

Being and Doing in Relationship: Person-Centred counselling students'
experiences during their training

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the experiences of students training in Person-Centred Counselling. The study focuses on students' perceptions of their relationships with their teachers and peers to develop a better understanding of how these might influence their development during training. Material was collected from a series of semi-structured interviews at the beginning, middle and end of the course. The intention was to develop rich descriptive accounts of individual participants' perceptions as they developed over their training. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was employed to generate themes from the interviews. To assist the reflective process, participants also completed Strathclyde Inventories.

This study illustrates how each student experienced their training as idiosyncratic and complex. Unconditional positive regard was found to be significant to personal development within this context. However, perceptions of this concept and how it was operationalised within the course varied. A lack of unconditional empathic acknowledgement of difference was found to have a potentially shaming and/or painful impact that could negatively affect a student's sense of self and their engagement with the training. A potentially problematic relationship emerged between a non-directive approach to training and students' need for direction. The influence of the course's conceptualisation of congruence on students' development emerged as a complex and potentially problematic theme. Groupwork emerged as a contentious strategy for personal development. This study highlights the value of open dialogue between teachers and students about a number of specific aspects of the training, including the students' and the course's conceptualisation of the approach. The study also raises questions about the value of focusing on a single therapeutic approach early in training. Finally, the study acknowledges that Person-Centred counselling training involves aspects of both doing **and** being in relationships, the dynamics of which need to be managed sensitively.

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Thesis outline

The structure of this thesis reflects my understanding of phenomenological enquiry. The thesis begins with preliminary discussions based on initial engagement with the topic. It goes on to explore my own position relative to the topic before engaging with the participants' material. The literature is then reviewed; this occurs after the participants' material to ensure that the study is grounded in the participants' perceptions rather than in the existing literature. Conclusions are then drawn from a synthesis of the participants' material, my interpretations and the literature.

Chapter 1 outlines the context in which the research took place. **Chapter 2** offers preliminary definitions of some significant terms used throughout the thesis. **Chapter 3** offers preliminary discussions of themes relevant to the research question.

Chapters 4 to 6 provide a philosophical basis for the project and discuss the research methodology and the methods. Ethical issues raised by this project are also discussed.

Chapter 7 discusses the process of analysis and begins with the selection of the participants for this thesis.

Chapter 8 presents the participants' stories. Individual stories are followed by comparisons across each of the three interview stages and across the cases.

Chapter 9 reviews the literature surrounding the topic.

Chapter 10 extends the exploration of the material through a discussion of themes from the perspectives of the participants' accounts and the literature.

Chapter 11 draws the thesis together and offers conclusions, including implications for practice and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 1: The context

1.1 My interest

This thesis was motivated by my interest in counselling training and by my understanding that our processes of individuating occur within our relationships with others and that those relationships are often conditional. These issues are particularly relevant to Person-Centred counselling training because training focuses on the development of the self of the counsellor within an academic context which involves external assessment and is therefore conditional. During my PGCE I explored the assessment of personal development on counselling courses. This raised questions for me about the personal and professional development elements within these courses: for example is it possible and/or desirable to separate professional and personal development in counselling training and in what ways might they interact?

As a Person-Centred counsellor I see my role as offering a person-to-person professional relationship which intends to facilitate my client's individuation. From this perspective I see counselling as an idiosyncratic activity which is uniquely co-created within each relationship and which is held within a professional framework that sets boundaries around those relationships. Therefore, Person-Centred counselling training is one example of training which spans multiple domains (e.g. theory, professional issues, skills and personal development). Others might include teacher training, nursing training and journalism courses. It is hoped that the material from this study might also speak to those associated with similar courses.

For this study I chose to focus on the perceptions that students have of their relationships during training for a variety of reasons. Principal among these are my experiences as a counselling trainer. Working within a team of trainers I sometimes feel saturated with what we imagine the students might be thinking and feeling about the course, about counselling, about us as trainers and about their peers. At times I can feel frustrated with this wondering about the students and at those times often find myself wishing that I could hear their voices more clearly. I wish I could hear them without the filters of tutor/student dynamics and responsibilities, assessment pressures and anxieties that

often seem to obscure those voices. The intention behind this study was therefore to hear students' voices with the hope that doing so would enable me to work with them more sensitively and respectfully. My hope is that I can allow their voices to be heard so that other trainers might do the same.

I was initially interested in studying counselling training across a broad range of theoretical approaches. However, two significant incidents influenced the route the research took. Firstly, my recruitment strategy provided participants from only two courses, a Psychodynamic and a Person-Centred one. Secondly, my engagement with the material highlighted significant differences between the contexts these courses provided. Therefore, I decided for this thesis to work with only one approach because this would allow me to explore the particular qualities of training in that approach in greater depth. I acknowledge that this reduces the breadth of the thesis.

1.2 Counselling Training

Early in my reading for this project I came across the work of The International Project on the Effectiveness of Psychotherapy and Psychotherapy Training (IPEPPT). IPEPPT suggests that there is a contemporary need for research into this field at a time when there is an increasing drive for evidence-based practice as stakeholders look for the reassurance of verifiable results from their investments in therapies (Elliott and Zucconi, 2004). This is supported by an international call for an increase in the knowledge base of counselling (Cooper, 2008). Similarly, authors (e.g. Grafanaki, 2010; Folkes-Skinner et al., 2010) have discussed the need for more research into counselling training with Folkes-Skinner et al. (2010:83) describing the research evidence as both 'meagre' and 'inconsistent' and with the Higher Education Academy highlighting the lack of an evidence base for best practice in this field (Rutten and Hulme, 2013). This study aims to add to this literature.

Qualifying as a counsellor in the UK typically involves two stages. The first comprises a Certificate in Counselling Skills teaching interpersonal skills and basic counselling theory. Successful completion of a Certificate is usually an entry requirement for the qualifying stage of training which occurs through a Diploma, Foundation Degree, Degree or Master's level course. These generally run part-time over two years although more intensive full-

time courses are also available. Typically students must carry out supervised client work within a placement during their training and this is a requirement of BACP Course Accreditation (BACP, 2016a). Many courses also require students to attend personal therapy. The spectrum of applicants for qualifying courses ranges from graduates with previous clinical experience in other roles to those with no previous or concurrent clinical or academic experience nor, in some cases, any experience as a client.

1.3 Myself

I practise as a Person-Centred counsellor and counselling supervisor and teach counselling at Certificate, Diploma and Degree level as well as supervising Master's students. I chose to train in the Person-Centred approach on the advice of a qualified counsellor who I approached for help while I was trying to choose a course. This advice came from a practitioner who was not Person-Centred but who suggested that the approach offered a good foundation upon which one could later build a specialism. However, through my training I found that the Person-Centred approach resonated with my personal philosophy and so I adopted it as a way of being and as my therapeutic approach. My relationship with the approach has endured and developed over the last 17 years. Therefore, my role in this research project has been a complex one that involved my experiences as researcher, teacher, supervisor, supervisee, counsellor, student and client.

My experiences as a trainee counsellor were mainly positive. However, I often wondered about how I was learning; was it through a developing understanding of theory, an accumulation of experience in placements, or through my experience of the models offered by my tutors who were also practising counsellors? This wondering reflected my struggle to synthesise all of the domains of learning on my course and as a student I was reaching for a straightforward answer; it had to be one domain rather than a combination of several or possibly all of them. Meanwhile, some of my peers and people from outside of counselling were offering the opinion that counselling was an ability which you either possessed or did not and that training was a hoop-jumping exercise to gain acceptance from the gatekeepers of the profession.

As a teacher I have seen some students go through their training with a developing sense of personal and professional growth while others seem to struggle to take anything meaningful from the process. Some who struggle find ways to engage with the training while others do not. This range of experiences may be due to a variety of factors including the diversity within student groups: each student's life experiences, hopes, expectations, personal philosophies and responses will all affect the way that they perceive their training, especially when training is designed to raise their awareness of these issues.

1.4 The project

This project treats students' perceptions of counselling training as an existing social phenomenon that can be meaningfully explored, leading to a greater depth of understanding of the processes involved. The thesis does not engage with the debate about the effectiveness of counselling training because that has been explored elsewhere (see, for example, Elliott and Zucconi, 2006). The research is informed by Pring's (2000) argument that educational research must be related to practice otherwise it serves no practical purpose. Consequently, the intention is that through dissemination this study could influence the development of counselling training.

My interest lay in unpacking students' perceptions of their relationships with their tutors and peers so that these relationships could be better understood. A better understanding could stimulate trainers to further develop their practices and my hope is that this may further improve student experiences and lead to developments in training and ultimately in clients' experiences of counselling. I acknowledge that this project has been informed by my own interpretations and my intention has been to explore these as part of the reflexive process within this thesis.

Chapter 2: Preliminary definitions

This thesis employs terms which have particular meanings within the Person-Centred approach. The definitions provided below are of the specific meanings of those terms that were employed in this work and are included here to give readers access to this topic.

2.1 Person-Centred

The phrase person-centred is often found in health care and management literature and can be employed to describe approaches that put the person, client or patient first. However, in the field of counselling the phrase refers to the therapeutic approach as described by Carl Rogers (e.g. Rogers, 1951; 1959; 1961). Throughout the thesis I have used 'Person-Centred' to delineate the therapeutic application of Rogers' theory to counselling.

Therapeutic Conditions

Rogers (1959) proposed that for therapeutic change to occur the following relational conditions were both necessary and sufficient:

- 1 That two persons are in contact
- 2 That the first person, whom we shall term the client, is in a state of incongruence, being vulnerable, or anxious.
- 3 That the second person, who we shall term the therapist, is congruent in the relationship.
- 4 That the therapist is experiencing unconditional positive regard toward the client.
- 5 That the therapist is experiencing an empathic understanding of the client's internal frame of reference.
- 6 That the client perceives, at least to a minimal degree, conditions 4 and 5, the unconditional positive regard of the therapist, and the empathic understanding of the therapist. (1959:213)

These conditions can be expressed in a range of ways each of which conceptualise the role of the counsellor subtly differently (see for example Sanders, 2012). A significant

aspect of the 'classical approach' to Person-Centred counselling (often referred to as 'Classical Client-Centred' counselling) is its focus on counsellor non-directivity.

Congruence

Rogers' third condition of congruence became a significant theme in this study and requires a fuller exploration here. Congruence has been described as:

...genuineness, transparency, authenticity, realness... The concept has been described as an attitude, a state of being, a way of living (Wyatt, 2001: vii)

Lietaer (2001) suggests that Rogers saw congruence as being 'the more fundamental of all three basic attitudes', but Rogers revealed changes in his own descriptions of congruence. For example, in 1966 Rogers suggested that:

Genuineness in therapy means that the therapist is his actual self during his encounter with his client. Without façade, he openly has the feelings and attitudes that are flowing in him at the moment. This involves self-awareness; that is the therapist's feelings are available to him – to his awareness – and he is able to live them, to experience them in the relationship, and to communicate them if they persist. The therapist encounters his client directly, meeting him person to person. He is being himself, not denying himself (1966:185)

Rogers goes on to use the phrase 'being real' and suggested that this is a process of being and becoming aware of our experience:

Being real involves the difficult task of being acquainted with the flow of experiencing going on within oneself, a flow marked especially by complexity and continuous change... (Rogers, 1966:185)

Rogers' writing at this stage suggests that congruence is a process and in this he echoes Gendlin's description of the concept as 'the therapist's subjective feeling process' (Gendlin, 1959:27).

However, Rogers' understanding of this concept continued to evolve as he expanded the application of his ideas beyond therapy. Rogers' work with communities and with encounter groups led to him suggesting that:

Congruence, or genuineness, involves "letting the other know where you are" emotionally. It may involve confrontation and the straightforward expression of personally owned feelings (Rogers, 1996:160)

This reflects a fundamental difference in the way this concept is understood. The earlier definition focuses on the counsellor's awareness of themselves in process, while the later definition focuses on 'confrontation' and 'straightforward expression'. My understanding is that the earlier definition applies to congruence in the therapeutic relationship in which the focus is on the client's frame of reference, whereas the later definition is more relevant to situations in which the focus is on multiple frames of reference. Therefore, I would argue that the development of therapist congruence must focus on students' developing awareness of their own processes rather than on their abilities to 'let the other know where you are'. However, this view is not universal and congruence is frequently interpreted as confrontation.

Experience, perception and subception

Rogers employed experience as a noun embracing '...all that is going on within the envelope of the organism at any given moment which is potentially available to awareness' and as a verb '...to receive in the organism the impact of the sensory or physiological events which are happening at the moment' (1959:196). Perception is defined as '...a hypothesis or prognosis which comes into being in awareness when stimuli impinge on the organism' (1959:198) and awareness is defined as '...the symbolic representation ...of some portion of our experience' (1959:198). Rogers defined subception as '...discrimination without awareness' (1959:199). Therefore, experience comprises the totality of stimuli acting on an organism, perception comprises those stimuli which the organism is aware of, and subception comprises those stimuli acting on the organism but not currently in the organism's awareness.

The self-concept

In Rogerian terms the self-concept is defined as the:

...organised, consistent, conceptual gestalt composed of perceptions of the characteristics of the "I" or "me" and the perception of the relationships of the "I" or "me" to others and to various aspects of life, together with the values attached to these perceptions (Rogers, 1959:200)

Rogers suggested that the self-concept is '...fluid and changing' (ibid) and that it is susceptible to environmental conditions because of our innate need for positive regard from others (1959:208).

Conditions of Worth

The positive regard that we perceive from others may be conditional; certain aspects of the self may receive greater positive regard than others. Rogers suggested that from an individual's perception of this conditional positive regard they may develop a regard complex:

...all those self-experiences, together with their inter-relationships, which the individual discriminates as being related to the positive regard of a particular social other (1959:209)

This process is internalised such that the individual perceives positive self-regard based on these conditions. Thus conditional positive regard from 'a particular social other' may lead to the development of conditions of worth (Rogers, 1959) as the individual '...comes to selectively view her self-experiences as more or less worthy of self-regard' (Cooper, 2007:81). Conditions of worth lead us to deny or distort aspects of our experience in ways which fit our self-concept.

2.2 Counselling

While there has been debate about the distinction between counselling and psychotherapy there is currently no consensus about this issue. Therefore, for simplicity, the activity will be referred to as 'counselling' throughout this thesis.

Counselling does not currently have professional status so anyone can use the title regardless of qualifications. A White Paper published in February 2007 'Trust, Assurance and Safety - The Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century' (Secretary of State for Health, 2007) gave priority to the regulation of counselling although this proposal was dropped at the change of government and is still in abeyance. This means that counselling could be defined in a number of ways (see for example: McLeod, 2003). In this thesis counselling is assumed to be a discrete activity rather than part of another professional role (e.g. nursing, social work, the clergy etc.) which may involve elements of counselling or the use of counselling skills. The significance is that other roles would have their own philosophies and ethics which may influence training.

2.3 Training

In the literature counselling courses are variously described as training, development and/or education. My understanding is that becoming a counsellor involves learning how to engage in a professional role which includes learning across the four domains of theoretical knowledge, skills training, professional development and personal development and could therefore be seen as a developmental process which includes aspects of training and education. This is discussed in more depth later in this thesis. However, this raises a question about the aims of counselling courses: do they aim to train students in a skillset, to educate students about theoretical and professional issues, to facilitate personal development or all of these and if so how do they balance the different demands of each of these aims? It could be argued that this question could be addressed to training in a range of professional roles; they would certainly be relevant to my experiences of teacher training. However, becoming a counsellor typically involves a greater focus on personal development and on relational processes than other professional training.

Chapter 3: Preliminary discussions

3.1 Becoming a counsellor

Because this research focuses on the perceptions of students who are entering the profession I have explored definitions of counselling from that perspective. Firstly, it must be acknowledged that potential students will have their own local definitions of the role and each student will approach counselling training with unique foreknowledge which will have been informed by various cultural systems.

In the UK counselling is typically used to define an activity which is practised in a range of contexts including private practice, the voluntary sector and within institutions. However, as discussed above, the title is not protected and as such the activity is defined in a range of ways none of which can claim to be definitive (McLeod, 2013). In 'First Steps in Counselling' Sanders (2011) addresses the question 'what is counselling?':

This question usually reveals the variety of ideas, attitudes and opinions regarding counselling... but I would caution any readers who think that the media representation of counselling bears any resemblance at all to the real thing! (2011:3-4)

This suggests that there are a wide range of possibly inaccurate lay definitions and that there is also a 'reality' of the role. In the UK authorship of this reality might be assumed to lie with professional organisations such as BACP and UKCP. Sanders draws on the BACP who propose that:

The task of counselling is to give the client an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of living more resourcefully and towards greater well-being (BACP, 1991, cited in Sanders, 2011:6)

However, Sanders warns that:

BACP carries slightly different definitions in different parts of its website... it is simply a confirmation that a single definition is probably impossible and not particularly useful when the contexts in which this type of helping have so much influence on the aims and methods of 'counselling' (2011:10)

Sanders is defining a helping role whose aims and methods are dependent on the context. From this it can be concluded that the nature of training might also be dependent on the

context within which students are expected to practise. For example, a debt counsellor may need different training to a bereavement counsellor.

Claringbull (2010) emphasises the professional and therapeutic conceptualisation of counselling and suggests that it is an activity which is based on:

...extensive research-based evidence. The talking therapies are now established professional disciplines (2010:3)

Claringbull speaks of 'professionals who get involved with helping people who have emotional, psychological or mental health problems' (2010:4) and acknowledges the distinction between medically trained psychiatrists and psychologically trained counsellors.

However, Feltham takes a broader starting position suggesting that:

[n]o single, consensually agreed definition of either counselling or psychotherapy exists in spite of many attempts across the decades in Britain, North America and elsewhere to arrive at one (2012:3)

Feltham offers a 'provisional working definition' and highlights the potential for counselling to be either a professional or a lay role. Feltham also suggests that training is an essential component of the professional role and offers insight into what that training might include:

Counselling and psychotherapy are mainly, though not exclusively, listening-and-talking-based methods of addressing psychological and psychosomatic problems and change... Professional forms of counselling and psychotherapy are based on formal training which encompasses attention to pertinent theory, clinical and/or micro-skills development, the personal development/therapy of the trainee and supervised practice (2012:4)

McLeod (2013) extends this by proposing an inclusive definition of counselling:

Counselling is a purposeful, private communication arising from the intention of one person (couple or family) to reflect on and resolve a problem in living, and the willingness of another person to assist in that endeavour (2013:7)

McLeod suggests that training is not necessary to practise as a counsellor but that it is an element of locating the role within a 'professionalized network' (2013:9).

Nelson-Jones (2015) offers a definition of 'healing the mind by psychological methods that are applied by suitable trained and qualified practitioners' (2015:1). In doing so Nelson-Jones situates the activity within one of McLeod's 'professionalized networks' and emphasises the significance of training.

These respected authors from within the profession are suggesting that, although counselling is a term that can be applied to a broad range of helping relationships, training is a significant part of the professional definition of the role. Therefore, the message to prospective counsellors is that anyone who wishes to become part of the profession must undertake 'suitable' training.

This brief discussion of introductory texts suggests that individuals taking their first steps into counselling will be equipped with their own foreknowledge about the role and may find themselves stepping onto a loosely defined path that offers several definitions of counselling and a variety of routes to becoming a counsellor. Amid all of this, it seems important to acknowledge the growing research base which suggests that clients do find counselling helpful (see for example, Cooper, 2008).

However, establishing a workable definition of counselling is important for this study; if counselling is loosely defined how might we sufficiently define counselling training to research the topic? The above discussion suggests that a workable approach may be to accept that the definition is contextually dependent and to focus on one specific context, counselling within the professionalised therapeutic network, and to look within that context for a definition which may have implications for the current study.

One perspective on counselling in this context has been to describe the process as a learning activity (e.g. Rogers, 1951; Law, 1978; Cain, 1993; Rose et al., 2005). This could be seen as a mirror image of Dewey's definition of education as an agent for personal change (in Pendleton and Myles, 1991). From this perspective counselling can be understood in terms of a process within which clients can engage in a reparative discourse that may lead to them re-engaging with learning from direct experience (Rose et al., 2005). This is significant because it suggests there may be potential for blurring the boundaries between teaching and counselling and between being a client and a student. This opens up a way of hearing students' stories about their relationships which is

sensitive to cross-overs between their roles as students and clients and between their teachers' roles as teachers and counsellors.

3.2 Relating to a theoretical approach

Sanders' discussion offers a significant contextual factor for this study; the theoretical approach of the training. Sanders suggests that five approaches are currently predominant in the UK: Psychodynamic; Humanistic; Behavioural; Cognitive and Integrative (2011:21). Sanders writes of how he became aware of this aspect of counselling and in doing so describes a process similar to my own; I first became aware that there was a theory about psychological distress when I began my Certificate course and then later learnt that this was one of many theories:

Knowing this could cut two ways, you could be confused and not know which approach to choose either as a counsellor/helper or as a client. Or you could be relieved, knowing that you can choose from a number of approaches...
(Sanders, 2011:20)

This needs to be understood within the context of recent research. For example, a comprehensive meta-analysis of contemporary research into therapeutic outcomes by Hubble et al. (1999) suggests that no one approach can claim superiority. However the BACP requires accredited courses to have a coherent core theoretical approach (BACP, 2016a) although the validity of this has been questioned by authors such as Rowan and Jacobs (2003:112) who suggest that this might result in training which is too 'narrow' to offer students critical awareness of their practice.

Each therapeutic approaches offers a unique perspective on what it means to be human, how psychological distress occurs and is perpetuated and how therapeutic change is facilitated. These perspectives inform counselling practice; for example, the Person-Centred conceptualisation of psychological distress focuses on our need for positive regard from others and on the impact of receiving conditional positive regard (see for example Rogers, 1959). From this perspective the counsellor focuses on the client's perceptions of their experiences and offers empathic understanding and unconditional

positive regard. This shows elements of an interpretivist philosophy seeking to validate the local truths within the client's lived experience.

Trainee counsellors in the UK will be in relationship with the particular approach that they have chosen to study and that approach will influence all the domains of their training. My understanding is that this relationship will be unique for each student and will be inseparable from their own personal and individual values and the hypotheses they hold about themselves, people, psychological distress and the processes of therapeutic change. This relationship will also be in process and I suggest that during training this will be informed by the course's conceptualisation of the approach. Therefore, each student's relationship with their course and its teachers may involve:

- each student's relationship with the approach including their understandings and assumptions
- the course's relationship with the approach including the understanding and assumptions that are expressed through the course material
- each individual teacher's unique relationship with the approach including their own understanding of it and their assumptions
- the relationships between individual teachers and their unique relationships with the approach
- each student's perceptions of the ways teachers' communicate these layers of relationships to the approach with the students and within and between each other

3.3 Training

My use of the term 'training' needs discussing in order to make it clear. My understanding is that diploma level training was an essential component of my development without which I would not have had the structured opportunity to develop my self-awareness, theoretical grounding, professional understanding and therapeutic skills to work as a counsellor in one-to-one settings with vulnerable individuals. However, I also feel that I needed the additional post-qualifying period as a Master's student in order to consolidate my learning. The Master's year offered me space to reflect on my learning in a collegiate

environment with my teachers and peers. There we expressed our more intimate experiences of being and becoming counsellors. This extended my understanding of Person-Centred counselling towards a more idiosyncratic and creative process which draws on awareness of self in relationship with the client and on professional and theoretical knowledge, skills and experience.

During my diploma I was less informed about the professional aspects and the responsibilities of the role and needed more guidance from my teachers and was therefore more reliant on their decisions. Laursen argues that ideology matters in education (2006) and that:

Educational development is not only the result of political and economic powers but also of what seems reasonable to students, teachers, parents, and public opinion (2006:276)

At the early stage of my training I was therefore more reliant on what my trainers felt was necessary learning and 'reasonable'. From this I would suggest that trainers have a responsibility to educate themselves so that what seems 'reasonable' to them is critically informed. In this way, and in dialogue with other stakeholders, as Laursen suggests, attention to ideology might offer meaningful ways to develop teaching practices based on a rich and diverse sense of what is reasonable.

In her discussion of educational ideologies, Pendleton (1991) describes training as a way of expressing an instrumentalist ideology as a means of acquiring competence in the necessary skills to 'provide a safe public service' (1991:2) which is defined by extrinsic values and ideas. This view could arguably be applied to counselling training because counsellors provide a public service and work with vulnerable individuals. However, counselling training involves more than the competent application of skills; it also involves personal development and a developing relationship with the chosen theoretical approach. Counselling training might therefore involve principles from adaptive instrumentalism (Pendleton, 1991) such as induction and initiation into the philosophy of the particular theoretical approach. However, it could further be argued that the process goes beyond the acquisition of skills and induction into a particular philosophy; because counsellors are required to show evidence of professional understanding and personal development it could be said that they require education rather than training (Pendleton,

1991:4). This brings us into the areas of liberal humanist and progressivist ideology (Pendleton, 1991) in which curriculum decisions are decided on the grounds of the intrinsic value of the material to society and the students. I suggest that the intention behind counselling training in the UK currently includes elements of all of these ideologies; students are trained in order that they practise safely and ethically, they are inducted into the philosophies and attitudes of the theoretical approach, and they are educated so that they can work flexibly, creatively and autonomously.

From my perspective, the progressivist stance has the closest kinship with the Person-Centred approach because it focuses on the student's experience of whether knowledge is worthwhile and sees the students as active participants in their training. Therefore, a student who has foreknowledge of the approach might enrol on a Person-Centred course expecting to experience a progressivist and a relatively andragogic environment in which they might hold authority. However, another student on the same course might expect to be trained in a Person-Centred skill-set; they might expect and/or want instrumental training rather than ideological education. This raises questions about the relationship between students' intentions for their learning and courses' intentions for their teaching. As Clarkson suggests:

As a teacher in the profession of counselling, I remain open to the idea that people will be using me at different levels, depending on where they want to pitch themselves and at what stage they are (1994:16)

This also highlights the relationship between a course's core therapeutic approach and its teaching practices; is there congruence between the two? Does a particular course in Person-Centred counselling offer therapeutic conditions and, does it need to offer those conditions in order to train Person-Centred counsellors?

3.4 Trajectories and expectations for professional training

The focus of this study illustrates the significance that I give to training in the development of counsellors. However I acknowledge that professional development is a process that continues beyond training (e.g. Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1980; Benner, 1984). Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1980) offer a model of skills acquisition comprising five

developmental stages: novice; competence; proficiency; expertise and mastery. They liken this to the acquisition of the ability to improvise jazz (1980:1) and suggest that:

...as the student becomes skilled, he depends less on abstract principles and more on concrete experience (1980:abstract)

Dreyfus and Dreyfus suggest a trajectory that leads towards individualised expert practice which is informed by the practitioner's immediate experience and is also intuitive. Pena (2010) critiques this model questioning whether it can be applied to the acquisition of clinical skills suggesting that the significance the authors place on intuition within expert practice needs further evaluation.

Benner (1984) offers a similar model but one which is related to clinical practice through her exploration of professional development in the education of nurses. While this work has been criticised as a 'retreat into tradition and authority in nursing' (Cash, 1995:527) Benner's suggested trajectory from novice to expert suggests a series of qualitative steps which result in expertise. Benner suggests that professional development extends beyond initial qualification and involves more than '...just a mechanistic following of formal propositions held as representations in the mind' (1996:669). Here, competence is characterised by practice moderated by external guidance in the form of training and internship while expertise is seen as practice governed predominantly by internal guidance, and viewed as a process rather than a destination, thus expertise is a type of practice that a professional may move in and out of.

