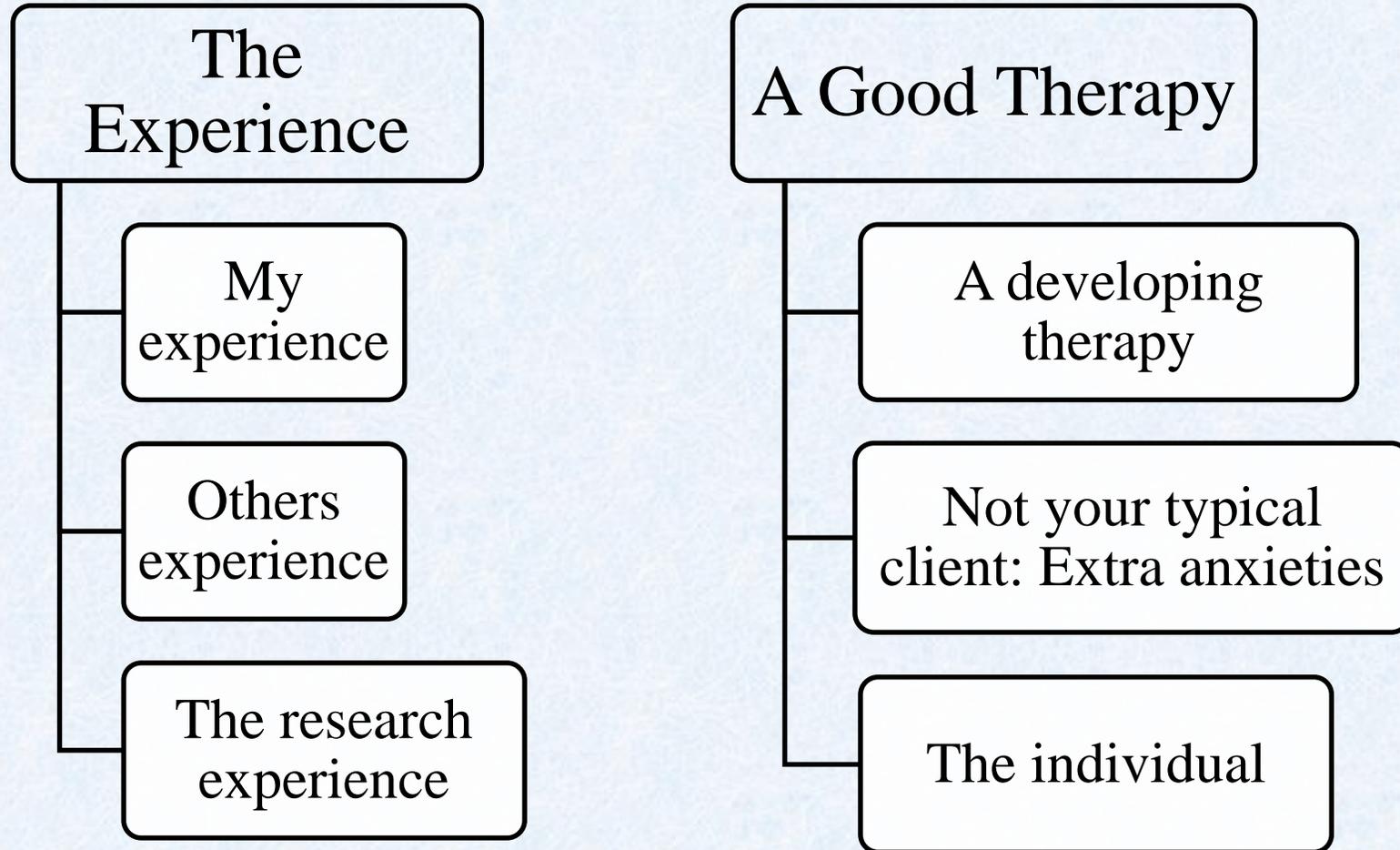


Edmund Husserl

1859 - 1938

My Findings

Figure 1: Diagram of themes.



The Experience

My Experience

*“But, uh, it was just the fact **she didn’t get it really**. Um, and then just carried on to persistently not get it. I just felt like I was there to talk at her and then she could just do whatever really, she wasn’t really, **she wasn’t really walking alongside me.**”*

(P: 8, L:137-139)

Others’ Experience

*“Another reason for doing it is because, um, I’ve got a lot of friends that and family who are some degree on the autistic spectrum, or have Asperger’s Syndrome and their experience of therapy has been quite **horrific** I think.”*

(P: 1, L: 10-11)

The Research Experience

*“I would like it to be a more positive experience, um, I’m a little bit **afraid** it will all be a negative experience and then I will really **question my whole understanding of everything.**”*

(P: 4, L: 63-64).

A Good Therapy

A Developing Therapy

“Um, so I’d like to look into that and hopefully look at ways maybe therapy could be developed, or if anything my own therapy (as a trainee) could be developed. Um, for people on the autistic spectrum.”

(P: 1, L: 17-18)

Not Your Typical Clients: Extra Anxieties

“Um, but yeah just be aware of a little extra anxiety as opposed to typical anxieties, there’s anxieties about the room, positioning, just be prepared to change your whole practice [laughing] I guess.”

(P: 32, L: 579-580)

The Individual

“...or individual is really, really important to me in doing the research, to identify that you can’t do a training course on autism or you can’t read a book on autism and say that you know how to counsel autism. Which I’ve seen happen.”

(P: 6, L: 85-86)

What it was like for my participants

Like speaking another language

“It’s just like you speak Chinese to me now. No. Can’t, there you go. That’s just how it is and they don’t get it, they don’t understand and I think if [pause] ... I don’t know how, but they’d have to tailor it to a person who’s on the spectrum, you couldn’t just do it in a neurotypical way.” (P1: 9: 255 – 258)

An unfriendly environment

“So, um, everything was there to just get on your nerves more and more, irritate you. Um, and then to ask you questions that seemed to pointless to me, because I couldn’t answer them, was even more annoying.” (P3: 3: 77 – 79)

A need for structure – It’s not all negative

“Structured, in a way but to my needs, I think the therapist realised, being on the autism spectrum, I would prefer to just have the structure and known what we were discussing.” (P2: 2: 57-58)

What has the research process been like for me?

Enlightening

- Through conducting the bracketing interview & speaking to others like me.

Humbling

- Hearing deeply moving, personal experiences of others.

Focussing

- Development of self-discipline, focus, organisation & research skills.

Inspiring

- Through presenting, networking & considering future options.



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Conclusions

1. Therapy is different for someone with Asperger's Syndrome.
2. Bracketing interview – Explored my hopes and fears for the research, identifying my own experiences of therapy as an individual with Asperger's Syndrome.
3. I explored what would make therapy better for me, based on my experiences and others close to me.

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Any Questions?

