



SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY
DOCTORATE IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

MAJOR RESEARCH PROJECT

‘The Paradox of Dementia’

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This manuscript has been submitted in partial fulfilment of a doctoral degree in Clinical
Psychology

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Declaration

I certify that all material in this dissertation which is not my own work has been identified and properly attributed and that no material is included for which a degree had previously been conferred upon me. I have conducted the work in line with the BPS DCP Professional Practice Guidelines.

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Abstract

This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews to explore how 6 people talked about their difficulties before and after a dementia diagnosis. The Assimilation of Problematic Experiences Scale (APES) was used to analyse the data and describe participants' internal processes as they became increasingly aware of their problems. Assimilation analysis views successful therapeutic change as accepting and integrating an aspect of the self that had previously been denied, due to it being too painful. The findings of the study build on the research evidence that suggests that despite the enormity of its psychological implications individuals find ways of integrating a dementia diagnosis into their sense of self. This occurred within an oscillating progress; stepping in and out of awareness, illustrating the paradox of acceptance and denial. Social support was crucial in enabling participants to sustain a positive sense of self in the face of this adjustment.