Eraut (2008) follows a similar line by suggesting that professional competence may continue to develop beyond studentship and that this ongoing process will:

...depend on the affordances offered by their practice context and the disposition of individuals or groups to take advantage of them (2008:14)

These authors propose a professional trajectory from novice to expert and beyond, which extends past training and therefore implies that the scope of any qualifying course is limited; it will not produce experts because expertise is an on-going process rather than a destination. This could suggest that the potential outcomes of qualifying training in the UK may realistically be limited to achieving competence or proficiency in the role. At those stages a developing professional seems to be in a process of crossing a threshold;

they are moving from reliance on external guidance and possibly performing skills in relatively mechanistic ways and are stepping into a realm where they rely on internal guidance and employ their skills in a natural and individual way.

This raises more questions about a course's intentions and their relationship with student expectations. Are students aware that the training they will be investing in will only take them to the levels of competence and/or proficiency? It also raises questions about the impact of teaching and assessment strategies; are they facilitating students' developing competence and proficiency and are they acknowledging the limitations of training and the uncertainty and confusion that may arise in this transitional stage? Or might they be perceived to be implicitly suggesting that students need to become experts?

3.5 Person-Centred Training

My interpretation of Person-Centred theory (Rogers, 1959) is that an individual's experiences of the therapeutic conditions may facilitate greater differentiation in their experiential field leading to increased self-awareness, self-acceptance and autonomy. This has been conceptualised in terms of levels of functioning (Rogers, 1959) which describe a range of experiencing from states of incongruence and experiential fixity to greater congruence and experiential fluidity. Increasing levels of functioning may in turn facilitate greater autonomy as the client develops an internal locus of evaluation. Rogers also discussed a Person-Centred approach to education (Rogers and Freiberg, 1983) suggesting that similar conditions were significant to successful learning.

Comparing Person-Centred training with Person-Centred counselling raises a question that is fundamental to this research project: is student autonomy synonymous with client autonomy? This relates back to the questions raised above about the likely trajectories and possible limitations of professional training.

Counselling students will initially practise their skills in small peer groups which typically involve peer observation and feedback along with coaching, feedback and assessment by their tutors. This stage of training generally involves a process in which students are assessed against fitness to practise criteria before they are allowed to start client work in

their placements. Once they begin their placements (typically during the latter part of the first year of a two-year part-time course) they will start to work on a one-to-one basis with clients. Therefore, while they will be supported by regular clinical supervision, students are required to work in a relatively autonomous way from the outset; their experiences of client work in a clinical setting will be on a one-to-one basis.

The overlap where students work on a one-to-one basis with clients while still attending their courses potentially creates tension within Person-Centred training because students are being required to work relatively autonomously while also being subject to assessment against external criteria. Person-Centred theory suggests that in order for individuals to be able to be more fully functioning (and therefore more autonomous) they need an environment in which they can experience, to a minimal degree, unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1959) and yet, assessment is inherently judgemental. This raises the question of whether it is possible for students to become autonomous practitioners within an educational environment. A complicating factor is that students will bring their personal expectations to their training and these will undoubtedly influence their perception. For example, students on a Person-Centred course may expect to be externally directed and assessed and/or place value on these processes.

The potential conflict between therapeutic conditions and external assessment can be expressed as a question about a course's intentions; are students being taught *about* the Person-Centred approach or *from within* the approach? The intended outcomes of the training are also relevant here; they could be to develop students' *ways of being* or to develop within students an instrumental approach to counselling. This then suggests a complicated matrix of teaching intentions, strategies, outcomes and expectations and I acknowledge the potential to hold all of the points on such a matrix within one philosophy. However this begins to present a complex picture of the dynamics within training which raises questions about the impact that this complication might have on student engagement.

3.6 The 'hyphen'

To comply with the BACP course accreditation scheme (BACP, 2016a) teachers on counselling courses must also be practising counsellors. I would therefore suggest that they will bring their experiences of both roles to their teaching. Typically, students will be aware that their teachers are counsellors and this may complicate student expectations; are they expecting to be taught or/and counselled? This suggests that being a counselling teacher involves roles-within-the-role of teacher and, because teachers will also be supervisees and possibly supervisors and clients as well as having experiences of being students themselves, the range of these roles-within-the-role extend beyond just teacher and counsellor. These interweaving roles will also be located within the broader context of other life roles such as parent, partner, friend etc.

This idea also relates to students because while studying they will also be practising as counsellors in their placements as well as receiving clinical supervision and undertaking personal counselling and filling all of the other roles that make up their lives. Their role on the course therefore comprises student-peer-counsellor-supervisee-client and myriad other roles.

This suggests that there is a complicated and dynamic interplay between these roles-within-roles for teachers and students both in their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Likewise, this interplay will be set within a specific context so that for example, a student who is in a supervised counselling placement and personal therapy may be learning about counselling from their teachers, supervisors and counsellor as well as from their peers whilst also experiencing all of these relationships within a context that focuses on personal as well as professional development.

The inter- and intrapersonal relationships between these roles-within-roles will inform and be informed by each other in a complex interactive process (Gendlin, 1981) which suggests that any attempt to separate elements of this process for the purpose of research is problematic. This further suggests the possibility that students and teachers may need to be aware of the potential for being between roles; of 'activating the hyphen[s]' (Humphrey, 2007) such that student-peer-counsellor-supervisee-clients (etc.) might relate to their teacher-counsellor-supervisee-supervisor-client (etc.) and vice versa.

3.7 Bringing the preliminary discussions together

The argument being developed is that counselling training is a complex and dynamic activity within which a course's theoretical approach could have a significant influence on the students' relationships with and within the course. A Person-Centred course might aim to train students about the approach or to train them from within the approach. Teaching from within as suggested by Rogers and Freiberg (1983) would suggest an andragogic approach that relies on the students' subjective experience and models equality between learners and teachers. However, in an academic setting it has been argued that an external locus of assessment is necessary (Mearns, 1997) in order to ensure that students meet the course's academic criteria and to fulfil the responsibility that goes with conferring a professional qualification. An approach which might address a Person-Centred course's ideology and its academic and professional responsibilities might teach professional and theoretical issues in an academic manner while offering a Person-Centred approach to personal development. However this implies separating professional and theoretical aspects from personal development is possible, while the literature suggests that this is problematic in practice (Wilkins, 1997; Pendleton, 1991). My experience as a student on a Person-Centred course was to find this complicated terrain confusing and I often heard my peers expressing their own confusion in terms like '...they say this is a Person-Centred course and yet they keep asking us to jump through these hoops'.

This discussion highlights significant issues for this study:

- the interplay between student foreknowledge of counselling and the course's conceptualisation of the role
- the interplay between student foreknowledge of the theoretical approach and the course's conceptualisation of the approach
- the interplay between student expectations of professional education in the context of Person-Centred counselling training and the course's conceptualisation of the process
- the interplay between student expectations of their relationships with teachers and the conceptualisation of this within staff teams and within individual teachers

- awareness of the interplay between the many roles involved in being a student counsellor and counselling teacher.

Chapter 4: The philosophical basis of this study

The development of a philosophical basis for this study was a reflexive process which continued to unfold throughout the planning and development stages. In order to provide a consistent basis a choice was made to freeze this process at a point when a reasonably coherent design had been achieved.

4.1 Phenomenology

My interest in the Person-Centred approach lies in its conceptualisation of our subjective perceptions of being in a world full of others, each with their own unique perceptions of being. This led me to explore phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962; Welton, 1999) as a way of studying 'conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view' (Smith, 2011a) which became a major influence in the design of the study.

My initial aim was to establish an ontological position for this work and this was anchored in my personal understanding that, from a phenomenological perspective, there is a reality which we perceive (Welton, 1999) although we do not have access to direct experience of reality and the meaning we make of reality is subjective. From this position my epistemological stance is that knowledge claims are expressions of perceptions and beliefs rather than facts or truths that can be supported by more facts or truths (Everitt and Fisher, 1995). Therefore, knowledge claims are contextualised attempts to construct meaning from our subjective perceptions of reality. This suggests a postmodern position, as Lyotard suggested:

[w]e no longer have recourse to the grand narrative...[b]ut, as we have seen the little narrative (petit recit) remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention... (1984:60)

Any definition of knowledge that relies on certainty or truth is seen as redundant when viewed from a perspective that embraces contemporary challenges to traditional concepts such as foundationalism (Everitt and Fisher, 1995) in which knowledge claims are seen as being:

...certain and incorrigible in starting out from indubitable foundations, indemnified from scepticism, error and change (Hartwig, 2007:211)

Heidegger suggested that the Greek meaning of truth has been misunderstood and that truth was intended to pertain to 'the sheer sensory perception of something' (1962:57) and that perception aims at that which is:

...genuinely accessible only *through* it and *for* it... and to that extent this perception is always true, 'true' in the purest and most primordial sense (1962:57)

My position denies a positivist truth in favour of our individual subjective perceptions. Because we do not have access to direct experience of reality it cannot be presented as truth and therefore we cannot make justifiable claims to know reality as truth and, arguably, the concept of truth becomes unhelpful (Rorty, 1999). As Lyotard suggested:

...it must be clear that it is not our business to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented (1984:81)

My position is therefore inherently interpretive and at the heart of this is my sense of *being-in-reality*; of my being, and of a relationship between being and reality. Heidegger (1962) suggested that *Dasein* dwells existentially in the world and meets others in the world, thus we are all in and arise from the world. We are born into a world that is already full of meaning and we learn about it and about ourselves through our relationship with it. But we do more than learn about ourselves through this relationship, we *become* ourselves and through this reciprocal relationship we create our perception of reality:

Dasein finds 'itself' proximally in *what* it does, uses, expects, avoids - in those things environmentally ready-to-hand with it which it is *proximally* concerned (Heidegger, 1962:155)

My understanding, therefore, is that we discover our being through our experience of existing, and existing is not a passive state but an active process with which we are engaged by our very being in existence.

From a Person-Centred perspective Gendlin proposes the concept of the reflexively identical environment (1981:1); the unique combination of organism interacting with environment which is participating with it. This suggests that we are unique and active parts of our environment and that therefore we imply that environment and it implies us.

We are aspects of an ecology engaged in an ongoing reciprocal and interactive process of having been, being and becoming. Gendlin highlights the sense of us as organisms; we are not merely sense-making but are also embodied organisms that are part of the environment. Gendlin also proposes the concept of the 'spectator's environment' (1981:1) which is the environment as seen from the observer position such that the observer defines the environment. As an observer of students' perceptions of their training I am defining that environment and in doing so potentially separating the student from the environment when they are inextricably a part of it; they cannot be the student without the training environment and it is not a training environment without students. I need to be mindful of this potential separation and strive to immerse myself in the perspective of the students-in/of-the-environment; they are immersed within the course as parts of the course and also acting on it while being acted on by it.

A phenomenological position suggests that research can only offer an interpretative discussion of the researchers' perceptions of their participants' stories. As Heidegger suggests:

What we hear first is never noises or complexes of sounds, but the creaking waggon, the motorcycle (1962:207)

This implies that when we hear something our first hearing is our understanding of the sound; we do not hear noises and make sense of them as language and messages but rather we hear the understanding of what it is to us. A challenge for this research therefore is to ensure that my meaning-making is transparent. This suggests the need for 'parenthesizing' (Welton, 1999:63-65) whilst acknowledging Heidegger's (1962) argument that this is not wholly possible. 'Parenthesizing' is considered here as an aspect of the critical element of phenomenology in which the perceptions and prejudices of the researcher are explored transparently and reflexively to expose the meaning-making process within the research.

4.2 Acknowledging the context

Phenomenology has been criticised from a critical realist perspective because:

In its tendency to see the life-world as constituted by its occupants, it overlooks that its games and practices are always initiated, conditioned and closed outside the life-world itself... (Hartwig, 2007:347)

However, my understanding is that we are always in relationship with others and with reality and that our sense of individuality is formed in our ongoing relationships with the environment. As Gendlin suggests, there is no us without our environment (1981) and the environment includes others and therefore includes our 'games and practices'. Our individual perceptions are therefore developed relationally which suggests an ongoing and interactive process in which we are developing the cultures within which we are embedded whilst being influenced by the practices of those cultures (Bourdieu, 1990). Bourdieu's perspective offers an answer to Hartwig's argument by highlighting social forces; it also implies personal agency and constraint and suggests that we live in the tension that these two forces create (Bohman, 1999). This expresses an acknowledgement of the potential momentum inherent in any social reality and suggests that practices create social forces that act on individuals within a context. Bourdieu suggests that subjectivism is an illusory concept in sociology because it can be blind to the context and the practice and can therefore put the observer in a position which is separate to the people being observed in such a way that they cannot be interpreted in any way apart from objectively. Again, this echoes Gendlin's concept of the spectator's environment and highlights the significance, for this study, of acknowledging the significance of the interrelationship between researcher, participant and context in which each continually influences the other. Holding Gendlin's (1981) understanding of the ways that individuals individuate within a culture and can therefore change that culture also acknowledges a socio-cultural position (Vygotsky, 1978) suggesting that our development is embedded in the culture in which we are developing and that our experiencing is both subjective and intersubjective.

For the current study the context was an educational setting which may encompass Bourdieu's concept of 'doxa':

Practical faith is the condition of entry that every field tacitly imposes, not only by sanctioning and disbaring those who would destroy the game, but by so arranging things, in practice, that the operations of the selecting and shaping new entrants (rites of passage, examinations, etc.) are such as to

obtain from them that undisputed, pre-reflexive, naive compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the field which is the very definition of doxa (1990:68)

This highlights the paradox involved in assuming a non-grand-narrative position when conducting research within an educational context which rests on a grand narrative of academic assessment. This paradox is at the heart of this study which explores individual perceptions within a world of practices and external assessment and which may therefore also reflect aspects of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital (Szeman and Kaposy, 2010:81). This is paralleled in my own experiences as a research student in that I undertook this study for the capital I hoped to gain from the external validation of being awarded a degree at this level.

The significance of context reinforces the need for transparency in this study such that individual stories can be heard whilst also allowing any potentially homogenising influences of the context to emerge. While the material is specific to the context of each participant's perceptions and to the context of a particular course, it is my intention that the dissemination of these stories may sensitise others (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) to the possible perceptions of students on such courses.

Chapter 5: Methodology

Selecting an appropriate methodology for this project involved moving backwards and forwards between question, philosophical position and methodology until a workable level of coherence between these elements could be achieved. This revealed significant drivers behind the project which are explored in the following account of the process. Reflexivity (Etherington, 2004) provided access to the ways in which I was influencing and being influenced by this project from inception to completion. My intention was to be reflexive without this becoming 'solipsism, self-indulgence, navel gazing [and] narcissism' (Etherington, 2004:31).

5.1 What did I set out to do?

The aim of this project was to develop an understanding of one aspect of lived human experience within a particular context (Carter and Little, 2007) occurring over a fixed period of time. The research studies the ways that students made sense of their relationships and therefore I chose to ground the study in students' perceptions and to engage with the complex and possibly contradictory voices that might be heard. I was not looking for the true nature or the complete story of these perceptions but for the versions of them (Willig, 2008:125) held by one element in a web of complex relationships involving individuals, groups and institutions.

The understanding I was seeking was focused on the participants' perceptions of this phenomena and this expresses my phenomenological perspective. Phenomenologists are 'typically interested in charting how human subjects experience life world phenomena' (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2014:18). Phenomenology emphasises the importance of the body's 'intentionality' or 'our experience and consciousness...[as] continuously directed towards the world' (Finlay, 2011:37). Thus, a phenomenological study is a study of our embodied relationship with the world; we do not exist separately from the world but in interaction with it (Gendlin, 1981).

5.2 How did I set out to do it?

Because the context of this study incorporated a period of transition for the participants my first decision was to conduct a longitudinal study so that students' experiences could be explored during that transition. The intention was to provide participants with the opportunity to explore their ongoing perceptions within the developing context rather than reflecting on the experiences after the event or at one point. This acknowledges my understanding that we are always in the process of being and becoming and that this process can be meaningfully explored by reflecting on it as it unfolds.

My role as researcher would therefore involve the interactive collection and re-telling of participants' unfolding stories of these ongoing processes. My understanding is that this would inevitably involve the interpretation of these stories and so from a phenomenological position I would need to practise reduction in order to get closer to the essence of the stories; I would strive to parenthesise my own 'prejudices... previous understandings' (Finlay, 2011:46). I would also be seeking to learn from those very assumptions and prejudices because, from a Heideggerian (1962) perspective, these can be a resource with which we can gain insight into the ways that we make sense of our worlds. Initially, Husserl (Welton, 1999) suggested that the process of reduction would allow the researcher to be able to establish the truthful essence of any given phenomenon. However, Heidegger later proposed that such a truthful essence could never be established because interpretation is inherent to our being (Heidegger, 1962). In this case interpretation becomes inevitable and can be drawn upon as a valuable aspect of the research process. Finlay argues that this binary division between descriptive (Husserlian) phenomenology and hermeneutic (Heideggerian) phenomenology is unhelpful because phenomenology '...is not either "descriptive" or "interpretive"; it is both' (Finlay, 2011:x). However, from the Heideggerian perspective there has developed a tradition of 'hermeneutic phenomenology' (Van der Zalm and Bergum, 2000) which includes Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009) which was the approach adopted for this project.

Finlay (2011) suggests that phenomenology can explore both the idiographic (our individual perceptions) and the normative (or nomothetic; what we share with others, laws rather than exceptions). This offers a useful position for the current study with its

focus on individuals within a specific context; what could it tell us about the possible experiences of individuals within this context and what might that tell us about the context?

Brinkmann & Kvale (2014:41) argue that knowledge gained via a phenomenological approach merely reflects opinions. However Finlay (2011:15) suggests that phenomenological research can provide meaningful data if the study comprises:

- 1) A focus on lived experience and meanings
- 2) The use of rigorous, rich, resonant description
- 3) A concern with existential issues
- 4) The assumption that body and world are intertwined
- 5) The application of the 'phenomenological attitude'
- 6) A potentially transformative relational approach

The study focuses on participants' perceptions in this context and the meanings they made of those perceptions and involved the development of rich multi-layered descriptions of the participants' stories of these perceptions. The analysis extended beyond the purely descriptive because, while I was continually working to parenthesise my assumptions and biases I was also reflecting on them in my journal in order to inform the analysis. I also drew on literature to extend the analysis. Existential issues were present within the participants' stories (for example perceptions of aloneness and thrownness). The assumption that body and world are intertwined was attended to through being with the participants' embodied experiences of being in this context as well as their cognitive meaning-making. This aspect developed over time as I began to engage with Gendlin's process model (1981). I strived to maintain a phenomenological attitude throughout the study and this was expressed through my referring back to the participants' recordings and through my ongoing attendance to my own phenomenology. The potential for the study to be a transformative relational experience was expressed through the ways in which the process was developmental for myself and seemed to be therapeutic for the participants.

As a relative newcomer to qualitative research I sought an approach that offered support by providing a structure and rich literature. IPA (Smith et al., 2009) was suggested by my supervisor following a process of exploration which had refined my question (see below for a discussion of this exploration and the issues it raised). IPA fitted my worldview

because it is rooted in hermeneutic phenomenology such as suggested by Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer and Schleirmacher (Smith et al., 2009). IPA offered a methodological framework that is 'committed to how people make sense of their major life experiences' (Smith et al., 2009:11) and which does not aim to 'fix experience in predefined or overly abstract categories' (ibid). The authors define 'an experience' as when we become aware of what is happening rather than merely undergoing it and IPA is typically concerned with experiences that form a 'comprehensive' unit made of experiences that link together to have meaning and significance. This fitted my sense of the participants' likely relationship to their training.

The first level of the hermeneutic aspect of IPA:

...shares the view that human beings are sense-making creatures, and therefore the accounts which participants provide will reflect their attempts to make sense of their experience (Smith et al., 2009:3)

Because the process requires the researcher to make sense of the participants' sense-making the double hermeneutic is also acknowledged. Smith et. al. (2009) discuss ways in which these layers of interpretation can offer more than just the voices of the participants. Two perspectives are offered; firstly Schleirmacher's (Smith et al., 2009:22) argument that the depth of engagement with the text and the reflective process offers an opportunity for 'an understanding of the writer better than he understands himself'. This however does not imply that these interpretations are truer than the participants' voices but that they can offer meaningful insights that may also be informed by other cases. Secondly, Gadamer's (Smith et al., 2009:27) perspective is cited with regard to his scepticism about our capacity to know another better than they know themselves, rather it is suggested that all we can know is the content of the text through our own perceptions. This highlights the potential for the interpretative and reflexive process to draw additional insights from the text whilst acknowledging the need to be transparent about the authorship of this material (Culler, 2002). This suggests that IPA is empathic in that it seeks to understand the text from within the participant's phenomenology and that it also takes an outsider position from which to interpret the phenomena. This position allows for the development of the researcher's interpretations and for themes to arise across multiple interviews. It also suggests that the research question can include a

second tier which can be more theory driven which fitted my sense of counselling as both 'being-with' another person and 'doing' through skills and theory.

My position for this project was that even though I had experiences of this context I was still an outsider in relationship to each participant's experience. Thus the insider/outsider dynamic needed to be considered and held in awareness as part of the design and reflexivity of the project. As an insider the material might be more accessible to me and I might bring insight based on experience and foreknowledge of the context. A sense of having shared experiences might facilitate rapport with the participants. However the challenges of being an insider were that my foreknowledge might cloud my reflexivity and might make it harder for me to parentesise. I could also potentially struggle with shifting my role from teacher and counsellor to that of researcher. Likewise, being informed about the context might lead me to ask 'legitimate' questions but might blind me to others that could be asked. A risk was that I could uncover practice issues which might require action and this needed to be addressed within the ethics submission as did the potential for my insider position to have a coercive influence on recruitment.

IPA involves deep engagement with each individual interview following a series of stages (Smith et al., 2009:82):

- *Reading and re-reading*: this involved immersing myself in each interview such that I developed a feel for the material. This involved transcribing the interviews and then reading through the transcripts while simultaneously listening to the recording. This was followed by further readings of each transcript, both as detailed readings and skim readings until I was immersed in the material.
- *Initial noting*: this involved making notes concerning the *descriptive*, *linguistic* and *conceptual* levels of the text. These notes were made on the transcript following the strategy suggested by Smith et al. (2009) of reading through the text and initially making descriptive notes, then taking a second pass to make linguistic notes and a third pass for conceptual notes. These were notated in the transcriptions as follows: descriptive, *linguistic*, conceptual (see Appendix 11)

- *Developing emergent themes*: I worked with the descriptive, linguistic and conceptual notes rather than with the original text, although there was also a degree of moving between the notes and the text.
- *Searching for connections across emergent themes*: initially this was contained to the individual interviews, then to each complete case and then over time bridges were noted between cases which helped to develop stories about the context.

The analysis was extended for this study because each participant provided material in three interviews over the two years of their training. This provided an opportunity to develop patterns of meaning across multiple interviews with individual participants as well as across the sample in various ways. This was broken down into a series of analytic pathways:

- along each individual participant's timeline, providing material about their process
- across the sample at each of the interview stages, providing material about each stage
- along the timeline for the sample, providing material about the process and the context

Flowers (2008) discusses the significance of the analytic strategy when employing multiple interviews with individual participants suggesting that the timing of the analysis can influence the authorship of the material. Flowers argues that when individual interviews are analysed by the researcher and the results taken to subsequent interviews this offers the opportunity to probe themes and hunches that the researcher may have developed and that this can lead to a more researcher-led project. With this project the intention was for the development of material to be primarily participant-led and consequently I delayed the analysis until the three interview stages were completed. The intention was that I would be with the participant's unfolding process of meaning-making rather than ahead of it. To capture my immediate reflexivity, notes were journaled after each interview and these will have undoubtedly informed my engagement in the subsequent interviews. However I strove to parenthesise this level of developing meaning-making during the interviews. The act of journaling became a symbolic act of

dumping my meaning-making for later use. In practice some of these interpretations inevitably arose during the later interviews and where I was aware of this in the moment, these were transparently explored within the interview and within the analysis. Throughout this project the intention was to provide an unfolding account of an ongoing process and thereby address the criticism that IPA can 'miss... a contextualised, unfolding and sequential account within a single interview' (Collins and Nicolson, 2002:627).

5.3 Why IPA?

I have layers of connection with phenomenology. One is that phenomenological enquiry reflects my understanding of the process of Person-Centred counselling. As a Person-Centred counsellor my practice is essentially directed towards generating a co-created phenomenological description of my client's perceptions. The client's perception is therefore as close to any 'direct experience' (Crotty, 2003) or 'essence' (McLeod, 2001; Cresswell, 2007) that we could hope to access. My congruent holding of the therapeutic conditions of empathy and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1959) represent the phenomenological concept of parenthesis (Welton, 1999). Another layer is that phenomenology resonates with my individual understandings of what it means to be human including my relationship between my perceptions and experience.

For this study I wanted to present rich interpretative descriptions of a sample of individual participants' perceptions of one aspect of counselling training. I did not want to follow the path of descriptive phenomenological enquiry which aims to generate a description of a phenomenon that transcends the assumptions and world views of those experiencing the phenomenon (Cresswell, 2007) which Husserl described as 'eidetic seeing', or seeing the essence of the experience (McLeod, 2001). My intention was to adopt a hermeneutic phenomenological stance which offers a critical perspective although arguably this was diluted in the subjective way that the approach was adopted in the U.S.A. (Crotty, 2003). This critical aspect of hermeneutic phenomenology suggests that as a method of enquiry it can provide a means of exposing our assumptions and prejudices such that they can be examined. Therefore, in choosing a hermeneutically informed phenomenological methodology, I was aiming to draw on my prior engagement

with this context as a student, counsellor, lecturer and supervisor which has left me with a wealth of assumptions about this topic. Because I am immersed in this context my preconceptions form my phenomenology which also offers insight into the possible phenomenology of a counselling tutor. As a researcher I am therefore both unique and a case that is worthy of study in terms of my individuality and in terms of any insights this might offer about being in and of that context.

My hermeneutic position was also informed by my understanding that Husserlian descriptive phenomenology (Welton, 1999) assumes a reality that is 'always already out there' and that the aim of enquiry was to get closer to that reality. The reflexive edge of this approach lies in the concept of parenthesising which can be seen as a way of removing the phenomenon from its context in order that its essence can be known. For example, Gergen (1999) suggests that phenomenological analysis always separates the experience from the relationships that it exists within. However I would argue that they cannot be meaningfully separated in this way. My understanding is that it is not possible to separate a phenomenon from its context (Gendlin, 1981) nor is it possible to fully parenthesise my assumptions and my worldview as these are the very nature of my perception (Heidegger, 1962). My perception of any phenomenon is therefore embedded in its context and as such the phenomenon will lose any meaning if it is removed from that context.

From my position the closest I can get to essence is my subjective interpretive description. In the context of this study my experiences would make it impossible for me to get close to the essence of the participants' perceptions while still retaining the separation that Gergen (1999) suggests is necessary to achieve a critical viewpoint. Rather I am drawn to Freire's concept of conscientisation, of awakening or becoming more conscious (Crotty, 2003) through immersion in the data and the context. In this case the critical aspect is expressed as an attitude towards my own meaning-making and towards those elements of the context which emerge through comparisons across interviews and across cases.

IPA has been criticised for being similar to Grounded Theory (Brocki and Wearden, 2006). However Willig (2008) suggests that a significant difference is that IPA is appropriate for

understanding personal experiences rather than social phenomena. This suits the current study with its focus on students' personal experiences rather than on the social phenomenon of counselling training. My decision to use IPA was in part informed by my experiences of using Grounded Theory for my Master's project. The aim of that study was to develop a theory of a particular social phenomenon: the ways in which adults who stammer had experienced counselling they used to address their stammer. The intention was therefore to reduce a diverse field of individual experiences to a common theory about that phenomenon. However, while it could be argued that the current study also addresses a social phenomenon, the intention was to generate a broad range of rich descriptions of individual perceptions of that phenomenon.

