

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

MASTER OF ARTS IN PASTORAL THEOLOGY

**A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF THE SIMILARITIES AND
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COUNSELLING AND SPIRITUAL
ACCOMPANIMENT**

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This research explores the similarities and differences between Counselling and Spiritual Accompaniment. The literature indicates that there is a difference between Spiritual Accompaniment and Counselling. However, this is not the lived experience of the researcher.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted. Five experienced Counsellors who offer Spiritual Accompaniment were interviewed to ascertain their views and experience of the similarities and differences. The data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The research concludes that Counselling and Spiritual Accompaniment are the same in the nature of encounter, in the insights and skills that are needed for the accompaniment of another at relational depth – whether psychologically or spiritually. A new model for understanding the relationship between Counselling and Spiritual Accompaniment is offered that describes both Counselling and Spiritual Accompaniment as being a process of oscillation between the encounter being soul-orientated or psychological-orientated. There are some distinctions (rather than differences) with regard to intentionality, the language of discourse and the nature of resources available in the encounter. Spiritual Accompaniment has professional deficits that need to be addressed concerning training, personal development, boundaries, ethical frameworks and mandatory supervision in order to strengthen it as a pastoral ministry.