Another criticism of IPA is that there is no replicable method (Giorgi, 2011). However, I found that the structure offered by this methodology provided an invaluable analytic route-map. This gave me a sense of direction when I felt lost in the material and offered me reassurance when I felt overwhelmed with the intricate stories my participants and I had generated. The map gave me confidence to generate my own structure to help navigate my way out of the stuckness that froze me at the start of the project and also gave me the freedom to be creative in my approach to dealing with an apparently endless terrain of participant perceptions. I came to value the combination of structure and freedom which Smith et al. (2009) suggest is a strength of IPA. My answer to Giorgi's criticism has been to provide a detailed description of my interpretation of IPA such that my method might be replicated.

5.4 The development of my research question

This process followed an iterative spiral which began with an initial question that led to a particular methodology. Critical evaluation of that methodology provided insights into my question and into the researcher behind the question. These insights prompted me to develop a new question which led to another methodology and then onto further iterations of the spiral of critical evaluation and development until the process was sufficiently resolved. Key stages in this process are presented below to offer access to the development of the question and methodology. The process began with:

What influence do the power dynamics on Person-Centred counselling training courses have on students' personal development?

At this stage I had just completed my PGCE during which I developed an interest in educational pedagogy and student autonomy. I was closer to my experiences as a student counsellor than I was to my new role as counselling teacher. Learning from my PGCE started a process of trying to work out the relationships that I had previously experienced with my counselling teachers, and examining the ingredients of training in the approach.

Client autonomy is significant in the Person-Centred approach with its focus on the facilitation of the client's tendency to actualise; to develop towards fulfilling their inherent and individual potential (Rogers, 1961). This application of the principle of client autonomy suggests a conceptualisation of counselling as an expression of libertarian liberalism (Crotty, 2003) with its respect for individual rights. However, as has been previously discussed, because counselling (and by association counselling training) is a social and caring activity there is an assumed responsibility to protect clients and others in society from harm (for example BACP, 2016b). This implies egalitarian liberalism (Crotty, 2003) which includes an eye for social justice. One aspect of the difference between these two branches of liberalism is that libertarianism locates power within the individual while egalitarianism shifts the balance towards external power.

Within the context of professional training there may be a series of concentric rings of external power surrounding the student. The immediate external power holders might be represented by the teachers, then by the educational institution because of their responsibility to provide a counselling qualification that meets the needs of society as expressed through further external power holders such as the BACP or other professional bodies.

I began to differentiate between the concepts of client autonomy and student autonomy. The significant difference for me was that student counsellors are training in a professional role that involves a responsibility to clients who are potentially vulnerable. Therefore, the autonomy of student counsellors has to be understood within a framework of professional and social responsibility.

Reflecting on the overlapping ideas of client autonomy, counsellor autonomy and student autonomy sparked an interest in the possible power dynamics in this context. This led to an interest in communication which brought me to the study of relationships through the study of language. Discourse Analysis (DA) potentially offered a way of studying how '...language gets recruited 'on site'...' (Gee, 2005:1) and of how 'language use is always political' (ibid) in the sense that it is used to negotiate over social goods: power, status, value, meaning and worth etc. My research question fitted the aims of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) which is '...concerned with language and its role in the constitution of social and psychological life' (Willig, 2008:125).

The Foucauldian perspective suggests that power is present in an interlocking web that we all inhabit and maintain through the discourse. It has also been suggested that discourse is a means of creating and/or adopting an identity (Gee, 2005). An analysis of discourse could, therefore, allow me to study the ways that training might allow students to gain access to the identity of being-a-counsellor. It could also demonstrate how others give us permission to inhabit that identity by acknowledging and accepting that we are in the discourse (Wenger, 1998).

Power can be held in the dominant discourse; a version of the social reality that is privileged over others and that legitimises the existing social structures in ways that are hard to challenge because they often become unconscious (Willig, 2008). FDA also recognises the ways that discourses are reciprocally entwined with institutional practices (Willig, 2008). FDA provides an opportunity to explore the power relations in these unconscious theories and institutional practices as well as the cultural and social forces that are shaping them.

FDA fitted my philosophical position because it was not concerned with exposing, describing or constructing truths. It offered a means of conducting an exploration that acknowledged the phenomenon and the context as well as the reciprocal relationships between them. As Willig suggests:

[FDA]... asks questions about the relationship between discourse and the way people think or feel... what they may do... and the material conditions within which such experiences may take place (2008:114).

However, this focus highlighted a bias in the study. The issue of power had initially arisen from my experiences as a student counsellor and teacher when, on occasion, I had felt confused by my relationships with my teachers especially as these relationships developed over time: were they authority figures or were they peers? I could not then perceive the possibility that they could be both and that we could exist within a network of power rather than a top-down hierarchy. I explored this informally with peers and my own students and realised that these issues may not be figural for all students. Therefore, I was imposing this perspective on the study. This led to me refocusing my research question.

Counsellor development: what influence might the discourse have on the developing ways-of-being of students?

It is clear from this question that, although I was moving closer to focusing on students' phenomenologies, I was still evolving my fascination with power and was concerned about the ways in which cultural conditions might be concealed if the research focused entirely on participants' perceptions. Student counsellors choose to be on their courses and, therefore, choose to be part of the culture of that particular course, but are they aware of the conditions of that culture and of the ways that those conditions might be enacted? Lyotard (1984) offers a postmodern and critical perspective on society that I felt had potential significance. Through his understanding of 'reciprocity' (1984) Lyotard recognises the dialogical nature of social bonds, acknowledging that while we are within systems that are engaged in internal struggles, we are also active agents agreeing to be a part of those systems and of those struggles. This conceptualisation of reciprocity enables an empowering critical access to our relationships with society.

Structural issues could be significant in an institutional context in which teachers arguably have power invested in them through the position they hold. Students may decide whether or not to agree to the rules or conditions but teachers have the power to pass, fail or even exclude students. Lyotard's (1984) concept of social bonds excludes communication that involves force:

... 'say or do this, or else you'll never speak again' - then we are in the realm of terror and the social bond is destroyed (1984:46)

Terror might be an inappropriate term to apply to counselling training but anxiety and the threat of failure or exclusion is nevertheless potentially present in these situations. The fullest expression of Rogers' (Rogers and Freiberg, 1983) suggestions for Person-Centred education might arguably provide an alternative to this by placing the assessment process fully in the hands of the students but this does not address an institution's professional responsibility to the public (Mearns, 1997). It could be argued, therefore, that the expression of this responsibility means that professional education is inherently oppressive. Alternatively, it could be argued that because institutions have to assume responsibility for the assessment process, the issue of oppression centres on the way that this responsibility is communicated. It needs to be acknowledged that there are at least two sides to this communication: the institution's intention and how it is perceived by the students. My understanding was that a critical exploration of the ways these messages may be communicated could usefully inform our understanding of this process.

Fairclough (in Wodak and Meyer, 2001:2) describes critique as '...essentially making visible the interconnectedness of things'. From this perspective Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) aims to demystify discourses by deciphering ideology. This approach can take the side of those who suffer and analyse the use of language of those in power. This approach, therefore, implies taking a political stance which did not fit with the developing understanding of the multiplicity of possible stances that was emerging from my experiences as a teacher which were giving me an appreciation of the potential power of the student.

My perspective was developing from one in which I wanted to empower oppressed students towards one where the power dynamics seemed more complicated. I realised that I did not want the question or the methodology to impose a political stance on the study. To do so might obscure the range of complex stances that the participants might have experienced. My question became:

How do we manage the unspoken balancing act between power and autonomy in the development of counsellors?

I began to look at power dynamics in counselling and this me led to The Voice Relational Method (Brown and Gilligan, 1993) as a methodology that would allow me to listen to the students' voices and to explore their perceptions of their relationships.

This approach 'tried to explicitly analyse issues of power, and also looked at the relationship between the researcher and the participant' (Proctor, 2001:365). It was originally conceived to meet the aims of feminist research methodology and participatory research and stemmed from an interest in 'hear[ing] about girls' responses to the dominant culture which was out of tune with their voices' (Proctor, 2001:366). Again, this focus on hearing subjugated voices implies that the researcher takes a critical stance about the participants' experiences, whereas my immersion in the subject saw me moving further from wanting to take a critical position. From here I resolved my intention to hear participants' voices without imposing a critical perspective on the material. My question became:

How do students feel their relationships within their courses affect their development as counsellors?

This 'how' question introduced the concept of theory building and to considering Grounded Theory as a research methodology. Grounded Theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) aims to generate new theory that might explain a process or form the basis of further research (McLeod, 2001; Holloway, 2005; Cresswell, 2007). Corbin and Strauss (2008) offer symbolic interactionism and pragmatism as philosophical roots for grounded theory. Pragmatists acknowledge the temporal aspects of knowledge suggesting that knowledge is accumulated. From this stance knowledge is understood as being 'provisional until it is checked out by peers' (Corbin and Strauss, 2008:3). While I agree with the provisional nature of knowledge, I would challenge the notion that knowledge has greater validity once it has been checked out by peers because this does not fit my understanding of the personal significance of our individual meaning making. In the tradition of Popper (in Everitt and Fisher, 1995), I suggest that knowledge is always provisional. Extending their discussion, Corbin and Strauss cite Dewey (2008:4) in

associating the legitimacy of knowledge with concrete experience. This position implies there is concrete experience that we have direct access to in order to test the legitimacy of knowledge. This does not fit with my position that we do not have direct access to reality nor with my sense that we live in a world in which practices continually create and re-create social reality (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) such that our experiences of being in the world are intimately related to context. If all knowledge is subjective and contextual then we cannot have any consensually meaningful direct access to concrete experience. From this perspective what could Grounded Theory be grounded in, apart from the researcher's and participants' relative experience? Corbin and Strauss (2008) acknowledge this point by suggesting that all knowledge is essentially the knower stating where they are at a particular moment in a particular context.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggest that analysis involves interpretation and so the results are not the data but rather they are an interpretative representation of it. This limits any findings by acknowledging that more than one interpretation can be made from the data and this underlines the type of knowledge claims that can be made. In this case the data would seem to represent the concrete experience of which the researcher's findings are creative interpretations. From my perspective this creates an unsatisfactory impasse, leaving the theory grounded in subjectivity while claiming consensual validity. This is developed further by the concept of sensitivity as discussed by Corbin and Strauss (2008) that focuses on the researcher's ability to attune themselves to their experience and to the subject in a way that facilitates self-awareness and therefore a greater possibility of catching more of the complexity of the phenomenon. They suggest that findings could be limited if the researcher is not sensitive to the subject and to their experience. Sensitivity brings the researcher into the research and acknowledges the undesirability of assuming a position of objectivity. But, if it is important to bring the researcher into the study then the research is grounded in a synthesis of the data and the researcher's experience and, therefore, any knowledge that is generated is contextual. In this case the theory is relative to the researcher and to any implicit theories that they bring to the study (Silverman, 2001) rather than purely grounded in the data. Corbin and Strauss suggest that 'context does not determine experience' (2008:88) but I would disagree with this from a phenomenological perspective.

Charmaz (in Bryman, 2008), Clarke (in Cresswell, 2007) and Rennie (in McLeod, 2001) have suggested approaches to Grounded Theory that move beyond this essentially positivistic philosophy. Charmaz and Clarke have separately suggested postmodern and constructivist (Cresswell, 2007) approaches that acknowledge reflexivity and highlight the power dynamic in the research process. Charmaz (in Smith, 2008:86) acknowledges the way the researcher brings their knowledge, disciplinary assumptions and worldview to the study and how these shape what they see, a position that is supported by Pring who suggests that 'values permeate our descriptions of reality' (2000:77). Rennie (McLeod, 2001) has suggested ways to connect the positivist underpinnings of the approach with the relativist nature of the analysis. These developments shift the researcher from a position of being the 'all knowing analyst' to an 'acknowledged participant' (Cresswell, 2007). This provides a closer fit with my position; however notwithstanding these fundamental questions about the relative philosophical positions, for the purpose of my study the important issue is the acknowledgement of the limit of any knowledge claims made as a result of research. Any findings or conclusions will represent one of many possible 'knowledges' that could come from the data.

The outcome of this exploration was my sense that the aims of Grounded Theory did not fit my intention for this study which was to generate rich and diverse descriptions that might provide insights into a potentially broad field of material. From here I evolved another iteration of the question, now expressed as a statement, and selected IPA as my methodology:

Being and doing in Relationship: counselling students' perceptions of their training

This respected my focus on the significance of students' perceptions and their meaning making. It also acknowledged that students are engaged in *being* (Heidegger, 1962) that is taking place within a context which has a specific objective; it is focused on counselling training and may therefore involve aspects of *doing*. As Rowan suggests

...a therapist or counsellor is playing a role which essentially involves and entails being authentic (1998:167)

As the research continued it became clear that there were specific qualities of this context (see Methods) which led to the final version of the question:

5.5 Validity

The criteria used to evaluate qualitative research differ from those used to evaluate quantitative research. For example, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four evaluative criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility looks for ways in which the study makes sense rather than possesses internal validity.

Transferability speaks of the ways in which any knowledge generated by the study might be applicable to other contexts rather than possess external validity and generalisability.

A project's dependability and confirmability relies on the researcher's transparency and reflexivity to provide an audit trail about the research process; this replaces the quantitative criteria of reliability and objectivity (Finlay, 2011). Likewise Guba and Lincoln suggest criteria based on authenticity such as: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity (1989:245-251).

Ultimately credibility rather than validity is the criterion by which IPA researchers suggest research should be evaluated (Osborn and Smith, 1998).

Researcher subjectivity can be seen as problematic because qualitative themes are selected by a lone researcher and therefore individual biases will be reflected in the analysis (see for example, Golsworthy and Coyle, 2001). The use of an audit trail to make the analytic process transparent might address this criticism however it is still probable that different individuals might generate different themes from the same data in which case the credibility of the analysis could be questioned. This criticism is acknowledged in the current study through the adoption of ongoing process of triangulation to assess the developing analysis (see Methods).

5.6 Ethics

This project was given ethical approval by the University of East Anglia School of Education & Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee following the submission of an

Application for Ethical Approval of a Research Project in August 2010. This application was based on a research proposal that was prepared in close consultation with my research supervisors.

The principal ethical issues that arose concerned the potential impact of the research on the participants. Counselling courses are usually closed environments such that they provide a bounded and confidential space in which students may explore their personal processes. Participation in a research project which invites students to reflect on their ongoing experiences with an external researcher would create a break in that closed environment which may have an impact on students' learning and personal development. There was also the potential that however I attempted to position myself, I could be perceived to be assessing students and/or courses. There was also the possibility that students might expect some return for their involvement in the study such as better marks or special treatment from the tutors.

The first of these issues (the break in the closed environment) could not be prevented. Therefore, the intention was to be transparent about this from the outset and to ensure that confidentiality was maintained around each individual participant's material. It was also important to ensure that participation in the project would be available to all students within a cohort and that the research process could complement the participants' ongoing personal development. The second and third issues (participants' perceptions of my role and influence on the course) would be addressed by carefully, consistently and transparently positioning myself in all publicity about the project (see appendices 1 to 4).

Engaging students in a reflective research project about their training could challenge the power dynamics on the course because as Lyotard (1984:8) suggests knowledge and power are two sides of the same question. This led to ethical concerns because participants would have invested in their training (financially, practically and/or emotionally) and inviting them into this reflective process could potentially have a negative impact on their return on this investment by opening up concerns about the course or about their engagement with it. This needed to be held in awareness throughout the study in order to protect the participants from potential harm while also

aiming to facilitate the fullest account of their perceptions. In practice this was achieved through open dialogue with the participants such that any issues could be processed within the interviews. This became a valuable part of the interview process.

There was the potential that participation could raise complaints in the participants about the course or the teachers and it was important to have in place a process for handling such complaints. The proposal was to hold complaints empathically during the interview process and then refer participants to appropriate support services or complaint procedures if appropriate. In practice, while the majority of the participants expressed powerful feelings about their relationships, none of these were expressed as complaints that required attention. My intention throughout the interviews was to facilitate participants' exploration of their perceptions and I was continually monitoring and reflecting on my own position in relation to the unfolding stories. This included being watchful for any inclination to direct the interviews towards positive or negative comments about the teachers and peers. I was also mindful of any inclination to protect the images of counselling and counselling training.

I also needed to be aware of my responsibility as a professional counsellor because I may have heard stories that raised ethical concerns about practice, either in the teachers or the students. The process to manage this was similar to the way that I would approach such issues in my counselling practice which would be to discuss the issues with my counselling supervisor. However, in this context I would also involve my research supervisor. Again no such situations arose, but if they had, any resulting action would have been based on the then current version of the BACP Ethical Framework for Good Practice (BACP, 2007).

Protecting the anonymity of participants was important for this study because of the potential depth of disclosure. This was especially relevant because these disclosures may concern peers or teachers and as such there was the potential for disclosures to harm participants, others, relationships and/or professional standings. Therefore, participants have been given pseudonyms, peers have not been named and teachers have been anonymised consistently (e.g. Tutor 1) throughout this thesis. The issue of anonymity was complicated by the relatively small world of Person-Centred counselling training and by

the limited number of such courses currently on offer in the UK. For this reason, the course has been anonymised and its identity has been obscured, it has been identified throughout as a qualifying course rather than by its academic level and all geographical references have been omitted.

Chapter 6: Methods

6.1 Working with individuals or with groups?

I explored two data collection strategies for this study: working with groups and/or with individuals. Working with groups offered coherence between the research process and the phenomena under study. Working with individuals offered the opportunity to explore the ways that individuals made sense of the phenomena.

I explored the possibility of using focus groups. Participants could be invited to join a series of group meetings whose aim would be to address the research question. It has been suggested that exploratory focus groups only provide 'everyday' knowledge that lacks 'scientific' validity (Fern, 2001:7), however, this privileges 'scientific' knowledge and, from the perspective of this study, everyday knowledge of students' perceptions was what I wanted to explore. It has also been suggested that focus groups generate material that is context specific (referring to the particular focus group as the context) and which therefore may not be generalisable beyond the immediate group. However, McQuarrie and McIntyre (1988) argue that sets of responses such as beliefs, attitudes and opinions may exhibit generalisable ideas providing adequate attention is paid to the recruitment strategy, to sampling and to the type of data that is generalised.

Focus groups are a method of focusing on context and discourse rather than on individual subjects (Willig, 2008). They typically involve five ingredients '(1) people who (2) possess certain characteristics and (3) provide qualitative data (4) in a focused discussion (5) to help understand the topic of interest' (Krueger, 1988:10). The design would need to acknowledge that any findings would represent the perceptions of a self-selected group of students who had an interest in the study and may potentially have an agenda. However, this would be true of any naturalistic study with voluntary participation. Therefore, it would be important to acknowledge the issue of representation in the recruitment strategy and to invite voices that may be silenced or that might otherwise feel excluded. My concerns were that students who had negative perceptions of their course and those who struggled with group processes may not come forward.

It has been suggested that, in order to facilitate the sharing of diverse information, it is desirable to have diverse groups (Fern, 2001). Fern suggests that a more homogeneous group (for example in terms of gender) may limit the exploration to shared experiences. However, while I would need to be mindful of this in the recruitment of participants I would not want to be blind to the diverse nature of human experience within apparently homogeneous groups. Exploring this issue raised my awareness of my own experiences as a counselling student of being one of the few males on a predominantly female course and the impact that my perception of the dynamics around this gender balance had on my ability to be open within the group. This raised my sensitivity to the potential consequences of my own 'fit' to any participants in terms of my gender, my age, my ethnicity and my roles as researcher, counsellor and teacher and to the potential impact this may have on the participants.

This developing understanding of the complexity of group experiences highlighted a significant issue for the use of groups in this study; I would be creating a new context that might complicate the material rather than complement the original phenomena. This could detract from my focus on the perceptions of the individuals who make up groups. It also connected with my sense that students come to courses as individuals and leave in a similar way. Whatever the group experience is, from an existential perspective we all are left to make sense of our experiences in our own unique ways. This came closer to the sense of individual subjective meaning-making that I was seeking in this study and prompted my decision to work with individual participants in a series of one-to-one semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1996).

6.2 Sampling and access

This project focuses on working at depth with a small sample of participants (Krueger, 1988:10) and the strategy was to employ purposive sampling to select 'certain units or cases "based on a specific purpose rather than randomly"' (Teddlie and Taskakori, 2009:174). I chose to sample the actors (ibid:182) occupying one role in a complex and dynamic production rather than the settings or events because my question addressed the perceptions of those particular actors. This involved two levels of sampling; initially

the strategy comprised typical case sampling and because the recruitment process generated a larger than expected number of participants, this was followed by extreme case sampling from within the larger sample to select the three cases presented in this thesis.

I was aware that the route to recruiting the participants might influence the findings. For example, if I approached them through their teachers I may appear to be coming from the perspective of a teacher. Therefore, I explored the possibility of approaching students directly because this might have presented me as an outsider. One such route would have been to advertise in the BACP magazine but I dismissed this because in my experience the majority of students do not become members (and therefore receive copies of the magazine) until later in their courses. This would result in missing their early experiences of training. I considered advertising in local papers or through local counselling organisations but experiences from my MA had taught me that the return rates of that style of recruitment could be low. Finally, I decided that the most economical approach (in terms of my time and resources) would be through staff teams although this would mean acknowledging and working with the potential influence this may have on the project. Therefore, staff teams would become significant gatekeepers for this study.

Because this project asked students to discuss their relationships during training I was aware of the potentially challenging nature of the project to those teachers who would be my gatekeepers. This was a complicated issue because I needed those relationships to facilitate the research process and I was aware of the potential for the teachers to feel vulnerable, exposed and/or defensive. I was also aware that my initial contact with the teachers could create an atmosphere in which the students might perceive me as being part of the staff team. My intention was that my focus would be on the students' perceptions and therefore my position would be as a transparent inside/outsider who would maintain their confidentiality, would not be reporting back to the staff during or after the research and who would work reflexively throughout the research process to bracket his perceptions of the teachers. My aim was to be transparent about this in recruitment presentations, in discussions with potential participants and during the interview processes. However, concerns about these issues may still have had an impact on the openness of my participants.

I began by identifying potential courses through an internet search for 'counselling courses' and 'counselling training' using the BACP and UKCP websites and Google. For ethical reasons I excluded the course on which I was then teaching. Two colleges responded favourably to my emails (Appendix 1) and I arranged meetings with their course leaders to discuss the project and with the intention of arranging to meet their students. These staff team meetings were a significant step for the project and one which I perceived as an early expression of confidence and interest in the study. Each of the course leaders was enthusiastic about my research and we arranged meetings between myself and their students. These meetings were arranged to coincide with the students' days at college without interrupting their studies.

The student meetings were promoted by advertisements (Appendix 2) which outlined the study and invited students to attend. In the meetings I introduced my work through informal presentations with open question and answer sessions. A large proportion of each cohort attended the meetings (approximately 70% of each cohort). This level of attendance may have been influenced by the students' interest in the study and/or by any ideas they may have had that attendance might reflect well on them. Likewise, the teachers' enthusiasm about the project will undoubtedly have influenced this high level of attendance. My perception was that both groups were generally enthusiastic about the project and this inspired me further because the study now had the approval of counselling teachers and students. I felt that this confirmed my sense that the study had relevance.

The presentations were held without the teachers present because it was significant that the students saw the research process as being distinct from their courses. I discussed the research proposal with the groups and invited interested individuals to contact me either immediately after the presentation or by phone or email. I provided information sheets, consent forms and draft interview schedules (Appendices 3, 4 & 10). My intention was that interested students would be given details of the research and an opportunity to discuss these with me in order that they could give informed consent. It was important, both ethically and ideologically, that participants were allowed to volunteer rather than being coerced into this project.

This recruitment process was stressful because the project rested on having sufficient participants to complete the study. The recruitment also had to be completed at a specific period within the academic year to ensure that I met the design requirement to begin interviewing students at the beginning of their training. If insufficient students volunteered at that point I would need to re-recruit at the start of the following academic year which would have extended the work by at least another 12 months. In my lowest moments I imagined the recruitment and data collection process extending for years as I struggled to get the necessary numbers. This was also influenced by my experiences of counselling courses which suggested that the attrition rate of students could be high and I was therefore anxious to initially recruit sufficient participants to allow for losses over the two years of data collection.

I was relieved and excited to leave the first meeting having recruited sufficient participants to complete the study. I considered cancelling the second meeting but decided that I needed to carry on because I wanted to respect the Psychodynamic course team that had generously offered me access to their students. The course would also offer me access to an additional theoretical approach which might broaden the material. I was aware that while this might result in a large amount of material to deal with, it would also give me a broad sample from which to draw and would cover any attrition. I had no idea of the volume of work I would be generating for myself.

I left the meetings with two lists of contact details from interested students. I contacted each by email with a follow up phone call if I received no reply to the initial email. This became a standard approach to all subsequent interviews which I discussed, agreed and formalised with all of the participants. Prior to the interviews I would send out an email to each of the participants (Appendices 7, 8 & 9) and, if I had no reply within a week, I would follow up with a phone call or text message (as previously agreed with each participant). If there was no reply, I would assume they had decided not to continue in which case I would send an email thanking them for their time and confirming that I would not use their data.

Twenty-six students agreed to take part in the study although only twenty Stage 1 interviews were completed. The others did not take place because of complications

arranging mutually convenient times or locations for interviews or because the participants had changed their minds about taking part. One year later seventeen Stage 2 interviews were completed. Of the three participants that withdrew two had left their courses and another decided the research was too great a commitment. All three declined any further participation. A year later, sixteen students completed the Stage 3 interviews. One student had withdrawn from training and declined any further participation. Of the sixteen participants who completed all three stages one had also withdrawn from their course after the end of their first year, however, they felt that the research process was beneficial and chose to complete their final interview.

6.3 The interviews

Because of the number of participants and the three-stage interview structure a database was designed to monitor the process. This allowed me to track all contact with each participant throughout the study. The majority of interviews took place in the participants' homes and, because the participants were mature students who were developing an understanding of the significance of the environment to confidential relationships, the process of arranging an uninterrupted confidential space in which to hold the interviews was relatively straightforward. The participants were all committed to the study and this made the data collection easy because they were, without exception, flexible, accommodating and generous with their time and with their stories.

Before conducting the interviews, I carried out a pilot interview with a colleague who was a recently qualified counsellor. This interview gave me an opportunity to run through the interview schedule and to develop the questions; it also helped to further draw out any biases that I was bringing to the study. The most significant bias that emerged was my assumption that students would place significance on their relationships with their tutors. The piloting process also provided an opportunity to check the recording equipment.

To facilitate the reflective process, prior to each interview I invited the participants to review the journals that they were keeping as a requirement of their courses. The design also incorporated the use of personality inventories (the Strathclyde Inventory, SI) which were sent to each participant just before their interviews. The SI (Appendix 6) was

employed because my interpretative framework was influenced by the Person-Centred approach and the SI is based on Rogers' theory of therapeutic change (1959). The instrument consists of 31 items developed according to Rogers' description of the fully functioning person. Each item is a reflective statement on the participant's subjective experience over the month prior to completing the inventory.

Figure 1 SI Extract

	Never	Only Occasion- ally	Some- times	Often	All or Most of the time
1. I have been able to be spontaneous	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
2. I have condemned myself for my attitudes or behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
3. I have tried to be what others think I should be	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
4. I have trusted my own reactions to situations	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

The items are each rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 'never' to 'all or most of the time'. Scores for each item are collated and a Total Score of 0 suggests that the participant has never had the experience of 'being fully functioning' during the last month. A score of 4 suggests they had the experience of being fully functioning all or most of the time during that period. An increase in their Total Score over time could therefore be seen as a change towards being more 'fully functioning' between the points in time that they were measured. The SI offered a subjective framework to encourage the participants to reflect on their perceptions in the immediate period preceding the interviews.

The discriminant validity of the SI has been questioned (Friere, 2006) because its results have high correlation with other inventories such as the CORE-OM. This implies that the SI measures the same factors as the CORE-OM and is therefore measuring psychological well-being rather than level of functioning from a Rogerian perspective. However, it could be argued that this correlation supports Rogers's original conceptualisation of psychological distress (Rogers, 1959). For the purposes of the current study the instrument was chosen as a reflective tool to prepare the participants for the interviews because it uses Person-Centred concepts and is therefore consistent with my interpretative framework. I also felt that it had validity for a study into the experiences of

counsellors in training because, unlike other measures, it does not use language that may be more appropriate to clinical settings.

Stage 1 Interviews

The interviews began with a discussion of the project to ensure the participant was aware of the process and its possible implications. I also ensured they knew they could withdraw at any time. In all cases the participants were keen to proceed and completed the consent form. I then collected personal details from each participant (Appendix 5) including their gender, age, course approach, previous experiences of professional training, motivation for training and any other comments. This material was to provide contextual material to enrich the data. I asked each participant if anything had arisen from the SI and in some cases this began our conversation while in others this revealed that the participants had not completed the questionnaire in which case I gave time to complete it during the interview. The interview then followed the finalised schedule. My intention was to allow the participant time to talk themselves out on each question and consequently the interviews lasted from between forty minutes to over two hours. The interviews ended with space for the participants to reflect on the process. After the interviews I would journal my immediate reflections on the interview.

Stage 2 & 3 Interviews

These began with space for the participants to reflect on the SI forms from previous interviews. Each interview then followed the finalised schedule for Stage 1.

After each interview

Interviews were transcribed and transcripts were returned to the participants for comment. None of the participants suggested any amendments to the transcripts but many offered appreciative comments about the work involved in preparing them. However, one participant left the study after reading their first interview transcript because they felt that the project was too great a commitment alongside the requirements of their course.

Reflecting on the interview process

Arranging the interviews was a stressful process which I had not allowed time for within the design because I had not expected to recruit so many participants. Pressure to get the interviews completed within the time periods created by my design generated a production line which undoubtedly limited my immediate reflexivity. However, the intensity of this phase meant that I quickly developed familiarity with the interview schedule. This allowed me to relax within the interviews and therefore to be more fully present with the participants in those momentary encounters. I found that I could fall back on my counselling skills while also holding awareness of my role as a phenomenological researcher. Working with each participant in this way also supported my intention to parenthesise material from other participants. However I had not anticipated that participants would share their experiences of the interviews with their peers. This had a positive effect because they all found the interviews to be helpful and sharing seemed to encourage greater openness. I acknowledge that this might also have normalised some of the material within each course.

My technique for transcribing the interviews developed as I became more familiar with the process. I initially devised a simple format to catch some of the character of an interview using standardised symbols. For example, from Victoria's first interview:

V um...but apart from that not particularly close to anyone on the
 course[
I]OK[
V]um...I don't really talk much

This illustrates Victoria pausing briefly after her first and second 'um' (the number of dots illustrates the length of a pause). The use of squared brackets illustrates where I spoke over her with 'OK' while she said 'course um'.

I soon realised that transcribing was more of a creative process that I had anticipated and that I needed to consider how much I might be tidying up or embellishing the original conversation. For example, I had to make decisions about who owned holding a pause, where an overlap was, and how to express non-verbal expressions of affect. To address this, I needed to acknowledge that transcribing is an interpretive process and one which I

therefore would need to keep returning to throughout the analysis. For example, whenever a theme seemed unclear I would go back to the recording and then work with the transcript, the notes and the theme to ensure that they closely suited my developing connection with the material.

My decision to send each transcript to the participants expressed my desire to share our co-created material and to support their reflexivity. However on reflection I am unsure about the value of doing this because in some cases, rather than leading to deeper self-awareness this process led to the participants becoming more self-conscious which may have influenced their openness in later interviews.

After all the interviews

The material from each participant's interviews was compiled into descriptive case studies (Appendix 12) which re-presented the narratives with no intentional interpretation from the researcher beyond any joint interpretations that were arrived at during the interview. These were returned to the participants for approval. All case studies were accepted by the participants who typically commented that the material was accurate and offered useful opportunities to reflect on their process. One participant decided to withdraw from the study at this point because they felt the material was too revealing and that they could easily be recognised.

6.4 Preparing for the analysis

Completing all the transcripts took a year after the final interview. By that time I had been involved with data collection for three years and with the project for four. Looking forward to what was still to be done left me feeling overwhelmed and exhausted.

It was clear that it would not be possible to present all the participants' material in any depth and that I should instead select a smaller sub-sample to work with. Within IPA it is generally suggested that a small sample size (Smith, 2008:56) is employed in order to provide a balance of breadth and depth within the analysis. Additionally, and with the same justification, Flowers (2008) suggests that when working with multiple interviews with individual participants the focus should be on the number of interviews rather than

the number of participants. Therefore, I decided to focus on nine interviews (three participants) because this would enable the study to go deeply into those individuals' perceptions while also presenting some breadth from the overall sample.

I therefore needed to work through the material to pick three participants who represented aspects of this project which were significant to me as a researcher. This process was hard because I believed all of my participants had unique stories that should be heard. The selection of cases would mean leaving a large number of these stories unspoken. The selection process started with a review of the interview transcripts, my research journal and the case summaries and included discussions with my research supervisor. During this review further notes were journaled to help with the selection process. The final selection is discussed in 'The Analysis'.

6.5 Triangulation

The first element of triangulation employed 'member validation'; checking-out my developing description against the participant's 'own understanding' (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2014:290). Member validation can add a useful layer of intersubjective reflexivity and reassurance into the process. This was philosophically balanced by employing Barthes concept of the 'death of the author' (Culler, 2002) from which perspective it could be argued that the researcher's interpretation is as valid as the participant's. From this position the researcher's interpretative process is respected, acknowledged and explored reflexively. In practice I was aware of holding my understanding tentatively until the participants had replied to the member validation process. The results of this helped me to develop confidence in the credibility of my initial descriptions.

The member validation process involved sending participants the initial descriptive case study with an invitation for them to evaluate the material. Each descriptive case study was my re-telling of the material from the interviews in which I strove to hold back any interpretations. They were presented in terms of 'P (participant) said....' Or 'P spoke about...' In practice the participants typically took the descriptive case studies to be expressions of truth and therefore their replies were reflections on their responses to this 'truth' rather than on the validity of the descriptions. This illustrates a potential weakness

in this process due to the power of the researcher; were the participants likely to question my descriptions? This suggests that this level of triangulation may have had little impact on the validity of the analysis although alternately the lack of feedback may be interpreted as tacit approval of the accuracy of the descriptions. I took the participants' generally positive responses as reassurance which gave me permission to continue with the analysis. The process also raised my awareness of the power dynamics that may be at play in the development of material within this type of methodology.

For the second element of triangulation I sent sample transcripts with their associated descriptive case studies to my supervisor and we later discussed the material and our responses to it. This allowed us to tease out some of the assumptions and biases I held about the material and to begin to explore some of the broad themes which we were each generating from the material.

When the three participants had been chosen for the thesis I began working through their material. My supervisor was given transcripts from all of the interviews for each of the selected participants and began to independently generate her own themes. When I felt I had exhausted my analysis of each participant's material we discussed our results. At times this process offered me reassurance because we had arrived at common themes; if a respected senior academic had independently arrived at a similar theme then I could not be making it up. At other times this process revealed that we had generated different themes. This could be challenging because I sometimes felt that I had missed something important and/or obvious, alternatively I was sometimes proud to discover that I alone had discovered something valuable. The intention behind this process was that I should retain ownership of the analysis and that my supervisor was there as a critical ally. Therefore, we would discuss any discrepancies and find a way forward which we felt respected our shared sense of that participant's story. The challenge for me here was to not confer greater validity on my supervisor's themes because of her status and similarly to not invalidate my own themes, nor did I want to hang onto a particular theme if our discussions altered it. I was developing a delicate balance between confidence in my analysis and openness to critical argument. Throughout, the intention was to get closer to and respect my subjectivity and to allow this to be challenged and expanded when that felt like a move towards deeper engagement with the stories.

Chapter 7: The process of analysis

7.1 Selection of cases for analysis

A split within the sample

Through my first level of engagement with the data it became clear that I was hearing significant differences in the participants' stories about the Psychodynamic and Person-Centred courses. These differences occurred across the following domains:

Therapeutic approach

Participants reported that the Psychodynamic course focused on the development of a therapeutic stance of 'wondering' about their clients from within the approach's theoretical framework. However the Person-Centred participants were focused on the development of the students' ability to offer therapeutic conditions and especially congruence which was expressed and assessed in the relationships between peers and between teachers and students.

Relational

The Psychodynamic participants seemed to perceive a collegiate and comfortably pedagogic learning environment whereas my sense was that the Person-Centred students perceived a relatively more didactic and hierarchical environment.

Learning outcomes

The Psychodynamic students focused on developing their abilities to think and feel with their clients from the perspective of therapeutic wondering whereas the Person-Centred students focused on being more 'Person-Centred'.

Researcher bias

My involvement with the Person-Centred approach was giving me an insider perspective on that course. This was not necessarily better or worse than my outsider relationship with the Psychodynamic approach but it undoubtedly introduced a bias which could further complicate the analysis.

Difficult choices

These differences reflected fundamental distinctions between the two therapeutic approaches and highlighted significant differences in the participants' perceptions of their training. This suggested that there were two distinct phenomena within the overall sample. Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) suggest that samples for IPA studies should be relatively homogeneous and this level of analysis had revealed a division into two homogeneous sub-samples. Comparisons across the overall sample may therefore have limited validity because there would be more than one variable separating the participants: their individual experiences and the different approaches. It was decided that the study would focus on participants from one course which could provide an opportunity to explore some of the diverse ways in which individuals might experience a common phenomenon.

This left me with the choice of which course and which participants to choose. Any choice would mean excluding participants who I had worked closely with for three years each of whose stories were rich and full of meaning. I wanted to honour all of their stories but I knew that any attempt to do so would significantly reduce the depth of the analysis.

I therefore decided to focus on the Person-Centred students which reduced the number of potential participants to eight. This focus could offer me the opportunity to go deeper into this material. Additionally, I felt that working with that approach would have the most benefit to my work as a lecturer on a Humanistic course.

Choosing individual participants

The next level of selection was based on individual participants' material. Initially participants were selected on the basis of my perception that they had reflected in depth on material that related to the research question. It was interesting to notice that although the participants were all asked the same questions they would often use the interviews for their own purposes. For example, one participant used the interviews for personal therapy around issues with their partner despite my attempts to focus on the research question. While such participants were of interest their material did not address the research question in sufficient depth for this project.

Three participants were eventually selected because their stories addressed the research question and because they represented notable cases from within the Person-Centred sub-sample. Person-Centred students often spoke about their perceptions of the group and the chosen participants expressed issues which seemed to represent core as well as outlying themes about this topic. One was of painful exclusion from the group, one spoke from the perspective of being within the centre of the group and the other questioned the existence of groups. I acknowledge that while I chose to focus on three participants from one sub-sample my exposure to all of the participants will have influenced my interpretations. I have addressed this by acknowledging the additional breadth of material within the discussion.

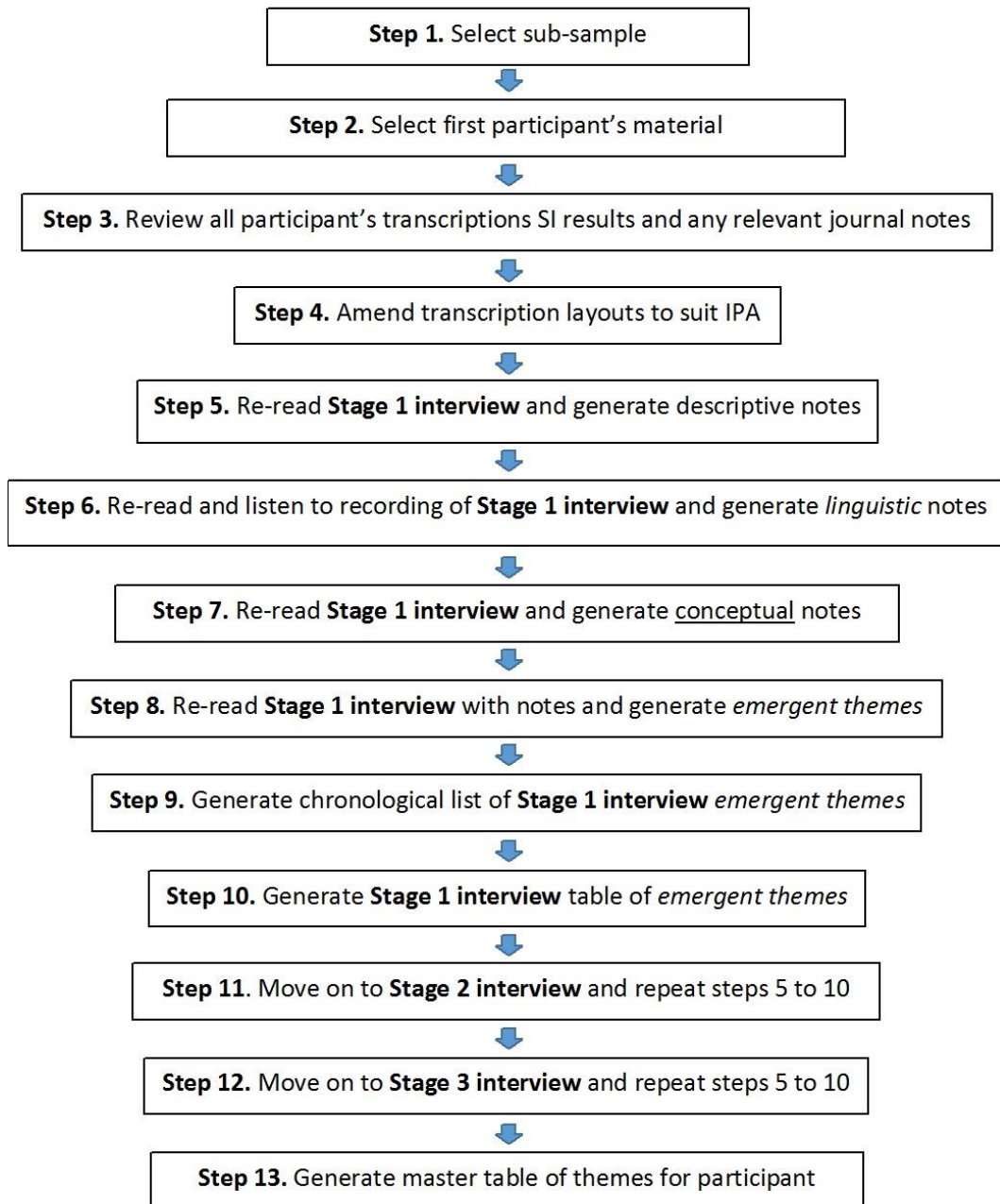
Focusing on the sense of self

It was clear that the three participants had experienced a wide range of relationships during their training. These included those with the group, with individual peers, themselves, themselves-as-a-counsellor, teachers, personal counsellors, supervisors, placements, clients, their families and friends, education, the various contexts on the course, the Person-Centred approach, time, being and learning. This generated a large volume of data that felt unworkable within this thesis so I made the decision to limit the scope of analysis to core themes that reflected the participants' sense-of-self-in-relationship during their training. This was a hard decision as it excluded a lot of fascinating material but the heart of this study was always about the impact the participants felt their relationships had on their sense of themselves so it was important to refine the focus in this way to allow space to explore this.

7.2 Analysing the stages

The analysis began by exploring each participant's material in relation to the individual interview stages as illustrated below:

Figure 2: Generating Tables of Emergent Themes for each participant



Each individual interview was analysed using stages suggested by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009):

1. Individual interview transcripts were reviewed to allow re-connection with the material (Step 3).
2. The original interview transcript layout was amended to that suggested by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) (Step 4, Appendix 11)

3. Preliminary notes were generated for each interview under descriptive, *linguistic* and conceptual categories (Steps 5 to 7). Descriptive comments were generated from re-reading the transcript, *linguistic* comments were produced by further re-reading while listening to the interview recording, conceptual comments were generated from a further re-reading of the transcript including the descriptive and *linguistic* comments.
4. The transcript, including the preliminary notes, was re-read to generate emergent themes (Step 8).
5. This process generated a chronological list of emergent themes for each interview (Step 9) which was reviewed to identify connections between themes. From this a table of emergent themes was generated for each interview (Step 10) with direct quotations from the original transcripts to illustrate the themes. The process involved refining the emergent themes to match my perception of the original transcript as closely as possible.
6. The same process was then completed for that participant's subsequent interviews (Steps 11 & 12).
7. When all three tables of emergent themes were completed the tables were reviewed and compared in order to produce a master table of themes for that participant (Step 13).

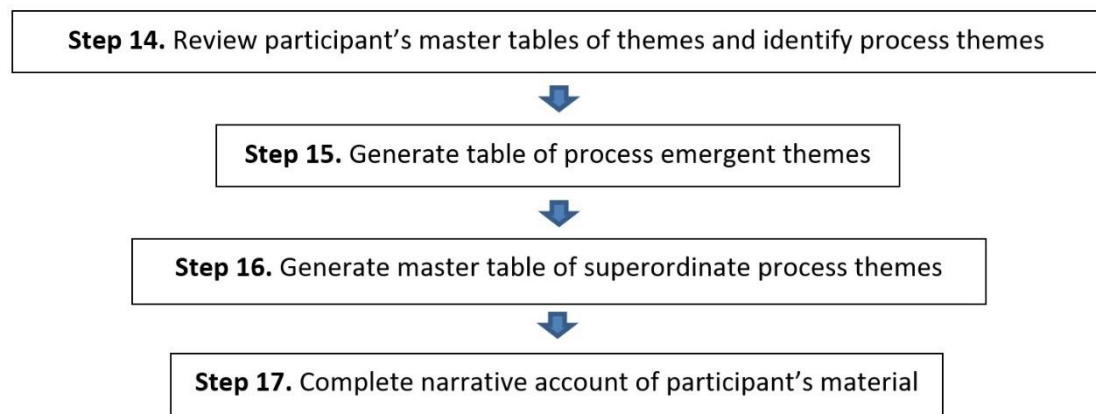
The participant's master table of themes was then analysed to produce a set of superordinate themes. These reflected a broader level of abstraction of the participant's material which also held the key aspects of the research question and created a bridge between the question and the participant's perceptions.

The participant's material was written up as a chronological account starting with the Stage 1 interview. This was another iterative process which involved writing and returning to the data (recordings, completed transcriptions, journal) in order to refine the double hermeneutic.

7.3 Analysing each participant's process

Once the participants' individual interviews were analysed I then moved on to analysing their process.

Figure 3: Generating Tables of Process Emergent Themes for each participant



The process emergent themes were a group of themes for each participant which reflected their change over time; themes that evolved, disappeared and/or appeared/re-appeared during the interview stages. These were checked and reviewed to ensure that the story they told fitted closely with my perception of the participant's process. Once the process emergent themes had been decided upon, they were used to generate superordinate process themes. These nested layers of themes were then used as the heart of a narrative account of the participant's process which concluded with a reflection on their SI results. This generated an extensive multi-dimensional set of material for each participant which I found overwhelming. In order to move on with the process, I decided to interrogate each participant's material with a single question; which story do I want to tell? This led me to reflect deeply on the impact that each participant had on me and to identify the one story that had personal significance among the many that could have been told.

The result of Steps 3 to 17 was a narrative presentation of my perception of the participant's story. This opened with contextual details taken during the Stage 1 interview and then explored each interview in turn before discussing the participant's process and

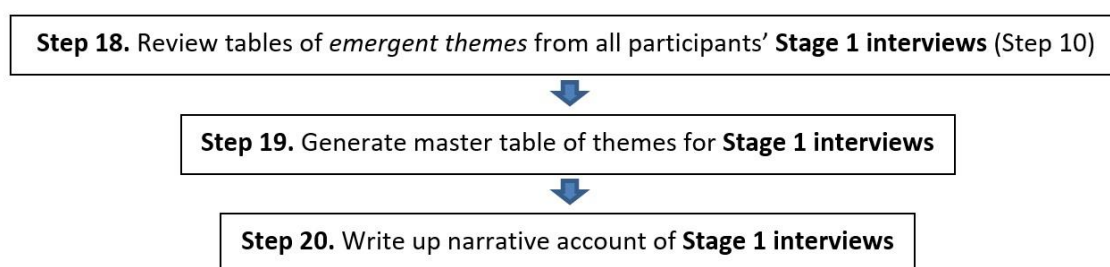
SI results. Once completed the draft narrative account for this participant was submitted to my supervisor as an element of the triangulation process. This generated a series of discussions which led to further revisions of the narrative as themes were developed.

When the first participant's material had reached a state of relative stability I moved on and completed the process from Step 3 onwards with the other participants.

7.4 Comparing across the stages

When all three participants' material had been developed to this stage the tables were revisited to generate comparative material across the participants at each of the 3 interview stages.

Figure 4: Generating material for comparison: across the interview stages



Once this was completed for the first interviews I repeated steps 18 to 20 for the Stage 2 and 3 interviews. This created three comparative accounts which explored similarities and differences across the participants' perceptions of each stage of the training.

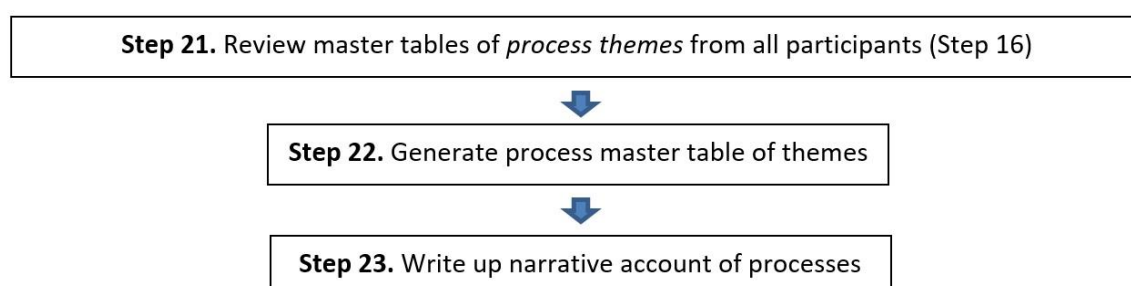
'Victoria' was chosen for the first analysis on the grounds that she was the last participant whose case study I had prepared and her material was therefore more present. This may have biased my engagement with the material especially as many of Victoria's emerging themes resonated with my own experiences in education. While my supervisor was going over Victoria's material I reflected on the process of analysis before moving on to the next participant. This process led to increased clarity around the distinctions between the descriptive, linguistic and conceptual domains of the exploratory notes which in turn developed my understanding of the development of emergent themes. This included a greater focus on theoretical conceptualisations of the participants' experience as the

themes emerged. I also identified a need to bring into the analysis my own influence and reaction to the interviews as they unfolded. Refining the analytic process continued throughout my engagement with the material and was supported by journaling to ensure the evolving process was recorded and could be repeated consistently. Once all the material had been analysed I reflected again on the process, reviewed my analytic notes and went back through all of the material systematically starting with Victoria to ensure that all of the analysis followed the same process.

7.5 Comparing across the processes

The final stage in the analysis was to compare across the processes of the three chosen participants.

Figure 5: Generating material for comparison: across the processes



The master tables of process themes were reviewed (Step 21) and a Process Master of Table of Themes was generated. This was then used to create a comparison across the participants' processes.

7.6 Reviewing and editing the analysis

All the accounts were then assembled into one document which was read in its entirety to ensure that a coherent narrative had been produced which reflected my perceptions of the participants' stories.

7.7 Generating the meta-themes

The analysis began with an open question and with the intention of creating interpretative phenomenological accounts of the participants' perceptions. The open question at the heart of the project generated a broad data set which presented its own challenges which involved layers of engagement to arrive at a manageable data set for analysis. Thus, the analytic process began with a broad and abstract question then reduced the material to those aspects of the participants' stories which addressed that question. From this detailed level I then I worked back outwards to identify meta-themes which could be meaningfully discussed within the context of the existing literature.

Chapter 8: The stories

8.1 Contextual background

The course

The three participants came from the same cohort of a qualifying course in Person-Centred Counselling which was a well-established part-time course run over two academic years, and had a good local reputation for offering Person-Centred training. It is likely that some or all of these factors would have influenced the participants' choices to undertake the course. They may have chosen the modality, the reputation, the location and/or the timing of the training. The college also ran Counselling Skills courses which were well respected in the area and which fed this course.

The process group

From the material it was evident that the process group was a significant element of the training. The entire cohort met for this session which was a facilitated but unstructured group session. Although this was never discussed explicitly, it seemed the group was facilitated by the two most prominent tutors (Lead Tutor & Tutor 1). During the first year the tutors introduced an encounter group as a development of the process group. Some of the students spoke of this as being a result of the tutors' dissatisfaction with the way the process group was working. The implication was that the process group had not been sufficiently congruent, which the course defined as being challenging and/or confrontational.

The tutors

In the interviews most participants referred to the tutors by their names. To maintain anonymity, the material was collated across the interviews and the tutors have been presented as 'Lead Tutor', 'Tutor 1' etc. These pseudonyms are used consistently across the material and therefore represent the same tutors rather than any individual participant's perception of a lead tutor etc. This convention was employed to highlight any potential similarities and/or difference in participants' perceptions of individual tutors.

8.2 Victoria's story

Some background

Victoria had completed an Integrative Counselling Introduction Course at a different college as well as a range of training linked to her work. Victoria enrolled on this course to train as a counsellor and because she wanted to become more confident (V1:P51-52). Victoria chose this course because of its Person-Centred approach and because her knowledge of the approach suggested that it reflected the way she naturally worked with clients. While Victoria initially felt a connection with the approach her relationship with it had been affected by the attitude of her previous tutors; she felt that '....they didn't really like it to be honest' (V1:P298).

Shyness was a dominant theme in Victoria's story which impacted profoundly on her perceptions of her relationships. Emergent themes within Victoria's interviews were reduced to four superordinate themes which describe Victoria's *relationship with self, self in relationship with others, making sense of experience, and relationship with the approach*. The relationships between these levels of themes are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Victoria's Themes

<i>Themes from Victoria's interviews</i>		
Superordinate themes	Emergent themes	Interview
Relationship with self	Being different	1
	Being judged	1, 2, 3
	Powerlessness and the curse of hope	2
	Empowerment	3
Self in relationship with others	Talking in the group	1, 2, 3
	This confrontation thing	1, 2
	The Big Group	2
	Bonding with individuals	1, 2
	Bonding with the group	3
Making sense of experience	Congruence	1, 3
	Developing conceptualisation of silence	1, 3
Relationship with the approach	Being Person-Centred	1, 3

Victoria's Stage 1 Interview

Our first interview took place three months into the course in a teaching room. Victoria was ashamed and resigned about being anxious and struggled to understand why she was afflicted with this:

...and I don't even know why...there should be a reason why I should be nervous but that's just me (V1:P226)

Victoria was waiting anxiously to start her day at college and was in tears as she thought about what was to come. Victoria also laughed frequently and my sense was that it was hard for her to stay with her immediate experience because she was full of pain and shame. Victoria's disconnection from her experience came across in the incongruence between her language and her affect; she would speak about 'feeling a bit scared' (V1:P30) but would sob and tremble as she said this or would express her pain and then immediately laugh it off. This created a challenge when presenting Victoria's story because staying close to her language would not accurately reflect her levels of affect. I chose to illustrate this by reflecting Victoria's language through her quotations and representing her affect in my discussion, so for example where Victoria may have said that she was 'a bit nervous' I might use 'scared' in my discussion.

Being different

...being shy

Victoria's shyness gave her a profound perception of difference from her peers. Anxiety was part of this shyness and while she knew she was not alone in feeling anxious Victoria could not understand why some of her quieter peers seemed less anxious:

Yeah, I mean there's a few other people that don't talk much as well but... when they do, they seem... they don't seem like nervous... whereas I do... (V1:P223-225)

While Victoria was familiar with not understanding her own anxiety what hurt was the lack of empathy she felt from some of her peers:

...it kind of feels like there's a bit of a thing with the group where the loud people don't really understand (V1:P236)

Victoria divided the group into 'quiet people' and 'loud people' and while she identified with the quiet people she also felt different from them because she perceived herself as being more anxious.

Being judged

...internalised judgements

Victoria carried a judgement that being quiet was not good enough and therefore she needed to change. However, Victoria was trapped between needing to change and her perception of her personal limitations:

...yeah I do kind of want to change it, as I go on the course I will hopefully become a bit more confident... equally I don't think I'm ever going to be like the centre of attention... 'cos there's only so much you can change isn't there? (V1:P51-52)

...external judgements

Victoria's experiences of being judged were ongoing and she often perceived these not as judgements of her quietness but as judgements about what was going on for her behind the quietness. Therefore, Victoria's anxiety was not acknowledged:

...I don't know, it feels like they think that I'm being lazy when I'm not talking in the process group (V1:P68)

Talking in the group

...anxiety

Anxiety about speaking in the group was continually present and Victoria spoke shamefully of how she would '...go red and everything and... like stutter my words...' (V1:P47-48).

...the group as an overpowering force

Victoria felt the group was demanding that she spoke while her perception was that her level of quietness was appropriate to her sense of self. It was important to Victoria that she was congruent with this:

...I don't see why I should, why I should start talking and pretend to be someone I'm not? (V1:P12-13)

However, talking in the group was represented as the correct practice and the pressure to comply with this condition was unrelenting.

...the tutors applying pressure

During Victoria's admission interview the Lead Tutor suggested that she would need 'to come out of her shell a bit' (V1:P37), however, in a tutorial the same tutor reassured Victoria that she did not need to 'to talk about stuff... like just for the sake of it' (V1:P177). This conflicting feedback did not offer Victoria meaningful reassurance because it was heard within the context of the group's pressure which Victoria understood as an expression of the course's requirement that people should talk in the group.

...the discomfort of others

Pressure from the group surfaced explicitly during a process group meeting:

Because someone mentioned um... in one of the process groups that they get annoyed that some people talk loads and some people don't talk at all... I thought, yeah that's aimed at me (laughs)... and I did kind of say oh if... "by kind of saying that it feels like everyone's going to be walking on eggshells"... because obviously the people that talk more they're now feeling like they can't talk... and I'm feeling like I should talk, yeah, it's difficult (V1:P75-79)

Victoria's congruent response was to challenge this comment. However, her feeling of vulnerability came out in the way that she chose to speak for others ('everyone' & 'people') rather than from her own experience. Victoria felt the initial comment had created incongruence in the group because 'people' then felt that 'they' had to behave in appropriately participatory ways rather than genuine ones:

Yeah... and it just kind of feels like since someone said that about people talking too much or not talking enough it feels like people are kind of not being congruent at all now (V1:P419)

...tears and shame

Victoria would often cry after speaking in the group and her tears were complicated by the shame she felt at becoming tearful; surely speaking in the group was nothing to get

upset about? Therefore, whenever a peer would move the conversation away from Victoria's sobbing, she felt relief:

'cos I was like feeling like embarrassed and then I started crying so for me that was kind of relief [when the group moved the attention away from her]... (V1:P189)

In some ways the group was supporting Victoria by taking the conversation away from her and this may have been because of their sensitivity to her pain or because of their discomfort.

...rehearsing

Victoria found herself rehearsing what to say in the group even though her experience was that '...I don't always feel like I want to say anything' (V1:P70). She had a very clear sense that:

...I don't want to go in there and talk about my week at work or whatever because I don't see the point... like I..... don't really have much going on in my life at the moment that I'm struggling with in my life (sniff)... I don't really have that much to bring (V1:P180-183)

Ironically, one significant thing that was going on in Victoria's life was the pain created by the pressure she was experiencing to speak out in the group. However, because of her shame and because she did not feel that the group understood and accepted the intensity of her feelings this was something that Victoria could not safely bring to the group.

...courage and conditionality

In a tutorial Victoria's tutor acknowledged the courage it had taken for her to speak out in the group (V1:P175) and Victoria sounded quietly pleased to have been acknowledged in this way. However, there was also an implicit message in this affirmation; you are valuable when you talk in the group.

...or failing the course

Victoria's understanding was clear: if she did not speak up she would fail the course.

Yeah I said it last week but I ended up crying so (laughs).....
..... I'm just getting upset because I'm scared (sniff)..... that I'm not going to pass it (V1:P85-86)

Qualifying as a counsellor meant everything to Victoria and her fear of failing was amplified by having already failed a skills assessment because of her anxiety (V1:P92).

This confrontation thing

...the encounter group

Early in the course the tutors introduced the new context of the encounter group and associated this with confrontation. Victoria understood this as the tutors instructing the students to be more congruent with each other which meant '...if someone's pissed someone off or whatever then they tell them in the group' (V1:P208). From Victoria's perspective this broke the bonds that had formed within the group:

...since they've been doing this confrontation thing... it's kind of like, I don't know... for me kind of messed it up a bit... I don't know, [it] made me feel that the group's less bonded (V1:P331-334)

Whatever connections and relative safety had been established were now broken:

Yeah 'cos um.... when like [Lead Tutor] first said you need to be telling people like how you feel or whatever... I don't know it just felt like people would just be rowing... all through the process group and.... yeah last week it was just like people saying to each other, you know how they'd pissed them off or whatever... and even though they were like owning their own feelings which is what you should do, it just kind of felt like a bit of a row... I don't know, it felt weird... It didn't really sit right with me (V1:P338-343)

...doing it across the group

One aspect of confrontation was that the students 'should... own their feelings' (V1:P341) and Victoria picked up the inference that doing so would validate this process but this did not reduce her discomfort. Victoria was not expressing discomfort around confrontation itself but rather that was not comfortable with confrontation across a large group. For Victoria 'I'd rather they said it to me one to one... I suppose it depends what sort of person you are' (V1:P348-349) which again suggested her experience of difference as it implies that she felt others in the group were comfortable with confrontation in this context.

Even though Victoria had not been on the end of a confrontation 'I think if someone did like bring something up to me in the group, I'd probably just start crying (laughs)' (V1:P351), here Victoria laughs incongruently as she describes a potentially painful experience over which she had no control. Her incongruent laugh sounded like a snort of self-derision that gave voice to a negative judgement of her potential tears and a way of distancing herself from her experience of being someone who cried whenever they had the group's attention. Victoria also seemed to be expressing her sense that she probably had 'pissed off' some people in the group with her quietness and that a challenge was therefore inevitable.

...a reason to talk in the group

There was a potentially useful side effect to confrontation because it offered Victoria a reason to speak and she found herself '...even thinking can I start on someone just so I can talk?' (V1:P209-210). Victoria quickly dismissed this idea and decided instead to:

...just say what's going through my head... be congruent... so... yeah, I'm glad I did say something even though I started crying... if I hadn't I'd have regretted it (V1:P211-216)

Victoria was drawing on her understanding of congruence to explain her behaviour and used the term to describe the honest communication of her own experience rather than the course's implicit definition of congruence as confrontation. Sharing her congruent experience of being in the group was hard for Victoria because it would mean sharing her shameful anxiety and would inevitably lead to more tears. However, Victoria was becoming aware of her response to having shared something in that she knew that '...if I hadn't I'd have regretted it' (V1:P216). I had a sense of Victoria's courage and her determination to remain true to herself and saw her 'being congruent' as a way of confronting the group over their lack of empathy.

Bonding with individuals

...settling in

Victoria spoke of how she was not feeling close to many of her peers but she had an idea this would change over time:

...because obviously it's early and there's only like five people that I've worked in a group with and I don't feel like I know everybody yet (V1:P20)

...outside the course

Victoria found ways to get to know and be known by individual peers by meeting up outside college. This emphasised the significance of these individual connections compared to the distance she felt from the group:

...well I've kind of bonded with a couple of people like um... in the sense of meeting up outside of uni... um... but apart from that not particularly close to anyone on the course (V1:P6-7)

...safety

Bonding with individuals helped to reduce the fear that Victoria experienced:

But I feel, I'm quite happy that I've bonded with a couple of people so...in that I kind of feel safe in a way... if I hadn't of bonded with anyone I'd be feeling a bit scared... (V1:P29-30)

Individual bonds prevented Victoria from 'feeling a bit scared' so when these precious peers were not present she chose to avoid the group:

Yeah it's funny, somebody had a Christmas party last week and invited everyone from the course.... and um... I was going to go along with like the girl I meet up with outside... and she couldn't make it so I said I wouldn't go too because it'd be too like scary..... I don't even know why I thought that because it's not like..... you know I've never met any of them (V1:P152-153)

This extract shows that the group was an unsafe place for Victoria even in a social context and that it was not the setting that made the group scary but the size of the group. This also shows Victoria judging her experience of not feeling safe because she was confused about the intensity of her feelings and was telling herself that she should be OK when she clearly was not.

As the interview had progressed the 'couple of people' (V1:P6 & P29) with whom Victoria had bonded became 'the girl I meet up outside' (V1:P152) whose connection was significant in making the group a safe enough place. This process may have showed Victoria getting closer to revealing to me the full extent of her anxiety and isolation and the significance of that one safe connection to her engagement with the group.

...challenging herself

Victoria was determined to know more of her peers but felt that many had already bonded into sub-groups some of which were based on previously established relationships. These pre-existing connections made it harder for Victoria to create the bonds with the wider group that would have reduced her anxiety:

...a lot of people already knew each other from previous courses... so I think them people have kind of stayed in their groups which makes it quite difficult as well (V1:P23-24)

Despite her anxiety Victoria pushed herself to connect with more of her peers individually and in smaller groups during break times. However this was challenging and Victoria would find herself returning to the safety of those with whom she had already bonded:

Yeah, you know it's funny at break times I always try to make the effort to sit with people that like I've not spoke to as much (laughs) but then I always find myself going back to what feels comfortable?... Which I s'pose is normal otherwise you wouldn't... have the same people sitting with each other all the time (V1:P261-263)

Victoria's comment that this was 'normal' shows that as well as pushing herself Victoria was also experiencing self-compassion in that she was saying that it was OK to return to her bonds.

Congruence

...self-acceptance and resilience

Victoria was painfully aware of the ways her peers judged her quietness and it required effort to hang onto her sense of self in that environment:

I'm quite quiet and I think some people are getting pissed off (laughs) with that and that's kind of come out in the process groups like a few people have made comments. But I've tried to stay congruent with that and... kind of carry on being myself (V1:P9-11)

Victoria's use of 'congruent' brings theoretical support to her determination to be true to herself. Victoria described her response to the pressure to change as '...I don't want to start acting...' (V1:P38) which expressed her understanding that this would not be 'coming

out of her shell' as the tutor had suggested but would be behaving in ways that would be incongruent.

Victoria was held in a paradox. The course was avowedly Person-Centred yet Victoria's perception was that she was being judged and that she needed to change in order to be acceptable to the course. This colluded with her internalised judgement that quietness was unacceptable. This highlights Victoria's perception of the course's focus on congruence as confrontation which required students to confront peers with their reactions and their perceptions of each other. While this expresses one facet of congruence; congruence as communication, it does not address the facet of congruence which is concerned with the therapist's awareness of all aspects of their own flow of experiencing (Lietaer, 2001), rather it is privileging communication over awareness. Victoria's perception therefore was that this Person-Centred course was judgemental, was not demonstrating empathic understanding of her experiences and was requiring her to be incongruent in the name of 'congruence'. This suggests a paradox between the course's espoused approach and Victoria's perception of the behaviour of the tutors and students in their relationships with her.

...being with her self-in-process

Victoria felt that she was connecting more with her feelings and that this was a direct result of her relationships with her peers and the tutors:

I suppose like I'm more aware of my feelings and stuff, they're [peers & the tutors] challenging me in a way... and that's making me... like really aware of my feelings... too aware sometimes (sniffs/laughs)... (V1:P407-411)

Victoria's snuffling and chuckling acknowledged that the feelings that came into her awareness were painful to be with and that this pain was all too familiar.

...as part of the course design

From Victoria's perspective the design of the course clearly intended student participation to be the principal agent for learning. Through congruent confrontation individual students would challenge each other's self-concepts by giving honest feedback about their experiences of each other. However different types of participation were being valued over others so as a quiet person Victoria felt that she was deemed to be not-

of-value. However, from the reactions of Victoria's peers it was clear that her quiet participation was challenging them. It was Victoria's perception that this was not worked through but rather that she was blamed for not participating rather than being valued for participating in her own way.

Developing conceptualisation of silence

...a battleground

Silences could seem like a battleground where Victoria was fighting for her right to be true to herself. When one student expressed his annoyance because 'some people don't talk' (V1:P230) one of the 'quiet people' responded by saying that they found it hard to find space to talk "because some people take up a lot of the time" (V1:P230):

...and then that kind of turned into a confrontation because someone said "oh we have long silences here, that could be your time to talk" (V1:P231-232)

But, 'just because it's a silence doesn't mean everyone wants to talk in that' (V1:P234). Paradoxically, when Victoria herself was in the counsellor's chair for a skills session she found herself breaking her client's silence because it seemed 'awkward' (V1:P133). However, this could have been because Victoria's perception was that as a quiet person silences were her responsibility.

Being Person-Centred

...contradictions and confusion

Victoria spoke often about how she could find the tutors' feedback in skills sessions to be contradictory:

...a lot of tutors say different things about it, what was it... that... yeah that was it, I broke a silence because I felt like it was um... awkward and kind of got told I shouldn't be doing that or whatever, and um... on the next one I was actually being counselled and there was a big long silence and... and the tutor actually broke it (laughs) and said "oh that was awkward you should have broken it" (laughs) so you can't win in that situation because each tutor

I suppose has their own style... so yeah that's... sometimes they contradict each other (V1 :132-135)

This contradictory feedback could have been focused on Victoria's quietness rather than on the other trainee counsellor's skills; the tutor may have stepped in to break the silence because it was Victoria being quiet. But who was the silence 'awkward' for, the tutor, the trainee counsellor or the observers? Victoria made sense of this and other contradictions with her understanding of the individuality of the tutors:

...just because they're [the tutors] all Person-Centred they're not all going to be like exactly the same (V1:P140)

Being with Victoria in our first interview

I was aware throughout our first interview of Victoria's impending day that seemed to be hanging around threateningly outside the door. Victoria was full of tears of pain and sadness over what she was being subjected to and I felt a strong sense of injustice as I sat with her. My own experiences of being shy and of finding myself in overpowering group situations were often around in that interview. I remembered my Diploma training and how I had struggled to find any voice in the formal group contexts. In our interview I worked to parenthesise these memories and feelings while also using them as a door to an empathic connection with Victoria. I was aware of the researcher in me who was connecting with this rich material as well as the counsellor who was relying on his therapeutic practice to connect deeply and possibly therapeutically with a vulnerable person. There was also a protective part of me that was trying to keep Victoria together enough to go out and face the group with her teary eyes and open wounds.

Victoria's Stage 2 Interview

Our second interview took place in Victoria's flat during the summer break. She was more thoughtful and less overwhelmed by sadness and pain but was feeling drained by the experiences of being on the course. I found myself working hard to keep the conversation going in order to collect my data so this was another situation in which Victoria's quietness was unacceptable; I needed to hear her story. However, this did not seem to be

distressing for Victoria and this may have been because it was just the two of us and we had bonded during the first interview.

Victoria sounded powerless as she spoke about the impact of the first year and seemed to find my responses to her story validating and empowering. Victoria shed quiet tears over how she had been judged and then more tears over how hard it had been for her on the course. She spoke of enjoying the time off (V2:P12) and of how the course seemed distant although she connected with it more as the interview progressed. The course had consumed just about all of her emotional resources:

I was so like glad when we'd broken up ... 'cos I don't think I could have actually carried on for much longer (V2:P28)

Victoria was focused on the end of the course and was trying to gather her resources in the hope that it would prove to be worthwhile. She seemed to feel that she had no control over the outcome of this enormously consuming process and was '...just sort of thinking, just another year, hopefully I'll pass...' (V2:P43). This glimmer of hope was a new thing for Victoria because she had only just successfully completed the first year after re-sitting her skills assessment. Success on the course would mean that Victoria could fulfil her ambition to be a counsellor and just as importantly it would mean that she would not need to endure any more process groups:

...like if I pass like I'll be a counsellor at the end of it and I'll be done with the process groups (V2:P188)

Being judged

...for being inconsistent

Victoria was still feeling that she was being judged but the focus now was on her apparently inconsistent behaviour. Some of Victoria's peers had seen her more vocal side in one-to-one settings and in her skills group and the news that Victoria could have a voice seemed to have spread throughout the group. Pressure was still coming from the teachers as well as from her peers and the message for Victoria was that her quiet self was not acceptable and she needed to '...improve more all of the time...' (V2:P19-20) if

she was to be successful on the course. The definition of 'improving' was clear to Victoria when for example, '...it just sort of felt like he [Lead Tutor] was blaming me a bit...[for not taking risks in the group]' (V2:P74).

Victoria had struggled to find a way into the group and was battling with the anxiety created by the tension between being told that she should talk and her perception of having nothing relevant to say. She felt her peers were judging her for withholding:

I think a lot of people make an assumption that I'm not being myself, that I'm really loud really (V2:P142)

However, for Victoria the explanation was clear:

...I have got like a confident loud side or whatever but not in a big group sort of thing, so they're not going to see that in a big group... (V2:P142)

...being constrained

Victoria was frustrated by the limited way in which she was being seen by the others.

Victoria's perception was that her peers were not accepting the broadness of her character because she could be shy and/or confident depending on the context:

I think people assume the quiet side of me isn't me, 'cos sometimes I am more confident or whatever in the smaller groups but it's actually like different bits of me if that makes sense?... Yeah... it's not like there's just one personality, no (V2:P146-148)

Powerlessness and the curse of hope

...not daring to hope

Victoria sounded powerless when she mentioned passing the course and felt that she needed her '...fingers crossed' (V2:P27). She made a decision not to hope (V2:P153) because her experience was that failure was highly probable and this had been reinforced when she failed her skills assessment (V2:P173):

I think things are even more disappointing when you get your hopes up too much, people say "be positive" and all that sort of stuff but I think if you're too positive it's even more of a let-down if it does go wrong (V2:P174)

This was a pragmatic philosophy and Victoria was clear that she was holding herself in a position where she would not be wounded by hope nor crushed by despair. Victoria's experiences of working one to one with clients in her work had shown her that she had the abilities to be a counsellor and so the course was a necessary trial that stood between her and this career goal.

...out of her control

Victoria was struggling with the course structure but was coping because '...that's all you can do isn't it? (sobbing)' (V2:P73). Some of this struggle was because she knew that specific changes to the course would help her pass the assessments but was powerless to make those changes happen. Victoria had failed her first skills assessment because of anxiety about performing in front of a group but had succeeded when she was given the opportunity to re-sit via a taped session:

...I kind of wish we could do a tape every term because I think I'd be alright then, but... and I'm not really sure what's happening... (V2:P152)

This precious option had been given once but because of inconsistencies in the way the course was being run Victoria could not hope that it would be available again. In this context Victoria was attentive for any changes which might improve this situation in skills sessions but would not allow herself to be hopeful. When the tutors suggested that the students might work in smaller skills groups for the first term of the second year Victoria was:

...thinking I don't want to get my hopes up because I don't know if they're going to change it again so I don't know if I'm just setting myself up... (V2:P153)

The only thing that was keeping Victoria going was her determination as 'I'm pretty um determined, thank God, otherwise I'd have left by now' (V2:P168).

Talking in the group

...the impact of anxiety

Victoria's anxiety about speaking in the group was so great that she would be occupied by the impending experience beforehand and thinking about the impact of thinking about it:

...so I'll think because I'm sort of overthinking it and worrying about it... that when it comes to actually being in the process group and like being so scared that sometimes I don't say anything (V2:P116)

Victoria's anxiety was self-perpetuating and left her unable to speak and so full of fear that she was unable to be truly present in the group.

...conditional acceptance

Amid all of this anxiety Victoria had found ways to speak in the group and had received some acknowledgement from her peers for this achievement, but these acknowledgements always came with a condition:

...people sort of said oh like well done and stuff like that and oh keep it up and stuff like that, you know no pressure then (V2:P9)

Victoria felt that her tutor had again reinforced the pressure to talk in the process group by suggesting that in order to get through the second year she would need to '...take more risks and stuff' (V2:P10). Confusingly, the tutor contradicted this later in the same tutorial when he suggested that '...well you're the only one putting pressure on yourself' (V2:P67). For Victoria the external pressure was real and it was 'something you can't just sort of take away' (V2:P133).

Victoria experienced a contradiction between the course's espoused attitude of unconditional positive regard and her perception of receiving conditional positive regard. This was emphasised when the tutors demonstrated a more positive attitude towards one of the other 'quiet people' on the course when they became more outgoing:

...they're completely different with her so... it's a bit odd, you'd think they'd be the last people that would sort of... treat different people in a different way depending on how they are (V2:P63)

...achievement and embarrassment

Rather than acknowledging Victoria's increased participation, the tutors seemed to be fixed in their perceptions and still pressurised Victoria to change:

I've always sort of heard the same thing, like you need to talk more and stuff but... I do feel like I have improved a lot, since September, I feel like that's not really... been looked at, it's just like you need to improve more all the time... (V2:P19)

Victoria was frustrated because she was challenging herself and would come away with a feeling of achievement after speaking in the group:

...when there has been a day when I've sort of spoke it's weird, I sort of go home feeling better 'cos I know I've sort of achieved something... (V2:P55)

So if Victoria succumbed to the pressure and forced herself to speak she would later feel that it had been worthwhile but this feeling of accomplishment arose only after the immediate distress of speaking had subsided. This sense of achievement was complicated by Victoria's internal struggle with being pressurised to behave in ways that felt incongruent:

I guess like one part of me really wants to push myself just to do like what's needed for the course but then another part of me's being quite stubborn and thinking why should I sort of thing (V2:P80)

In that moment Victoria perceived her determination and/or resilience as stubbornness.

Another aspect of this complicated mass of emotions was Victoria's embarrassment at the tears that would still flow after she had expressed herself in the big group:

...but then when I do say that important thing I end up crying in the group and then get embarrassed by that as well... I hate it because I can feel everyone sort of looking at me (V2:P84)

In this respect it would have been safer for Victoria to express something trivial but that would have been speaking just for the sake of it and she was determined that when she spoke it would be '...that important thing'. Yet saying something important would leave her exposed to the intense attention of the group.

...dividing the group in two

Victoria still spoke of her peers as the loud ones and the quiet ones and had an ambivalent connection with the 'quiet people'. She felt a kinship with them and she could also feel separate from them because she alone suffered with intense anxiety. Victoria often compared herself with the 'other quiet people' (V2:P51) as a way of measuring when she should speak:

...if they've [the other quiet students] all spoke I feel like it's a big pressure, I must speak now 'cos they have sort of thing, which is a bit strange (V2:P51)

Victoria's use of 'a bit strange' spoke of her struggle to understand the tension between the pressure to speak and the shelter she received from her connection with the quiet people.

This confrontation thing

...what does it mean?

Confrontation across the group still did not feel right to Victoria. Discomfort and fear had stayed with her throughout the first year although confrontation had been re-categorised from being 'pissed off' with someone to now also including 'being congruent':

...sometimes I get a bit scared still like in um..... in encounter group when people are really congruent with each other and stuff and I do get scared that someone's going to sort of, I don't know say something to me that I've pissed them off, and I think if I was in the big group I'd probably just start crying or something, so that part of it scares me (V2:P4)

When Victoria said that people were 'really congruent with each other' I heard that they were being powerfully confrontational across the group. Within this charged environment there was an implication that Victoria knew that she had 'pissed off' some of her peers by being too quiet and that one day one of them would confront her with this across the group.

The Big Group

...the emergence of The Big Group

Victoria had started to refer to the process group as 'The Big Group' (e.g. V2:P6).

...is it relevant?

Victoria was wondering about the relevance of The Big Group to her training because:

[learning how to be a counsellor is] ...the most important bit... surely (laughs)... but it does feel like it's more sort of focused on how you are in the big group and stuff... (V2:P209-210)

...its nature

The Big Group was overwhelming and full of voices, silences and the relentless pressure from everyone to speak congruently i.e. confrontationally. For Victoria this space served no useful purpose because:

I find it more useful talking to my counsellor rather than talking to a whole group sort of thing, and I will like tell individual people whatever, like if I have time or whatever but I don't find it as helpful... telling a group of people... (V2:P123)

For Victoria speaking in The Big Group would invite unwelcome attention but 'I don't want everyone looking at me, so what's the point?' (V2:P124). This was stressful and unnecessary but she was powerless to do anything about it because she had to 'take more risks'.

Bonding with individuals

...individuals emerging from within the group

Reflecting on the transcript of our first interview Victoria was:

...quite struck by the kind of difference because I seem quite detached at that point from what I read, and I hadn't remembered what I'd said so yeah I was quite surprised at how detached I was feeling from a lot of the group... (V2:P2)

Victoria found that she could now connect with more of her peers as individuals

...I still feel a bit weird when we're in the big group but I think when it comes to sort of them as individuals I feel closer to most people (V2:P6)

This implied that Victoria was not close to some of her peers and this could have been because she had not yet worked with them and/or because they were now known as people she was not close with. Being close to individuals had a direct impact on Victoria's anxiety; if there were people present in The Big Group with whom she had a connection, it seemed less over-bearing and scary.

...trust

Victoria felt that she had begun to trust the group and that while this process had been inhibited by the size of the group it had been facilitated by her increased knowing of some of the individuals within it:

...I think it's really hard to trust like group people, like you hardly know, like I've known them for a year now but I think at the beginning I didn't know one of them, to trust like twenty-five people I think that's quite tricky, it's hard enough to trust one person isn't it?... but I think that I trust everyone now... (V2:P98-100)

Being with Victoria in the second interview

At times in this interview I felt angry and sad as Victoria spoke of the unrelenting pressure, the conditionality and the lack of empathy she had perceived on the course but as she told her story I could see that she was finding the interview process therapeutic. I was aware that I was offering Victoria a moment of empathic understanding and unconditional acceptance as she was otherwise alone and misunderstood. I say 'a moment' because the interview seemed brief compared to the time she was spending on the course and the impact it was having on her. Victoria felt blamed and shamed for being quiet and although it was hard for me to hear this in the interview I allowed her to stay with those feelings. This space to honestly and deeply reflect on her experiences on the course and to have them validated and affirmed would have undoubtedly had an effect on Victoria's later experiences of the course.

Victoria's Stage 3 Interview

Our final interview took place in an empty room at the college after the course was over. We met there because Victoria was meeting her group on campus later in the day for a farewell social. Victoria chuckled as she looked back over her experiences and reflected on how hard the course had been. Over the duration of the course Victoria had become more aware of her 'damn feelings!' (V3:P261) which included anger at 'what them bastards did to me!' (V3:P272). She reflected on the 'black place' (V3:P242) she had been to in the middle of the course and how 'that... should be at the beginning...' (V3:P271) implying that her trajectory should have been towards increased feelings of wellbeing rather than down into the 'black place' into which her peers and tutors had put her.

Conversations with people outside the course had confirmed Victoria's sense that counselling training was difficult and also that it was something that other people could not understand 'unless they've kind of been through it' (V3:P220). Victoria found this reassuring because it acknowledged some of her struggle however it did not touch her continued experience of being judged because of her quietness. Victoria's understanding was that counselling courses were unique and could only truly be understood from an insider position. However her own perception had been one of feeling separate from the majority of her fellow insiders for a significant and painful part of the course.

Being judged

...being a person on a Person-Centred course

Throughout the course Victoria had experienced a contradiction; the course was Person-Centred but its positive regard had consistently been conditional. Victoria had perceived this as ever-present pressure to behave in ways which were incongruent. Victoria had resolved this contradiction by accepting that even though she was on a Person-Centred course she would be judged because being judgemental was part of being human:

...just having an awareness of 'I may be judged', that's natural isn't it? But kind of learning that if I do that's their stuff, kind of tough shit really (V3:P17)

Because the course focused on the development of self-awareness Victoria now felt of her peers that 'they're training to be counsellors, they can look at their own judgements can't they?' (V3:P34).

...closing down

Victoria reflected on how judgements and continual pressure to change had closed her down:

I think it was the judgements like, I think it was because people were saying you should talk, you should share (V3:P23)

The impact of this was highlighted by Victoria's perception of receiving unconditional positive regard from one of her peers when they met outside the course. Victoria asked this peer whether she should share something deeply personal with the group and they gave Victoria permission to do whatever felt right. Victoria felt this permission allowed her to open up about this particular issue in the group:

...when [peer] said you do whatever you want to do, if she'd have said you should definitely share that I probably wouldn't have, so I think it's just having that acceptance that I'll do whatever feels comfortable (V3:P23)

...expecting judgement

Victoria was open to her part in her perception of being judged and wondered '...if that was me kind of expecting that and then kind of misinterpreting stuff, I don't know' (V3:P36). It was as if her sense of the reality of these judgements had diminished; on one hand Victoria had come to accept that she would be judged while on the other she could wonder whether some of the judgements were purely her perceptions based on a history of having been judged. My perception was that she had been judged consistently throughout the course and I had to hold back from defending her sense that she *had* been judged. However, Victoria was used to being judged and brought her expectations that she would always be judged in this way. These expectations would undoubtedly have influenced her perceptions and would have left her sensitive to subtle judgements and possibly open to misinterpreting the intentions of others. The significant element is that this inevitable sensitivity was not allowed for by her peers and tutors; they did not empathise with this aspect of her uniqueness.

Empowerment

...making choices

Victoria discussed how her anxiety in skills sessions had reduced over time as she had got to know and be known by the group members. At the start of the second year they were given the opportunity to choose skills groups and Victoria made the decision, against the directions of the tutors, to carry on working with her old group:

...so we all stayed in the same group all year so that was a lot easier... and it was funny, right at the beginning of the second year they said um..... put yourself in a group, we don't want it to be too challenging but we don't want it to be too comfortable either, but I just put myself in a comfortable one (V3:P57-58)

Victoria was taking control to reduce her anxiety and therefore giving herself a better chance of passing the skills assessments. In this moment Victoria found her power in what had otherwise been an ongoing experience of feeling disempowered.

Talking in the group

...using the group

Victoria had begun to trust the group and to use it as a space to share her life experiences. Victoria recognised that her personal development had been instrumental in this process; it was Victoria that had changed rather than the group:

I think it's building trust as well, because for me it takes a while to trust people, especially that many people [and trusting others]... came from developing in myself (V3:P16-17)

Victoria's trust in the group had increased with her greater knowing of the individuals within it and this included knowing herself as one of those individuals. Victoria's sense of having developed included her growing acceptance of herself as someone who could be quiet or loud depending on the context and on her growing perception that she was someone who was valid in the group.

...life events

Victoria's opening up was in part prompted by events outside of the course which meant that:

I started to kind of use the group to more advantage to open up, but it was, it kind of came naturally rather than 'cos I felt I should (V3:P9)

Victoria's opening up was an expression of a need that was coming into her awareness rather than as the result of the relentless pressure to change. Victoria described this in terms of:

...in the first year... I didn't struggle much in my personal life to be honest, but in the second year I did struggle quite a bit, a lot of things happened... and I found I kind of opened up to the group (V3:P14)

This confirms that Victoria's earlier struggles with the course were not valid for sharing but that later events outside of the course were. Her sense that her struggles with the course were not to be shared seemed to have been rooted in the group's reaction to her quietness and in her own shame. Significantly the events outside the course were not related to her shyness and were therefore valid for sharing. Sharing these issues in the group included receiving their '...kind of warmth and stuff' (V3:P22). After all of her experiences on the course it was highly significant that talking in the group had become a valuable resource for Victoria. Her natural sharing of personal material with the group, as opposed to her earlier struggles to find something meaningful to say, led to other benefits as she discovered that '...learning that other people had been through a similar experience, that kind of helped as well' (V3:P25).

...relief and exasperation

At the end of the course Victoria reflected on how in earlier tutorials she had always told the tutors that she needed to speak more in the group because she felt that was what they expected her to say (V3:P273). However, in her final tutorial Victoria told her tutor that she was happy with how she was and in saying so she expressed her acceptance of her quietness. Victoria was full of both relief and exasperation when the tutor said '..."well actually maybe you don't need to speak every week in the group", I was like wow, finally!' (V3:P273). Ironically, but inevitably, this conversation occurred at a time when she was talking in the group more.

Bonding with the group

...socialising

Earlier Victoria had spoken of how she had avoided a social event with the group because of her anxiety but by the end of the course when the group were planning a get together Victoria was '...looking forward to it just being social rather than... feelings' (V3:P40). Being social with her peers had become a relief compared to the intense focus on feelings in the big group. Victoria wondered whether the course's Person-Centred values would still be present and seemed to be hoping they would not:

...it'll be interesting today actually, to see if people on the course are still in that non-directive space because it's a social, so it'll be quite interesting, (laughs) because often on the residentials like obviously in the evening we'd be social and all the counselling would go straight out the window (laughs) (V3:P172)

Interestingly, Victoria was hoping that in this social setting the group would abandon non-directivity and 'counselling'; she did not mention confrontation. This was a clear expression of her developing relationship and discomfort with the model as it was being presented by the course.

...judgements and freedom

Victoria was finding the Person-Centred environment of the course to be more judgemental than the informal social settings. For example, her sense of freedom in social situations contrasted with her perception of conditional acceptance when she naturally opened up in the big group and subsequently found that the tutors were more accepting of her (V3:P176). Victoria linked this new acceptance directly to her changes in behaviour:

...like when I felt more accepted toward the end I felt that was... conditional I guess, because I did open up more... (V3:P178)

Congruence

...hanging on to her self

Victoria reflected on how she had managed to maintain her sense of self throughout the course and she described this in terms of how 'I didn't budge, I think I became a bit more confident, I was still kind of myself' (V3:P7). Despite the pressure to speak in the group:

...I still kind of went with what I felt was right, and I still kind of shared when I felt it was necessary (V3:P35)

For Victoria this was an expression of a significant part of the course's Person-Centred philosophy as:

...otherwise it's contradicting the whole thing, if I become someone I'm not to please other people (V3:P62)

Developing conceptualisation of silence

...an opportunity

In her moment of spontaneously speaking out in the group Victoria re-conceptualised silence as an opportunity:

...at the beginning of the process group there was a silence and I thought, oh, there's my chance (V3:P19)

...a valuable space

Victoria had also begun to see silences as valuable because they gave her space to reflect and so '...I suppose for me actually that um... silences can be helpful in a way' (V3:P158). Victoria's '...in a way' suggested that there was still something unresolved about the value of silences and this seemed to centre on the ways that she expected others to be judging her silence as problematic and on her own internalised judgements of shyness and its associated quietness.

...a problem for others

In skills practice Victoria's quietness was seen as her ability to 'do silences' and these could be problematic for her peers:

I think people [peers] often dreaded having me [as a client] because I'd do a lot of like silences and stuff..... yeah, I think they found me a bit difficult (V3:P154-156)

This carried across to her personal therapy in which she felt her counsellor had also struggled with her silences and that '...it took him [counsellor] a while to get used to it, poor thing' (V3:P166).

Being Person-Centred

...affinity

Victoria reflected on her relationship with the Person-Centred approach and said that she was '...glad I went on a Person-Centred [course] actually...' (V3:P65). However, her relationship with the model had been coloured by her experiences in skills practice.

...constraint and individuation

Victoria's experience of the skills sessions was one of having to fit the course's conceptualisation of a Person-Centred way of working:

...if you did something not purely Person-Centred they'd say oh that was really good but it's not going to pass you on this course, so it's kind of like restricted (V3:P131)

Victoria was therefore confused to find that she had developed her own way of working and wondered how '...you kind of learn your own opinion by the end of it kind of thing, rather than following this rigid [model]' (V3:P136). Victoria resolved this confusion when she spoke excitedly about how she had developed through her client work and that '...a lot of that's down to the placement, just being allowed to get on with it rather than being assessed' (V3:P138). This was in stark contradiction to the course where there was:

...a certain way of doing it... and if you do one thing that's not classical Person-Centred then [you will fail] (V3:P149)

...a necessary evil

Victoria seemed resigned to being observed and was rationalising the validity of skills assessment:

...I do recognise that you do have to be assessed here otherwise they wouldn't know would they? You could kind of go away being anyone (V3:P139)

I noticed how Victoria emphasised that students could go away *being anyone* rather than being concerned that they might go away *doing anything*. Therefore, *being* rather than *doing* skills correctly was a significant aspect of Victoria's understanding of ethical practice.

...non-directivity and frustration

Victoria had been frustrated by the tutors' adherence to non-directivity as part of their Person-Centred approach to teaching:

Mm... yeah sometimes like you'd get feedback at college and say well how can I improve on that or what could I do differently and the answers are quite vague because they're Person-Centred (V3:P101)

The tutors' unwillingness to be directive in their feedback clashed with Victoria's sense that as a student 'sometimes I just like want to know' (V3:P107) which resonated with Victoria's understanding from her placement work that '...sometimes people need a little bit of direction' (V3:P134). This implied that Victoria's understanding was that Rogerian conditions might be necessary but were not always sufficient in either teaching or counselling.

Being with Victoria in the third interview

Victoria was more relaxed and I no longer felt that I needed to contain her or that she was taking a deep breath in the midst of an incredibly challenging process. Victoria had only recently completed the final assessment task on the course in which students had to make presentations on their client work to the tutors:

I had to take a Valium (laughs), I was a nervous wreck and I went away from it thinking I'd failed because to be honest when they asked me the questions I was put on the spot a bit, so I didn't answer them as well as I could have, but I got my results and obviously as you know to pass you need a forty and I got dead on forty (V3:P51)

It was all over and Victoria sighed and said ‘...this bloody course has cost enough’ (V3:P71) which included so much more than the price of the fees.

Victoria’s process

Victoria’s process was reduced to a set of emergent themes which yielded superordinate process themes (see Table 2 below).

Superordinate themes

Relationship with self

One significant aspect of Victoria’s story was her ***developing resilience***. She began the course with a fixed sense of her *personal limitations*. She was shy and knew that she would never be very different (V1:P52, P226). However, Victoria also possessed great *determination* which was rooted in her desire to qualify as a counsellor (V2:P168). Victoria’s determination flowered in the middle of the course when she was feeling most oppressed and judged by her peers and tutors. Regardless of the pressure she was under to change Victoria used her determination as a form of *empowerment* and hung onto her sense of self (e.g. V3:P7) while creating situations in which she could feel safe. This internal empowerment was supported by external empowerment in the form of a supportive peer (V3:P23). In this context Victoria developed a greater sense of *personal validity* (V3:P14) and a resilient *acceptance of others* (V3:P17) which contrasted with her earlier powerless resignation about the cruelty of others.

Victoria’s experiences on the course facilitated her ***developing differentiation of experience***. Her exposure to a range of different contexts that featured big groups, small groups and individuals in formal and informal settings gave Victoria *a broader sense of self* (V2:P142, P146, P148). She could be shy and quiet and/or confident and loud as well as reserved and/or open depending on the context and on her process. Victoria’s increasing openness to her experience also allowed *a broader sense of others* (V3:P23, P25) as they could now be seen to be, for example, judgemental and/or accepting, overpowering and/or permissive, cruel and/or caring.

Table 2: Victoria's Process Themes

Participant: Victoria (4) Process Themes Summary		
Superordinate Themes	Emergent Themes	Line
Relationship with Self	Developing resilience <i>personal limitations</i> <i>determination</i> <i>empowerment</i> i) internal ii) external <i>personal validity</i> <i>acceptance of others</i>	V1:P52 V1:P226 V2:P168 V3:P7 V3:P57-58 V3:P23 V3:P14 V3:P17
Relationship with Self	Developing differentiation of experience <i>a broader sense of self</i> <i>a broader sense of others</i>	V2:P142 V2:P146 V2:P148 V3:P23 V3:P25
Relationship with Self	Making sense of her experience <i>silence</i> <i>confrontation</i>	V1:P230 V3:P19 V3:P158 V3:P154-156 V3:P166 V1:P208 V1:P331-334
Self in relationship with others	Connecting with others <i>knowing and being known</i>	V2:P6 V2:P98
Relationship with the approach	Developing relationship with the approach <i>enduring philosophical affinity</i> <i>dealing with contradictions</i> <i>doing rather than being</i> <i>insufficiency and distance</i>	V3:P65 V1:P132 V3:P132-135 V3:P108 V3:P136 V3:P138 V3:P139 V3:P107 V3:P134

In an environment in which she felt judged Victoria would often be **making sense of her experience** and especially those aspects of her experience which were problematic for others. This seemed to offer Victoria a way to manage her profound feelings of pain, shame and anger. Silence was particularly problematic because as a shy person Victoria 'did' silences in a way with which others could struggle. Victoria's initial *conceptualisation of silence* was that it was a battleground where the loud people and the quiet people fought for supremacy (e.g. V1:P230). By the end of the course Victoria saw silence as an opportunity to bring herself into the group (V3:P19) and as a valuable space for reflection (V3:P158). However, Victoria still felt that her silences were *problematic* for others (V3:P154-156, P166) including her tutors, peers and counsellor.

Confrontation was another concept that Victoria needed to make sense of. She did not 'do' confrontation in a big group setting (V1:P208, P331-334) and felt that for her to do so would have been incongruent. Therefore, The Big Group was an unsafe environment for Victoria where people were encouraged to behave in ways that she found threatening to her sense of self. Ironically, even though Victoria felt that she was being required to be incongruent her sense was that being on this course had led her to being more in contact with her experience.

Self in relationship with others

Victoria's initial experience of **connecting with others** was of feeling different from and separate to the group however over time she challenged herself to connect with as many individuals within the group as she could. This led to her forming some close connections and to *knowing and being known* by her peers (V2:P6, P8). Being known meant being seen as more than just a stereotypically shy or possibly lazy person and was highly significant to Victoria because she felt less judged when others knew her.

Relationship with the approach

Over the course Victoria had a **developing relationship with the approach** which was based on her *enduring philosophical affinity* with the principles behind the approach (V3:P65, P132-135). This was at a philosophical rather than a practical level; for her it was a set of attitudes which expressed a meaningful philosophy but not a set of rules about how to do counselling. Victoria found herself *dealing with contradictions* in the tutors'

feedback about the correct ways to practise the model in skills sessions (V1:P132).

Victoria felt constrained by the requirement to perform these limited behaviours in skills sessions (V3:P108) and found her own way of being therapeutic through the freedom she was given in her placement (V3:P136, P138). However, because skills feedback was based on the demonstration of skills it focused on *doing rather than being* Person-Centred and therefore did not connect with Victoria's affinity with the approach as a way of being. At the end of the course Victoria acknowledged the relevance of skills assessments but in doing so her language expressed this understanding that counselling was about being rather than doing (V3:P139).

Although Victoria had an affinity with the philosophy of the Person-Centred approach her experiences as a student left her feeling distant from the course's conceptualisation of Person-Centred practice. The course's focus on non-directivity in educational and therapeutic practice left Victoria feeling that '...sometimes I just want to know' (V3:P107) and '...sometimes people need a little bit of direction' (V3:P134).

Being with Victoria's process

Throughout our interviews I was aware of my identification with significant aspects of Victoria's material because I also can have a profoundly shy side. My relationship with this has changed over the years as I have challenged myself and I know that my need to challenge myself came from a desire to move away from a place of pain and shame and to be more acceptable to myself and others. The challenge has also been pragmatic in that I needed to earn money and teaching was an obvious route that became available at a time when I had processed a lot of my material around shyness. This processing took place after my own experiences of struggling with shyness and anxiety on my counselling Diploma although I experienced a far more supportive and accepting environment than Victoria. Having these experiences brought back to the surface by being back in education during my Diploma undoubtedly influenced the way I engaged with Victoria's story and therefore the way that story unfolded. My intention throughout the interviews was to negotiate between holding my experiences in awareness such that they could sensitise me to Victoria's unfolding narrative and to bracket them so that I could hear Victoria's

story. The result was a series of co-created narratives in which I wanted Victoria to be understood for her quiet experiences of pain, struggle and ultimately of victory to be heard.

A year after Victoria had completed her training I sent her a copy of the draft descriptive case study that I had prepared from our interviews. Her comment was a brief:

Thank you for sending the analysis you must have had so much work to do.
Has been fascinating to read, and I have learnt I need to cut down on my
swearing! I hope life is treating you well

With all of the richness of her material I wished she had said more but I also felt that she was probably glad to leave the course behind.

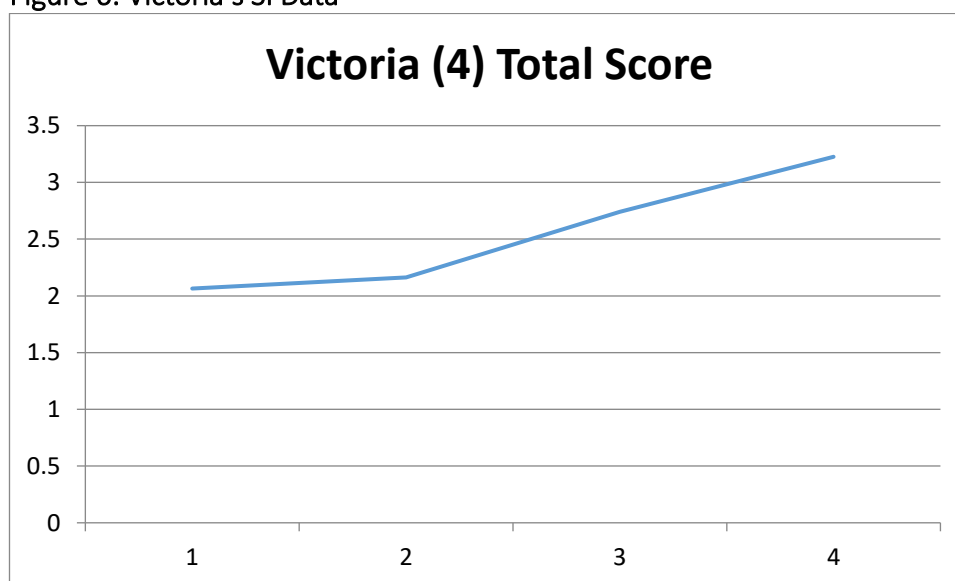
Discussing Victoria's process with my research supervisor as part of the triangulation process raised my awareness of the embodied aspects of Victoria's story. For example, when Victoria sobbed her body was wracked with the immensity of her feelings. I had been aware of this during the interviews and being with Victoria was always a visceral experience for me because her feelings were so powerful and were held so deeply in her being. However I missed this in my initial analysis and focused on her meaning making and her 'working out' which I could now see as possible survival strategies for both of us in the intensity of the interviews. Acknowledging this allowed me to re-connect with my physical experience of the interviews and to drop deeper into my perceptions of her feeling and being.

In the triangulation process we also discussed my supervisor's ethical concerns about Victoria's treatment on the course. While I also had concerns my supervisor felt these more acutely than I did and I put this down to two factors. Firstly, Victoria's transcripts and descriptive case study made up the first full package of material from this study that I sent to my supervisor. Therefore, this was her introduction to the course whereas Victoria's was my eighth interview and I consequently had a broader perspective on the potential impact of the course. Secondly, my own experiences of shyness and of struggling with anxiety may have led me to diminish the immediate impact on Victoria. My supervisor and I discussed our ethical concerns at length and agreed to hold them until we had both worked through all the material.

Strathclyde Inventory

At the end of the final interview Victoria and I looked back over the three SIs that she had completed and Victoria felt that her answers accurately reflected her experiences on the course. Victoria completed a fourth SI a year later when I sent her the completed descriptive case study. The results of all four SI questionnaires show her levels of functioning (total score) at the four points when she completed the inventories.

Figure 6: Victoria's SI Data



The graph suggests that while Victoria experienced her 'black place' in the middle of the course (point 2) her level of functioning had increased by this point and continued to increase steadily over the duration of the course and in the year beyond. However, the graph shows a marked increase in this upward trend after 'the black place'. This increase in total score is supported by Victoria's shift to a more internal locus of evaluation in the final interview.

Reflecting on the three SIs during the final interview Victoria mentioned that

...there was a couple in here where I thought... I was saying what I wanted it to be rather than [how it was]... of course the further on the more honest you are (V3:P284)

Here Victoria was talking about her struggle to accept how she was feeling at certain points on the course. On the one hand Victoria felt she had been '...really honest on this as well, a couple I was like I'll fib on that one but I thought it kind of defeats the object'

(V3:P258). On the other hand, she felt that on reflection she had scored some of the items in the early SIs in ways that reflected how she had aspired to be rather than how she was. This would have inflated the earlier SI scores which implies that Victoria's difference in level of functioning between 1 and 4 may actually have been greater than recorded.

It is worth acknowledging that some of the upward trend in SI results could also be due to practice effect from repeating the same instrument. This could have been amplified by the close fit between the course's Person-Centred approach and the language of the SI because both focus on issues around congruence and incongruence with which Victoria was becoming increasingly familiar.

In terms of Rogers's stages of process Victoria began the course with a relatively fixed sense of herself that focused almost exclusively on her shyness. Other people were distant and fixed and were typically perceived to be judgemental apart from the very few individuals with whom she bonded. Outside of these everybody was just there to judge Victoria in ways which reinforced her self-concept. As the course progressed Victoria's sense of self became more fluid as she acknowledged broader aspects of her personality and began to perceive herself as someone who could flow between different aspects of herself depending on the context. It seems that Victoria's determination to stay true to herself helped to facilitate her experiential fluidity.

Congruence was a significant theme for Victoria and her increasing levels of functioning reflect her resolute determination to 'be herself' and not to act in ways that suited the course. The 'black place' was a result of the conflict between Victoria's experiencing and the judgements she received because of the course's pressure for her to change. There was something paradoxically potent about Victoria being in an environment in which she was disempowered by the contradictory, conditional and judgmental behaviours of those around her while they were also espousing Person-Centred attitudes. Throughout the course Victoria was connected to her determination which she drew on deeply to develop a stronger sense of self. For all of Victoria's powerlessness in the big group she became more empowered as the course went by. It was almost like she was hungry for any

positive experiences (e.g. unconditional acceptance from a significant peer) and fed herself on them wherever they presented themselves.

It is interesting to notice that Victoria's increased openness in the group followed a traumatic life event outside of the course which seemed to connect her more with her process and which finally gave Victoria something 'real' to bring to the group. This 'realness' was Victoria's own sense of the significance of the event which eclipsed her previous judgement that her life experiences were insufficiently real or traumatic or just too shameful to share with the group.

8.3 Johnny's story

Some background

Johnny had previously completed an Introduction to Counselling and a Counselling Skills course at the same college with some of the same tutors and peers. Johnny spoke about how he had undertaken the training because it was '...people oriented' (J1:P26) and was also the '...first thing that made me really want to carry on' (J1:P28). Johnny's motivation for training was for personal development, for the challenge and the education; any potential career development was secondary.

Johnny's developing connection with his experience while he was on this course was a core theme throughout our interviews. Emergent themes were reduced to three superordinate themes which describe Johnny's *relationship with self*, *self in relationship with others* and *relationship with the approach*. The relationships between these levels of themes are shown in the following table.

Table 3: Johnny's Themes

<i>Themes from Johnny's interviews</i>		
Superordinate themes	Emergent themes	Interview
Relationship with self	Being different	1, 2, 3
	A developing relationship with his experience	2, 3
	Process of change	3
Self in relationship with others	Bonding with the group	1, 2, 3
	Group culture	1, 2, 3
	Receiving feedback	1, 2, 3
	Relationships with the tutors	1, 2, 3
Relationship with the approach	Being Person-Centred	1

Our interviews took place in Johnny's living room which offered us a private space. I felt at ease in Johnny's home and it was a calm and contemplative place for us to meet although I was always aware of Johnny's pile of Person-Centred counselling books and college papers that were stacked tidily on a nearby desk. I experienced Johnny as open, thoughtful and reflective throughout our time together.

Johnny's Stage 1 Interview

This took place after Johnny had been on the course for three months. He was relaxed but seemed tentative and this was possibly due to his feeling of not being academic and of finding himself being interviewed by a University lecturer who was also a qualified counsellor. I felt at times that he deferred to my 'expertise' and he spoke of how:

...your take on it must be really sort of up four or five or six levels on what anyone else is doing right now and you must really have a passion for the whole... you know (J1:P604)

I felt a pull to assume this expert stance but instead held onto my position that he was the expert on being Johnny.

Being different

...academia

Johnny made it clear that unlike his peers he did not see himself as 'particularly academic' (J1:P26 & P72). However, Johnny was now enjoying studying and was surprised to find himself visiting the library:

I found myself in the library in er, the other week, and it was the first time I can say in my life that I was in a library and I was kind of excited (J1:P51)

Johnny's surprise was rooted firmly in his 'not academic' self-concept:

...because normally I avoid them like the plague (laughs)...because it's academia, I think that's probably because of my own probably self-doubt about being able to do something like that (J1:P56)

Here Johnny was reflecting on his self-doubt because his self-concept was being challenged by his experience; he 'knew' he was not academic but he was enjoying studying.

...being a gay man

Another aspect of Johnny's sense of difference was his sexuality although when he first mentioned this it came out so quietly that I almost missed it:

...because I know it's ridiculous but one of the things that I've had that I've really held back for SO so many many many many years and I think I have a bigger issue than anybody else is I'm gay... (J1:P118)

Johnny judged himself for his struggles with this issue and implied that his relationship to his sexuality should not be so problematic. He had decided that he needed to risk being more open with the group about this sexuality:

...and I thought I'm not doing two years of this of having them awkward questions, I'm 51 it has to stop and this is as good a place... as any to test the waters whether... the congruence, the support (J1:P120-122)

The course's espoused culture was offering Johnny a space to challenge his preconceptions about how people might respond to his sexuality. For Johnny 'them awkward questions' were any which might lead towards his sexuality such as questions about whether he had children. Whatever the intention behind these questions for Johnny they had always been loaded.

Bonding with the group

...developing trust

Johnny perceived the group as being a uniquely supportive place and linked this to the expression of '...as much empathy as you possibly could' (J1:P128) within the group. Johnny felt that '...they're a fantastic group' (J1:P169) that had surprised him by continually exceeding his expectations in terms of their openness and their willingness to understand and to accept each other.

...defining these connections

Johnny struggled to find the right word to express his feelings towards his peers:

...I don't think there's anybody I don't like on the course, that's too strong a word... don't like, can't work with on the course... because there is [nobody I can't work with]... I know I'm painting this rosy picture of how it is... but that is exactly how it is (J1:P556-560)

For Johnny his peers were a surprisingly fantastic group of people to work with on this personal development project.

Group culture

...depth of disclosure

Johnny's descriptions of the group portrayed a shared and willing commitment to openness about their personal histories. From Johnny's perspective this culture of honest self-disclosure was influenced early on by one of his peers who '...almost put the orientation there' (J1:P111) with the honesty of their introduction to the group. Johnny found that the extent to which his peers were willing to reveal themselves was compelling so that '...if you can do that [so must I]...' (J1:P115).

...inspirational

Johnny felt his peers' immediate commitment to self-disclosure was 'amazing...' (J1:P127) and that '...it...it kicks you up a gear doesn't it?' (J1:P158). Johnny felt a cultural imperative to join them in their honesty which was revealed by the global statements he used:

...you couldn't fail, they demanded your attention because it was so, it included everybody and you had a duty to sit there and listen to this whether you liked it or not and you needed to, you wanted to anyway (J1:P163-164)

Johnny's global statements ('...**you** had a duty...', '...**you** needed to, **you** wanted to...') show that although he was feeling these reactions he was calling on an external locus of evaluation to validate them.

...competition

The culture of self-disclosure brought a competitive quality to the group which Johnny struggled with:

(sigh)... I almost got to the point where I thought well it's almost "my dog's black, well my dog's blacker", but I thought that's just the cynical side of me, this is, this is genuine stuff that's going on here (J1:P200)

Johnny's use of '...I almost got to the point...' suggests that he was distancing himself from this thought but he must have thought it otherwise how was he aware of it? He was checking his reaction, doubting it and telling himself to accept the honesty of the stories and the validity of the process. This self-doubt and checking undoubtedly included

elements of Johnny's relationship with his own material and he seemed confused about the validity of his own experiences.

...challenge

A significant turning point for Johnny was when the tutors introduced the concept of challenge. Johnny now dismissed his previous perceptions of the group as a fantastic place and redefined it as a place:

...where the Carl Rogers things are all prevalent and everyone's all very touchy feely and very sensitive and things like that... (J1:P174)

In this Johnny seemed to be dismissing the fundamental attitudes of the Person-Centred approach. Now the group was a place where 'we might disagree and we might not get along' (J1:P179). For Johnny the introduction of challenge was a moment:

...of people realising in an instant in a lovely way that life isn't like that so why should a group be like that? (J1:P183)

Johnny was implying that the group had been given permission to import something from 'life' and therefore his understanding had been that this previously 'fantastic' group had not fully represented life. In this new environment Johnny found himself spontaneously expressing himself in ways that he would normally have suppressed:

...what I'm learning now with this stuff is I'm not scared, normally... but with this one I can sometimes hear myself saying things that normally I would hold back or dressed up (J1:P358-359)

While challenge was an essential aspect of relationships in life Johnny was not used to allowing himself to challenge others. This implies that Johnny was more used to being challenged than he was to challenging. Although Johnny was now being more spontaneous he was also negotiating with himself and was finding a way to judge when these new challenges were appropriate:

...doing this course, it has, it does something to you, it changes you in a little way, providing you're not a... shit or something to people (J1:P360)

Johnny was regulating his spontaneous challenges by evaluating them against his understanding of the boundaries created by the group's values (not being 'a shit').

Receiving feedback

Some of the qualities of Johnny's relationship with others were illustrated by his reaction to feedback from his peers and tutors.

...confirming his perceptions

Johnny was clear that he did not yet feel ready to work with clients and he heard confirmation of this in his skills feedback:

...the skills feedback that I've had lately, it's not been bad but I think what the last couple or three has been, I, I'm not surprised at what's been in them because I knew myself, I mean I wrote down my own learning journal (J1:P440)

...denying the positive

While Johnny could hear his peers' and tutors' feedback that he was not ready he struggled with their perceptions that his 'good presence' (J1:P466) was valuable because for Johnny this was not enough:

...you can't not listen to what's going on around you, to all the feedbacks that you're getting... and they say that you've got good presence and that and that presence is not enough, nor for me... because presence isn't enough... to feel... not confident but feel able... even if it's just to hold something, whatever's coming out, rather than panic (J1:P465-469)

Relationships with the tutors

...respect and liking

Johnny respected the tutors for their apparent integrity:

...no matter how good you are at whatever you might do you can't manufacture certain emotions and certain ways of being (J1:P215)

Johnny emphasised that '...they are human beings with the right to be in the group' (J1:P218) and was clear that 'there isn't any of [the tutors] actually that I don't like... none of them...' (J1:P341).

...the impact of assessment

Johnny was aware of the impact that assessment had on his relationships with the tutors. He was particularly aware that the Lead Tutor had significant power:

...well it is about [Lead Tutor] and [Lead Tutor] will tell you if he's miffed, [Lead Tutor] will be the one that tells you you're off the course (J1:P515)

Being Person-Centred

...the tutors as models of the approach

At Johnny's course interview he met the Lead Tutor who he saw as being '...as far [from] my perception of a humanist counsellor could ever get to be...' (J1:P82). Johnny was conflating 'humanist' with 'Person-Centred' which suggests that his relationship with the model was still evolving. Johnny's understanding of how a counsellor should be was now being informed by the course's conceptualisation of the role and he felt that:

...my idea of counselling when I started this... to what I'm actually studying now couldn't have been further, poles apart (J1:P398)

The way Johnny spoke implied that this new conceptualisation of counselling was the reality of the role; the course's conceptualisation of a counsellor was now defining the role for him.

...skills practice

Johnny found himself confused during skills practice sessions because tutors gave conflicting feedback (J1:P251) about how to be Person-Centred. Johnny discussed this with his peers who suggested that 'there is no right or wrong' (J1:P255) however:

...I can't work out how one [tutor] can say one thing and another in another situation and they're not that dissimilar (J1:P269)

Johnny needed clarity about how to 'do' these sessions correctly or, if there truly was no right or wrong '...how we are supposed to look at that?' (J1:P287).

...as a way to be

Johnny felt that all of his peers had come together because of their desire to support others and that the approach was a way:

...to channel it in a healthy way rather than misguided or a sort of erm.... not structured because it's not really a structured way is it the Rog... not structured but a way that you feel comfortable with... and it's beneficial... (J1:P579-580)

Here Johnny was struggling with the confusion he experienced over skills feedback; was the model a thing to do (a structure) or a way to be?

Being with Johnny in our first interview

Johnny was an affable host who made sure I was comfortable and seemed grateful that I was giving him the time to discuss his experiences. At times he was hesitant and seemed to be searching for the correct language and I felt as though he was treading uncertainly into this language which he saw as my territory. However, even with this hesitancy Johnny spoke earnestly and with intensity yet I could often feel lost and confused within his story and tried to stay focused on his frame of reference without getting drawn into clarifying it for either of us.

Johnny's Stage 2 Interview

Our second interview was near the end of Johnny's first year of the course when he was looking forward to the summer holiday. We were back in his living room, I had a fresh glass of cool water, and his books and journals were still waiting close by.

Being different

...doing the personal development work

Johnny was still feeling different from his peers but this was now because of their reactions to the personal development aspects of the course. Some of Johnny's peers had spoken of how they had:

...had enough of this, "I've been completely stripped down [by the course] and I need to rebuild myself", and that was a theme that kept coming up (J2:P134)

This led some of these peers to question the course:

...there was a sort of period where three or four members would say y'know I've had enough of this, I... I found myself getting a bit angry (J2:P134)

Johnny's anger was in defence of the training because he felt these peers' attitudes were contrary to his understanding that personal development was an essential element of the course. From the force with which he spoke I felt that when Johnny qualified his anger with 'a bit...' he was diminishing those feelings. Johnny felt that the course had not stripped him down but had given him the opportunity to look at himself and:

...see the bits that aren't useful or aren't helpful for me... and either learn how to deal with or sit with them a bit better (J2:P135-136)

This reflected his goal of personal development.

...but feeling the impact

For all of his anger with these peers Johnny was also aware of the intense emotional impact of the course:

...for some people, some of the residential for example... um... some of the personal stuff that came up was hugely powerful and really, you could see... how, you could feel, sense and see... how difficult some people were finding it, and I was thinking well I'm finding it difficult but not quite that difficult...so it was almost like a comparable thing, y'know (J2:P226-228)

Johnny was clearly touched when he compared himself to his peers and witnessed them as they reeled under this impact. He was also saying that he had been through more difficult processes than those on the course.

...being a gay man

Johnny spoke about his sexuality openly and recognised that his experiences growing up as a gay man had left him with defences:

...I think that I can see why some of the behaviours would be the way they were, or why I'd be the way I was (J2:P85)

Johnny felt that he had left some of these defences behind ('...the way I was') and had chosen to do something different in this group by acknowledging his sexuality openly. In

doing so he sought to define his relationship to his sexuality for this group; it was who he was but not all that he was:

...you're in a group of twenty-three people and you're the only one that's openly admitted that... that's the first thing I want to get out of the way, so that's my sexuality... I would normally never have done that... that's who I am but that's not what I am... and I can own that now... I thought yes I do feel right... and that's on two levels, a) because of the course, and because it made me feel validated to myself (J2:P434-437)

Johnny perceived himself to be the only person there who was openly gay but he was going against his conditions of worth which meant that he had previously dealt with any issues regarding his sexuality privately. Johnny's feeling of 'rightness' illustrated his developing relationships with being the only openly gay man in the group and with himself as a gay man. He could own his sexuality with his peers and validate himself as a gay man.

...and being valid

Johnny felt like a valid member of the group and was committed to the reciprocal support the students offered each other:

...and you help support them through that... and they would come back the other way if you're in that position (J2:P229-230)

The group had become a place where Johnny could feel anger and compassion towards his peers and could also receive support from them. Johnny's global statement here ('...and **you** help support them...') illustrates his sense of sharing this process with his peers.

A developing relationship with his experience

...slowing down

Johnny had developed an acceptance that everyone had their own pace of learning (J2:P3-4) and this included accepting that his pace was slower than he had previously been comfortable with. Before this Johnny was always 'feeling that I needed to be going at some pace all the time' (J2:P121). Johnny had become aware that he was being hurried

along by his sense of not being OK ‘...and needing to measure up and lots of insecurities’ (J2:P122). Johnny’s relationship with his counsellor had challenged him to slow down and this had taught Johnny that:

I’m going to do my own thing at a different pace to other people... and that’s OK... and that in itself was probably the main thing to help me slow down... and when I slowed down... and when I slowed down everything seemed to be so much easier (J2:P123-127)

...a gut connection

Experiencing more fully meant that Johnny was able to connect with his feelings and this was an embodied process of moving from his head to his gut:

Well you see not realising that you have feelings to a degree or be able to recognise them in you... it’s a really good way of experiencing it, because before you know it in your head and as soon as I take something from here [gesturing towards his gut] to my head now, it loses something (J2:P306-308)

...an internal locus of evaluation

Johnny defined this new connection as his developing internal locus of evaluation and described this new understanding as experiential rather than conceptual:

...to quote the text but knowing what the text actually means I have an internal locus of evaluation now (chuckles)... I’m not sort of always looking for outside approval, I still like it, um and it still means the same thing but I... I think it goes down... tracks back again, there’s too much energy involved for me to be sort of... seeking it (chuckles) like that all the time... and I can actually self-nurture to a degree, which is also new for me (J2:P186-188)

Johnny was describing his complicated relationship with external validation which was now valuable but not something that he relied upon entirely because he had developed an internal valuing process ‘in here [his gut]’. This internal valuing process was of value itself and ‘I’m fully intending to come away from here and trust this more’ (J2:P384) even though it was fragile:

...and it feels very new as well, and I’m still very sensitive and very sort of fragile but I still, I can feel, really feel getting better from that... I can feel stronger from that (J2:412)

This quality of fragility was contradicted by a deeper feeling of the momentum of change

...y'know I think I might want to slide back into the... but then I thought you're just too late (chuckles) (J2:P464)

Johnny was full of contradictions as he came to terms with the concept and the experience of an internal locus of evaluation. Having lived with a way of being that was both separate from others and reliant on external validation from a culture which judged his very being as wrong, Johnny was now in an environment which was promoting internal validation and self-acceptance while also actively accepting him. The confusing element was the relationship between the active acceptance and validation that the course was offering while also promoting internal validation. My understanding of the justification for offering external validation in this context was twofold: firstly, that the course was academic and therefore relied on external assessment, and secondly from a Person-Centred perspective the perception of external validation could facilitate the development of the internal valuing process. However, in the midst of the process Johnny seemed lost about where the validation should come from.

Bonding with the group

...stepping in

Johnny's experience of being with the group had been challenging but rewarding because he had chosen to go against his established way of holding himself separate from others. Johnny had become more aware of how hard it was proving to change from:

...being insular for so many years and internalising all my stuff, to actually ask for help with something was actually a big move forward for me but the help and the way I got it made me feel that it was OK for me to ask for it again (J2:P76)

...safety and maturity

By the end of the first year Johnny's perception was that the group had '...matured... from, from [being comfortable]...it's now... it feels like a group, it feels like a safe place' (J2:P106-107). Safety was affected by the 'personal' quality of the group:

...it couldn't be more personal, so there's a safeness in it, where there was a shakiness in it when people for various reasons didn't feel safe (J2:P108)

But was Johnny one of the people who had not felt safe?

A significant aspect of this personal quality was the type of openness students were bringing to their relationships with each other. Openness was now focused on their experiences of being with each other (see *group culture* below) and Johnny defined this in terms of honesty:

...the underpinning of the whole first year, if you're looking for a word for it, is a new honesty (J2:P408)

...exceeding his expectations

Johnny was struck by how much the experience of being in the group had exceeded his expectations:

...I started and had an idea of what it might be like and it's been absolutely nothing like what I had the idea of it being about... it's been much more... much, much more (J2:P234-235)

Johnny's original sense was that the group would be a place where people would be accepting of each other's differences and could therefore be a place where he could be accepted. But the group had also become a place where people could be honest with each other about being with each other.

Group culture

It was clear that Johnny perceived the group to have an established culture which was expressed through specific norms which defined acceptable behaviours. From Johnny's perspective these cultural norms had been introduced by the tutors (and possibly carried over by the students from their preceding Certificate courses) and were then reinforced by the group which used them as ways to evaluate appropriate behaviour within the group; the group had become self-regulating around these norms. Behaviours that were outside of these norms would risk the approbation of the group and a negative assessment by the tutors. Johnny's perception seemed to be that the tutors were maintaining these norms intentionally because they were therapeutic and that the adoption of them was a vital part of the learning on the course. From my perspective these cultural norms created conditions of worth within the group.

...not rescuing

Rescuing was deemed unacceptable within the culture. Although Johnny never specifically defined rescuing, the inference was that it was any behaviour which sought to move an individual (or group) away from their experience, especially if this experience was painful or was being denied or distorted by the individual (or group) process. This condition was reinforced in Johnny's personal counselling:

I was in a position at one point where I was teetering on... I was actually praying to be rescued from a very difficult place... and she didn't and I'm eternally grateful that she didn't (J2:P40-41)

Under the influence of this 'not rescuing' condition Johnny was re-evaluating an aspect of his self:

...so instead of my er... what used to be my natural rescuing tendency... I can see the benefits of not rescuing (J2:P42-43)

The value that Johnny placed on not being rescued was clear:

...and that time when I sat with the feelings, I've told you already when I wanted to be rescued because it was so uncomfortable... but the benefit from it was huge (J2:P310)

The learning for Johnny was that not being rescued had enabled him to stay with his experience and to become aware of a previously unknown aspect of his experience:

I had my shaky period, and as I say I think that's the pivotal thing with my own counsellor not rescuing me and the benefit of not rescuing me and allowing to experience that feeling and sit with it... changed it (J2:P390)

Johnny's counselling was providing an opportunity for him to develop an experiential understanding of the therapeutic significance of these cultural conditions. This illustrated the significance of a coherent fit between the course's conceptualisation of therapy and Johnny's personal counselling.

Johnny felt that not rescuing was also facilitating greater acceptance of individual processes within the group. This was allowing increased honesty because group members' individual processes were being revealed and accepted rather than being blocked through rescuing. For Johnny this was another aspect of the increasing reality of the group:

...and I think that's another thing that, one of the big things actually is this tendency to rescue is getting less and less and less, and the tendency is to accept that people will do it at their own pace... and that's more honest... much more real (J2:P490-492)

In this statement Johnny introduced a new definition of 'real'. Previously he had used 'real' to convey the ways a situation reflected his perception of life outside of the course. Here he was using it to imply that there was reality in allowing individuals their different experiences.

...accepting difference

Accepting individual difference was a significant cultural norm. Johnny's adoption of the non-judgemental attitude that supported this had given him a space to connect empathically with his peers:

...and knowing how vulnerable and how sensitive and how difficult it is, then I've got a real empathy for what it must be like from the other person's... and I do, I'm aware that I'm less, much, much less likely to try and make sense of anyone else's story based on mine because mine's so different (J2:P536-537)

This was also allowing Johnny to validate his own experience.

...challenge

Johnny reflected further on the significance of challenge and on his understanding of the increasing reality this had brought to the group (J2:P87). The significance of challenge had been established earlier when the tutors introduced the concept of the encounter group (J2:P330). The encounter group emphasised challenge as a cultural norm and the impact of this was to change Johnny's perspective of the group from one that had been 'fantastic' (J1) to one that had become 'too comfortable' (J2:P96).

While Johnny welcomed the transition to greater realism it had not been a comfortable process:

It was a difficult transition, it was almost like sort of walking on eggshells to... to get to this area of honesty... because no-one wanted to be seen as um... (J2:P94-96)

Johnny was locating himself within the group by speaking of 'no-one' and 'we'. While Johnny never finished the sentence 'no-one wanted to be seen as...' the inference was

that no-one wanted to share their reactions to their peers or to their peers' material because this might be seen as being judgemental. To understand this Johnny drew on his developing understanding of the course's conceptualisation of challenge as an essential aspect of congruence:

...in actual fact I think it... it was a change and instead of talking about congruence you were actually practicing it (J2:P98)

The introduction of challenge diminished Johnny's fear of being judged for expressing this aspect of his self which, from the previous interview, it seemed that Johnny had tended to suppress. The external validation he was now receiving allowed Johnny to be more unchecked in the group compared to his previous experiences when:

...there was still an air up to that point, and for me as well, of I have to do right, I have to pass this course, I have to make sure what I'm doing is acceptable (J2:P112)

Now challenging was being valued he could bring more of his previously hidden self into the group and be acceptable. In this environment Johnny was becoming aware of how his response to the idea of challenge had changed:

...even saying the word [challenge] doesn't set off a ping in me and my shoulders go up... (J2:P361)

He could understand challenge in terms of:

Challenge means OK then what have you got to say? And then think about what am I going to say back to that... you don't have to agree in the middle of it and that's fine as well... that's new for me (J2:P362-364)

Challenge was defined as the congruent expression of one's experience of another. For the recipient this required openness to the challenge which was then followed by reflection and an open dialogue with the challenger which did not need to result in agreement; challenge could raise awareness of difference and disagreement was acceptable. This had implications for Johnny's sense of not being OK and the ways he tried to be in his relationships; he did not always need to like (accept) and/or be liked by (be acceptable to) everyone.

...contradictions

A culture in which challenge was encouraged, support was evident and rescuing was not permissible led to confusing experiences when the group's conditions contradicted themselves. In this environment people could be challenged for being challenging:

...someone said in the group, quite rightly, you're attacking, it wasn't an attack, we were exchanging ideas about what he'd said, but it felt to one girl in the group that we were attacking him [another peer] (J2:P334)

This raised a question about the subjective legitimacy of any challenge and Johnny's reaction seemed to be to imply legitimacy in numbers; the 'we' against the 'one girl'. However, the peer maintained their position:

And she said you're supposed to respect the difference, it was another penny dropping moment, yes of course you are... they might be, but he might have his own stuff going on that makes him that way (J2:P335)

This lone peer had suggested a hierarchy in the group's contradictory conditions; respecting difference trumped challenge. This moved Johnny on from his previous understanding that challenge was sacred because it was an expression of congruence and gave him a more nuanced understanding of the relationships between the therapeutic conditions. The learning that Johnny took from this relied on this peer's challenge because with this she moved him from a position in which he had been frozen by this contradiction in the conditions. However, I was struck by the ways that no one seemed to notice that the 'one girl's' challenge could have been perceived as rescuing her peer; challenging was more significant than not-rescuing.

Receiving feedback

...becoming more open

Johnny's not-academic self-concept was being challenged by his developing openness to feedback. Previously Johnny's reaction had been to bat away positive feedback and to label it as insincere:

...because my natural reaction is to say oh don't be silly, don't be silly, no I thought, yes I have and thank you... and I've learnt how to say thank you and leave it there (J2:P152-153)

Being academic was becoming an acceptable way to gain validation.

Relationships with the tutors

...becoming more complex

Johnny made it clear that he '...love[d] them to bits' (J2:P340) however:

...I've had experiences where I've disagreed with them and I've actually had experiences where I've resented a couple of them... but that was me learning... that was me learning to take constructive feedback... but at the time I didn't like them... I didn't like to be told that because I was sensitive um... but looking back on it, it was the only way I would have learnt (J2:P351-355)

Johnny was making sense of this reaction in terms of a learning process about being too sensitive; he had to become more resilient to constructive feedback because his over-sensitivity was blocking his development. Sensitivity in this context was being judged as a negative quality.

...their qualities

Johnny understood this learning process as being rooted in his perceptions of the tutors' qualities:

...they're real people, but they're kind and compassionate and caring people... and that comes across, that really comes across... watching them there's a passion they have and a caring they have that supersedes teacher, it's human being (J2:P372-373)

Their evident humanity gave the tutors authority in this context so that:

...you accept it [feedback] more because you lose that tutor/pupil relationship... and I thought oh God, this isn't a game for you this is real (J2:P376)

Johnny felt more open to the tutors because his perception of their humanity undid the tutor/pupil dyad; for Johnny this was real authority. A significant aspect of Johnny's perception of the tutors' humanity was that they demonstrated therapeutic attitudes:

...because hearing it that way is different from hearing it in a book or whatever... because you experience it... that's the difference for me, because you experience it (J2:P380-383)

The tutors offered Johnny working models of their conceptualisation of the Person-Centred approach which provided valuable experiential learning.

Being with Johnny in our second interview

In this interview I felt less of a pull to be the expert. We seemed to find a shared language in Person-Centred vocabulary and it felt as though Johnny had stepped across into my world and was walking around there in a more informed way. A lot of interesting material came up which at times felt overwhelming but I hoped that the quality of the material would not be lost in the quantity. However, when it came to analysing this material I kept losing Johnny in what felt like a maze of contradictions created by the words and the concepts. Johnny was talking about his gut but I was hearing it with my head rather than with my own gut. I was becoming more aware of my tendency to prioritise making sense of things rather than being with them and also noticing that Johnny and I were spending time making sense of his perceptions; it was as if we were jointly creating a neat but nevertheless confused map of this terrain rather than stumbling around in it and feeling the textures of the various surfaces under our bare feet or getting mired in the occasional bogs and shocked by the sudden cliff edges. My overall sense was that rather than feeling more connected to Johnny I lost him behind a mist of new language and re-defined old language that provided an academic understanding about how to be more connected.

Johnny's Stage 3 Interview

This interview took place two weeks before the end of the course. Johnny appeared to me as more confident and spoke with easy authority. My perception was of being with someone who was more solid than he had been in our previous meetings.

Being different

...being a gay man

Johnny's experience of the course was still being influenced by the impact of growing up in a homophobic society. He spoke with irony of how the course had raised his awareness of some of his own internalised homophobia:

...and also your own sort of realising about things, I mean we had this sex and sexuality, sexuality and gender um... er... um residential, and I became aware in that that although I'm gay I actually (chuckles) sometimes quite homophobic myself (J3:P194)

Internalised homophobia came out in Johnny's feeling of invalidity and the shame which had held him separate from others. Johnny was becoming more accepting of how growing up in this culture had shaped his process by making him self-sufficient. He understood this in terms of taking care of himself in a hostile world and how that hostility had led to his internalised fear and shame about being gay:

...and things like you know I'm defensive about certain parts of it and I thought hang on, thirty-five years of living in the shadow and internalising your feelings that would kind of make you that way, so I kind of accept that part of me... yeah and... you know, and, and fear and shame and all that kind of thing (J3:P196-197)

Johnny made a commitment to better understand his relationship to his sexuality:

...you need to either understand it better, accept it better or do something with it because it's actually getting in the way of you being able to live (J3:P197)

This commitment came from Johnny's awareness that he was still judging himself as not being valid and was therefore muting his voice in the group. Johnny understood this in terms of the cultural influences that he had absorbed during his development:

...I think, if you think about it logically if you live in a society where newspapers, broadcasts, religion, whatever, all that sort of thing say you're wrong, or your way of living is wrong, it's illegal, it's a disease, you brought this HIV on yourselves, all that kind of reinforcement of you being less than, of you being never up to the mark, of you being basically substandard, you believe, you believe that you're substandard, and so it takes a long time for you to either forgive those people who have put those judgements on you either through ignorance or fear, or to do something like I've done which is

try to understand the ignorance and fear and you know the fact the there's some people might think a certain way doesn't make it so, it's just a thought it's illegal, it's a disease... I can understand about being judged and, and how difficult that is and what kind of labels that puts on you and how you label yourself (J3:P217-218)

Johnny was talking about moving from internalised judgements of wrongness and of being substandard to a position where he could see this as 'just a thought' in others; he was shifting his belief that because he was gay he was fundamentally not OK and was connecting with a sense of his own validity.

Johnny was seeking an internal peace where his sexuality was more comfortably integrated into his being. He was searching for self-acceptance so that he could trust his motives when he wanted to disclose his sexuality and also allow himself to hear others more clearly without the perpetual filtering for awkward questions. Johnny had recently found some of this peace and had not got lost in his old reactions when those questions came up:

...I've actually come to a peace with it, if somebody says have you got children or are you married... but it's so new for me for me to have that rather than go into that stuff (J3:P226-227)

Through his experiences on the course Johnny had become aware that his history around his sexuality had given him something additional to work with:

...I didn't think I'd realised, forget the other sort of awarenesses that go on, I felt I'd got an extra one in some ways which was that some people, the sexuality, they grow up, they have children and that's a given kind of thing, mine's different to that, it's not worse or you know it just was different to that (J3:P229)

From Johnny's perspective some, and probably most of his peers had had different experiences with their sexuality because they had not had to explore, justify or suffer for the way they were. Johnny was careful to equalise these experiences; for all of the fear and shame he went through his experiences were just 'different... not worse'. One way of hearing this is as a statement of the course's culture of accepting difference, another way is as an expression of Johnny's tendency to diminish his own experience. This suggests that there was the potential for collusion between the course culture and Johnny's

process whereby he could feel that to diminish his own experience in this way was acceptable.

While Johnny was clear that he had more to deal with around his sexuality, he felt misjudged when his peers made assumptions about the impact of sessions on the topic:

...there's been a couple of times when someone has said to me "God sexuality and gender [session], you'll have loads to talk about", and I'm like why would I have more to talk about than you? (J3:P231)

Johnny sounded angry and yet he had previously said that he did have '...an extra one' to deal with. While Johnny's internal relationship with his sexuality was less defended he was still sensitised to being judged by others and could 'embellish' their comments (see below).

A developing relationship with his experience

...reality and the truth

Johnny frequently discussed 'reality' and 'the truth' in uncertain terms as '...it's only how I perceived it, I don't know if it actually was' (J3:P5). This suggested a growing conceptualisation of the subjective nature of perception and also illustrated Johnny's doubts about his own perceptions. Johnny was becoming more aware of his process of taking a defensive position by distorting his experience to avoid anticipated judgements '...sort of erm... embellishing something to make me feel more right for being in that place' (J3:P7). Johnny was now seeing that this process kept him separate from others by assuming that they were judging him. Awareness of this process was also allowing Johnny to connect more with his experience:

...I know that um, my second guesses are getting less and my reactions and my sort of my response now are genuinely how I feel about things now (J3:P135)

This was clearly an ongoing process as Johnny could still embellish (see *sexuality* above).

...growing closer to others

Getting beyond this process of distortion was a relief for Johnny because he then found himself able to perceive:

...how they [peers, tutors] actually do feel about you, to get past your own stuff first and let that in, and run the risk of it maybe being critical or whatever, but it never was... I think that's kind of, I just think Jesus, that's such a relief (J3:P232)

The judgements that Johnny expected had never occurred in the group.

Process of change

...towards valuing himself

At the end of the course Johnny felt that:

...the biggest sort of..... personal development thing or awareness that I've come up against, that actually I like me... I understand me a little bit more now (J3:P204)

Self-liking went hand in hand with self-understanding and Johnny's description was of a process of sitting with his feelings and processing them on an embodied level:

...I'm reflective, I'm always reflecting on practice, when I've been with clients, when I've been to [college], reflecting is what I prefer to do now rather than analyse, because it's analysing that screws me up, thinking about it is where I will never get anywhere with it... sitting with how I actually feel about it and trying to work out what that's about... that's, that's where I get some kind of movement with things (J3:P209-210)

Movement was Johnny's way of describing his shift from thinking to feeling; from his head to his gut.

Bonding with the group

...the impact of competition

Johnny spoke of how he had initially found the group to be:

...really kind of useful and really kind of bonding from the experiential side of things at the outset of it and then it took a bit of a dip and I lost confidence in the group and sharing in the group and it became quite competitive for a while (J3:P4)

Johnny's focus on how the group had been useful and how the bonding had been experiential illustrated the ways in which Johnny's connection with the group had been instrumental to his self-development project, it also implied a distance from the group because his peers had utility rather than being; 'I-It' relationships rather than 'I-Thou' (Buber, 1958). There had been competition over space in the group and Johnny had reacted to this by withdrawing. He knew that some of his peers '...like[d] to be heard and perhaps more than others' (J3:P5) and validated his reaction through his perception that other peers were also withdrawing because of a lack of space.

...and opening up

At the end of the course Johnny was surprised to find himself opening up to the group again:

...I didn't feel as though I was heard and so I was really, I sort of felt then well what's the point? And I got really a bit withdrawn myself about it, and I got quite sort of resentful about it in a way, about the people that were sort of hogging the space, or that felt as though they were hogging the space, and then a couple of weeks ago I had a really big, almost like a catharsis of my feelings came up because, completely by chance somebody mentioned something that linked and resonated with me, and normally I've got a sort of system that I can stop myself sort of going into anything, but this it was just too big and I just sort of opened up, and I was really impacted by the group and how much they were there (J3:P6)

This moved Johnny from the resentment and judgement of his peers that rumbled around in his head and down into a gut level connection that pushed him back into the group where he then felt heard and held by his peers.

...being judgemental

Johnny perceived the group to be a complicated environment and reacted to it by being wary which led him to separate himself by judging some of his peers because '...I also think that sometimes I can sniff insincerity...' (J3:P33). Johnny's use of '...I also think...' implies that this response came from his head rather than his gut. Johnny seemed less sure of himself and at such moments could retreat back into his head.

...the impact of camaraderie and care

However, Johnny also spoke of his connection with the group in terms of ‘...it’s the kind of genuine concern and support for you as a co-student’ (J3:P83). While co-student may sound formal this support had included:

...genuine concern for you as a person and that puts you in the right space to be more receptive to stuff... there’s a real camaraderie and caring for each other in the group (J3:P83)

Johnny’s perception of the genuine concern of his peers made it easier for him to hear their experiences and their feedback and to feel part of the group.

Johnny’s perceptions of the group were contradictory because it could be a place where his peers could be both genuine and insincere. This had made it hard for Johnny to be consistently open in the group and was complicated by the influence of his process of invalidating his experiences which could also prevent him from allowing himself his voice:

...part of it was at the middle of the course, towards three quarters of the way through um... having a voice but having it muted, or muting it yourself for a long time and then actually finding it’s OK to have one (J3:P236)

There was a confusing overlap between Johnny’s perception of being silenced by others and silencing himself; was his voice being muted by others or was he muting it? Yet experiences of allowing himself his voice had taught Johnny that his voice was valid and this perception of validity came from an interplay between the external validation of the group and Johnny’s own developing self-validation. He would risk having a voice because he felt some validity and if this voice was validated by his peers he would experience greater validity and therefore allow himself more of a voice.

Group culture

...not rescuing

Not rescuing was still a significant aspect of the group culture and one with which Johnny was negotiating. This involved developing a new understanding of his tendency to rescue which he now understood as a way of keeping the peace:

...I used to be anything for a safe easy life and I don't like making waves and that's all to do with wanting it to be and rescue tendency and all that kind of stuff... and you know to a certain degree I still have that occurring in my life now, it's very difficult to get completely away from that but at least I'm aware when it's going on (J3:P99)

He was becoming more willing to make waves and to be visible in the group.

...facilitating growth

Johnny was still struggling with this rescuing and was synthesising it on a theoretical level by connecting it with the course's conceptualisation of how to facilitate growth:

...you're aware that you can't rescue but you're also aware of a colleague that's taken a huge dent for whatever reason because, so you're in a Catch 22, I want to sort of "facilitate your growth" rather than help you but of course what you want to do is help (J3:P169)

Johnny's inconsistent use of 'you' and 'I' shows that he felt that his response to rescuing was both global and individual; it was something that the group had to contend with and it was something that he felt deeply. This conflict was challenging for Johnny (J3:P171) but '...that's the nature of the beast' (J3:P172). Johnny linked this understanding to his ongoing experiences as a client which again highlighted the significance of congruence between the course's therapeutic agenda and that of his personal counsellor:

...my own experiences of it in my own counselling of the benefits of not having that [rescuing] done and the growth and the, you know, the painful... touching on stuff that I would have loved to have been rescued from and I wasn't, but I'm really up to scratch and aware of that now (J3:P187)

Receiving feedback

...openness to criticism

Johnny spoke of how he was more open to challenging feedback from his peers:

...I really noticed that my process now is I will be very open um... to constructive criticism, to things that are you know other people notice that perhaps I don't (J3:P66)

However, Johnny could struggle with this new openness because some feedback needed time to be processed before he could find the learning within it. When he could find that learning it was often profound and of more value than academic learning:

...I got some feedback and I really didn't like it, I didn't like it but I could actually come away from that and think well OK, let's have a look at that and think about that and actually yeah I can see what you mean by that, and that learning sits far, far deeper in me than reading any book or doing an essay (J3:P86).

...the value of feedback

For Johnny any feedback could be uncomfortable because feedback and judgement were inextricably linked. This relationship meant that Johnny could struggle to allow himself to be seen because this would inevitably lead to being judged. Johnny knew that one of his reasons for remaining separate from the group at the start of the course was because '...I wasn't prepared to take that risk [of being seen and therefore judged]' (J3:P46). However over time Johnny's experiences of not being judged by the group left him abler to express himself and more open to feedback. For Johnny the group was the 'the only place where I would get the sort of feedback that would be honest and genuine' (J3:P85):

...it felt like a really unique place, well in fact the only place where I felt comfortable and said well what about that? How does that sit with people and I got some feedback and I really didn't like it, I didn't like it but I could actually come away from that and think well OK, let's have a look at that and think about that and actually yeah I can see what you mean by that (J3:P86)

Johnny was open to learning about himself through feedback because this linked to his desire for personal development. Therefore, a significant aspect of Johnny's conceptualisation of personal development was that it was carried out in relationship with others and was informed by their responses to him, which in turn were informed by their perceptions and judgements of him; personal development was influenced by external valuing processes. I wondered whether the significance of external evaluation in Johnny's process may have been a factor in why I could find myself losing contact with him and feeling confused as I tried to connect with him within his story. It was as if he was offering me something that seemed solid but was also implicitly asking for validation.

Relationships with the tutors

...developing depth and intensity

Johnny felt that his relationships with the tutors had developed:

...the relationships with the tutors so, second year's much more intense.... There's a level of trust and a level of um... realness that comes much more to the fore in the second, I feel anyway for me, and they felt much, much more approachable, much more real, much more supportive um (J3:P18-19)

...increasing reality

Johnny acknowledged that his earlier perceptions of the tutors had been distorted by his expectations of being judged and spoke of how 'I didn't see or wasn't prepared to see before [their genuineness and concern]' (J3:P43) because:

I think there was a threat to me... I avoid it, quite clearly and concisely putting myself up for evaluation by anybody or anything... I think it's about being judged or about not being good enough... and the idea of somebody saying you're good at that or you're not good at that, I wasn't prepared to take that risk (J3:P44-46)

...annoyance and power

However not all the reality of these relationships was welcome:

...I got a fairly bad [feedback from a tutor], not a bad but to me it was a bad... um skills, for the last, last night, and it kind of stuck with me and I thought, for the first time I thought I don't agree with that (J3:P50)

This had an impact on Johnny's relationship with the tutor and his initial reaction was to acknowledge that he could not get on with everybody:

I was a bit peeved by it and um... I think it highlighted that I, no matter how much I am in a group congruently that I can or I can be expected to voice, even if it's to myself that I don't get on with everybody and that's an honesty I can sit with now, it doesn't have to be tied up with a bow (J3:P58)

Johnny seemed to be changing his understanding of the relationship between being congruent and being liked/liking such that congruence would not necessarily lead to being globally liked/liking. Therefore, being liked/liking had been a significant aspect of Johnny's relationships with the tutors. However, Johnny seemed to diminish his reaction because 'a bit peeved' did not reflect the physical expression of anger behind those

words. Johnny's perception was of feeling misjudged by this tutor and his response was to pull away and to negotiate internally about whether or not he should challenge them. Challenging a tutor was complicated for Johnny because his desire to be congruent (and to therefore satisfy one of the course's cultural conditions) was mitigated by his desire to do well on the course which included being liked by and expressing liking for the tutors. To challenge a tutor was an expression of the necessary congruence but might invite personal disapproval from someone who also had the power of assessment. It was also tied up with Johnny's relationship with academia because he tended to confer greater validity on those who he perceived as being more intelligent than himself. Johnny was negotiating his way around this complicated power imbalance that included aspects of structural power and his own sense of relational validity:

...it's either I have the conviction, that's not the right word perhaps or the... the congruence to say you know that's bothered me... and to go back at it and take that risk (J3:P65)

Johnny's 'that's bothered me' again did not match his affect because he sounded angry and also looked hurt. His struggle to find the right word to fit his experience (was it conviction or congruence?) showed Johnny trying to find a way to validate these powerful feelings that he could not accurately express and in order to do so he took support from the external validation of a theoretical construct.

Johnny's reaction to this feedback went deeper than feeling criticised for his skills:

...this is... er me being really honest about it, there have been times when I've thought, I don't think you like me, and I've said this before about another tutor and I've realised over a period of time that that was my stuff, I can actually put my hand on my heart and say that was my stuff, and I've actually got past that and have a fantastic relationship with that person because of [their] honesty and because of my inability to take it initially and because of my looking at it and realising that it was founded, and I can sit with that, but this one I thought no, there's been a couple of instances and I thought no, I don't like you very much (J3:P70)

Johnny's initial reaction to challenging feedback had been to feel disliked. But Johnny felt he had processed this (which linked with his earlier self-judgement of being too sensitive) and was now open to challenging feedback providing his perception was that the tutor was honest. However Johnny judged this particular piece of feedback as being a

misjudgement and an inauthentic expression of the tutor's dislike. Johnny's reaction was to push this tutor away and to feel dislike for them. For all of the strength of these feelings, Johnny experienced fleeting doubt about their validity although he would again reflect and find truth in the fact that the feeling kept arising:

...so again that's, I don't know whether it's because it's fresh in my mind or whether I truly feel that, but to keep saying it I must feel it (J3:P72)

This internal measure validated Johnny's perception and overcame his old process around being too sensitive in his reactions to feedback from people in authority:

...and it smacks to me of not feeling fair... and that's not a word I like to put up there because I see that sometimes, as is that you not being able to take criticism is that because you're sensitive, and that's gone, that side of me has changed, this is coming from a different place, this is coming from that's not fair, end of, no processing that (J3:P92-93)

This unfairness seemed to come from a place deep within Johnny that went beyond his 'over-sensitivity' and created a clarity that fixed his perception of the tutor. He validated this by connecting his reaction with his new self-awareness and self-acceptance:

...and I think that's new again for me to be able to sort of say that and to think that's my stuff and I'm not comfortable with it (J3:P98)

With this Johnny could then resolve the tension between his desire to be congruent and the tutor's power by reconceptualising his reaction from angry withdrawal to a calm and adult desire for greater understanding:

...and I do feel quite confident to say, not to challenge but just to say I need better understanding of this please, and that's fine (J3:P129)

In that sentence Johnny's passionate clarity seemed to evaporate and I was left feeling that he had withdrawn from his relationship with this tutor and was now keeping the peace by handing over his power while also internally hanging onto his perception of injustice.

Being with Johnny in our third interview

I was struck by my perception of Johnny's apparent solidity compared to our previous sessions when he had felt, in comparison, less solid and therefore harder to see and to connect with. I was also left confused and trying to work out some of the mist of contradictions that seemed to settle over our time together. Johnny asked me for feedback during this interview because he was interested in hearing how I had experienced him over the two years. In the context of his developing Person-Centred vocabulary I noticed Johnny's use of 'experienced' rather than 'perceived'; was he looking to me for the truth of how he was? I expressed my feeling of his increasing solidity but did not share my confusion and the feeling of greater distance because I could not quite grasp that sense and I was concerned that it could sound critical. I was holding back from giving Johnny the honest feedback that he told me he valued and instead gave him the part of that honesty that I knew he would value because it fitted with his developing self-concept. Johnny was pleased with my feedback and spoke of how it fitted with his own perception of being able to be more fully present with himself and with others. This encounter seemed to sum up my perception of Johnny's process at that point in time; I saw him as feeling more connected to his own experience while still seeking external validation of his perceptions. Reflecting on this again as I went through the analysis I was left wondering whether Johnny had become more fully present or whether he had adopted a new language that spoke of deeper connection.

Johnny's process

Table 4: Johnny's Process Themes

Participant: Johnny (3) Process Emergent Themes Summary		
Superordinate Themes	Themes	Line
Relationship with self	Developing relationship with difference <i>finding deeper ways to be different</i>	J1:P26 J1:P118 J2:P134 J3:P194
Self in relationship with others	Becoming lost between experience, perception and external evaluation <i>a gut connection with his experience</i> <i>perception and reality</i> <i>external evaluation</i>	J2:P306-308 J3:P135 J3:P5 J3:P85
Self in relationship with others	Learning a new way to be <i>internalising the modelling</i>	J2:P373-374 J2:P380-383
Relationship with the approach	Caught between 'being' and 'doing' <i>adopting cultural conditions:</i> i) empathy ii) self-disclosure iii) challenge iv) internal locus of evaluation v) not rescuing	J1:P128-129 J3:P83 J1:P108 J1:P111 J1:P179 J2:P98 J2:P186-188 J2:P490 J3:P169 J3:P187

Superordinate themes

Relationship with self

Johnny's **developing relationship with difference** began with a focus on being different because of his lack of experience in *academia* (e.g. J1:P26) while very quietly acknowledging his *sexuality* (e.g. J1:P118). By the end of the first year his sense of difference was rooted in being more committed to *personal development work* than his peers were (e.g. J2:P134) but at the end of the course it was almost exclusively focused on his *sexuality* (e.g. J3:P194, P197). Johnny's sense of difference brought with it deep

personal invalidity which may have colluded with the course's culture which included powerful messages about accepting and valuing difference in others; this seemed to increase Johnny's sense that others were more valid than himself.

Self in relationship with others

Johnny's experiences in the group and with the tutors seemed to lead him to **becoming lost between experience, perception and external evaluation**. Johnny often spoke of his *developing gut connection with his experience* in terms of slowing down and shifting from his head down into his gut (e.g., J2:P306-308) and this expressed a richer experience of congruence than that being defined by Johnny's perception of the course's model of congruence as challenge. By the end he was speaking about the relationship between his *perception and reality* (e.g. J3:P5). Johnny's use of the word 'real' became more complicated because it could describe his internal locus of evaluation or it could refer to *external evaluation* of his perception (J3:P85). Johnny was **learning a new way to be** through a process of *internalising the modelling* from his peers and especially from his tutors to whom he gave greater authority (J2:P373-374, P380-383). This was problematic when it came to Johnny's confusion about whether he should challenge a particular tutor and here Johnny experienced a significant challenge to students on Person-Centred courses; can students be truly congruent with tutors when tutors hold the power of assessment?

Relationship with the model

This learning could leave Johnny **caught between 'being' and 'doing'** the Person-Centred approach as he went through a process of *adopting the cultural conditions* imposed by the course. Paradoxically these externally imposed conditions included the reliance on an internal locus of evaluation (J2:P186-188) and so Johnny could end up talking about being congruent (J2:P98). Johnny's process was to develop a set of course-centred conditions of worth which would shape his developing self-concept and inform the direction of his developing therapeutic self-concept.

Being with Johnny's process

On one level, I felt increasingly equal with Johnny and perceived a developing solidity about him. This fitted closely with his perception of becoming more connected to his experience and to his internal locus of evaluation. However I could also connect with a feeling of distance between myself and Johnny. Initially this was rooted in my roles of tutor, counsellor and academic but later this became subtler as we seemed to be sharing our experiences as peers. Reading through the interviews it seemed as though Johnny had become more academic and had developed a fluent Person-Centred vocabulary through which he could connect with himself and with others. In 'conventional' academic terms this would be a good result. His new vocabulary was therefore a way to connect with people within this exclusive context. However, I wondered whether it also served as a way to keep people separate because he was talking the theory rather than being it.

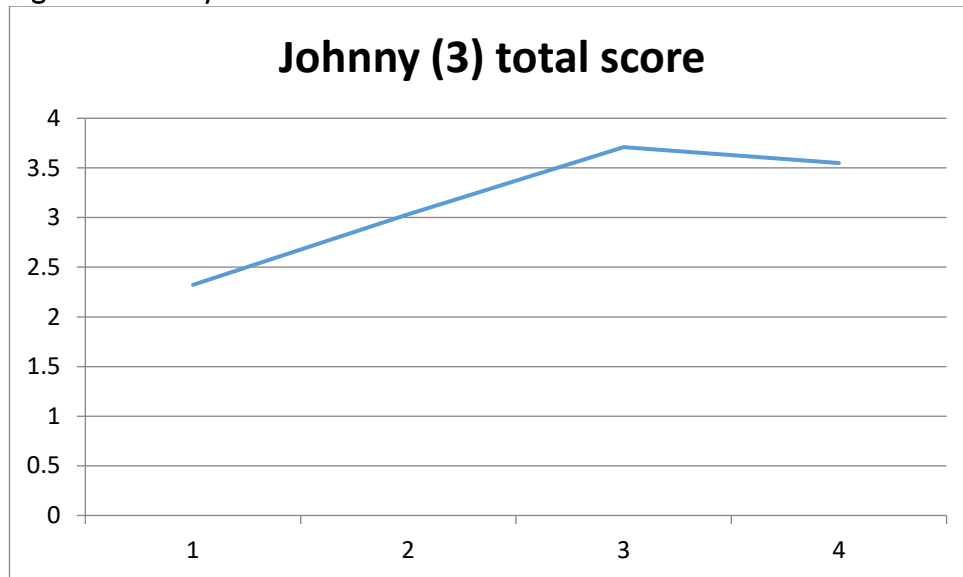
Triangulating Johnny's material with my supervisor raised my awareness of the incongruence between the transcripts and my perceptions of being with Johnny. The written data presented gut connections and shifts from the head to the body while my perceptions spoke of distance and a confused perception of being met with a mist of words that spoke about clarity of connection. Some of this was undoubtedly my way of being which I was increasingly realising was focused more on sense-making than on being. Johnny's interviews also alerted me to the possibility that one aspect of this was my research focus; I was engaging with the double hermeneutic and was therefore looking for the meaning that I was making of my participants' meaning-making. However, this was still leaving me relatively blinkered off from a significant aspect of the multiple ways that we make sense as organisms with/through and in our bodies in relationship with our environments. Here I feel (or is it think?) that Johnny and I may have been implicitly colluding to stay safely in our heads while we talked about gut feelings.

Strathclyde Inventory

Johnny completed four SIs. He declined to discuss the first three in the interviews because he preferred to stay with his immediate experience rather than reflect on the past. The results show Johnny's perception of his increasing level of functioning

throughout his time on the course. Notably Johnny's level of functioning decreased after he left the course.

Figure 7: Johnny's SI Data



This suggests that when Johnny was removed from the validation of the course his level of functioning decreased. His decline after the course suggests that any gains were impermanent because they were conditional on the positive regard from the course.

In terms of Rogers's Stages of Process Johnny became more fluid. At the start of the course he held a fixed view of himself; for example, he was not academic and he was wrong because of his sexuality. He had grown up with experiences of external negative regard for a significant aspect of his self which he had internalised into a deep sense of not being OK. He had then developed a self-concept which he perceived as acceptable and sought harmonious relationships while anticipating judgement and challenge from others which aligned with his internalised valuing process. As time passed Johnny became more aware of his process of distortion (embellishment) and began to more accurately experience the unconditional positive regard of his peers. In this context he found new ways to be acceptable within a defined culture which he valued.

Johnny's increase in score over time may have been a function of the practice effect which may have been increased because of his increasing familiarity with Person-Centred language and specifically with Person-Centred ideas about therapeutic change. If these factors are combined with a desire for personal development, they could distort the

results. However this suggests that Johnny's post-course decline in functioning could be greater than recorded.

8.4 Maggie's story

Some background

Maggie had previously trained and worked in mental health services. Her decision to undertake counselling training was to facilitate a career change away from the psychiatric/medical model and towards an approach to mental wellbeing closer to her own ideology. This was based on Maggie's experiences of being in psychological distress. Maggie had previously experienced an extended period of physical illness and 'panic attacks, anxiety, mild depression' (M1:P50) and had rejected her GP's offer of 'happy pills' instead choosing a 'more holistic way' (M1:P51) to treat her illness. She visited a complementary therapist and found significant psychological healing which she later attributed to receiving therapeutic conditions:

...it did work and I think that in hindsight at the time what I had from him, he basically gave me the core conditions really (M1:P72)

Maggie spoke of these experiences with passion and seemed to be expecting to receive more of the same from the course.

Emergent themes were selected from each interview which related to Maggie's theme of connecting with individuals and groups while on the course. The themes were reduced to three superordinate themes which describe Maggie's: *relationship with self*, *self in relationship with others* and *relationship with the approach*. The relationships between these levels of themes are shown in the Table 5.

Table 5: Maggie's Themes

<i>Themes from Maggie's interviews</i>		
Superordinate themes	Emergent themes	Interview
Relationship with self	Being different	1
	Process of change	1, 2 & 3
Self in relationship with others	Bonding with the group	1, 2 & 3
	Course culture	1
	Relationship with the tutors	1, 2 & 3
Relationship with the approach	Being Person-Centred	1, 2 & 3

Our interviews took place in Maggie's apartment. The first was after she had been on the course for three months, the second was towards the end of the first year and our final meeting was just before the end of the course. Maggie was always enthusiastic about the interviews and told me that she felt the process was supporting her ongoing self-reflection which was part of her engagement with the course.

Maggie's Stage 1 Interview

Maggie was aware of the impact the course was having on her and sounded drained as she admitted that '...you know it's a difficult course' (M1:P353).

Being different

...did she have the right to be there?

Maggie was sensitive to the fact that she was alone among her peers in being accepted onto the course without having first completed a Counselling Skills course. The tutor (Tutor 1) who had interviewed Maggie had waived this entry requirement because of Maggie's previous experiences working in Mental Health. Initially this left Maggie feeling vulnerable about her place on the course:

...maybe if I show that I make a mistake then it is almost somebody could go like "oh I shouldn't have given a chance to this person she's not good enough because she's not ready" (M1:P495)

By the first interview this had settled and Maggie could say:

...I'm doing a good job, I'm good enough and more confident, more comfortable with it... although the fear was there at the beginning but now that fear is slightly going... and now I know I've got a place on this course and I'm good enough for it (M1:P521-525)

Process of change

...connecting with her experience

Maggie was becoming more connected with her experience and was, therefore, seeing through the distortions which had previously led to her perception of a dark world:

...during one of the sessions when I was playing the client I pointed out how my life has actually improved since I started this course... because I was scared at the start that I would be finding out more shit about my life or more shit about myself or whatever... and then all of a sudden think how can I deal with it? Well instead of that this course has given me the opportunity to see my life in a different perspective and well actually how my life is so bloody better than I thought... and I'm in a bit of a... of a... you know, I'm in a nice place now (M1:P651-655)

Maggie felt different from her peers because they all seemed to be struggling with their lives whereas she felt content. She was longing for someone to connect with:

...but I'm the only one on the course who feels like that at the moment... everyone seems to be so complicated... and um... I just wish there was somebody else in the group that felt like me (M1:P658-660)

The most significant part of Maggie's change in awareness was that 'now I'm less angry I'm more accepting, and I just think to myself, you know what, I'm tired with being angry' (M1:P674).

Bonding with the group

...making judgements

Maggie was becoming more aware of herself through her reactions to her peers and sounded self-critical when she hesitantly admitted that 'I just feel like..... a bit judgemental of them' (M1:P177). But judgements were Maggie's expression of her embodied reaction to some of her peers because:

...there's something about them that um I I... if I trust my gut feeling it's not right to me (M1:P181)

This highlighted an aspect of Maggie's process that involved her gut reaction and her cognitive process of 'I try to work people out a bit' (M1:P347). Working out seemed to be

Maggie's way of meeting this new group and involved evaluating individuals to whom she had a gut reaction.

Maggie's discussion of feeling judgemental was dominated by her perception of one peer because '...she's got this mask where you know where I'm fine I'm always happy' (M1:P227). Maggie perceived this peer as being incongruent and was feeling physically and emotionally uncomfortable in her presence, Maggie squirmed as spoke of her. Maggie found herself consistently working with the 'happy mask' peer and sighed as she spoke of how she was already getting a bit tired (M1:P229) of the impact this was having. I could feel a weary weight in my chest as she spoke. Maggie projected her idea of how she felt this peer might be when giving skills feedback:

it's almost like um... I can't help about um..... going in my head like ah "oh I bet you know she's going to be really judgemental"... and that and really critical of my counselling skills whatever (M1:P231- 232)

...disclosure and congruence

Maggie understood the group as a place where she could and should express herself openly which she defined as congruence. However, there were two forces at play in Maggie's engagement with the group: an injunction to talk openly and Maggie's internal self-regulation around safety. Maggie spoke of how '... I'm cautious with, you know quite cautious with but at the same time... erm... I don't feel unsafe' (M1:P176). It seemed important that Maggie made it clear that she was not unsafe because this expressed her idea of how the group should be (it should be a safe space) while also expressing something about her self-concept (I should feel safe). This linked with Maggie's working out of her peers and her awareness of her own reactions which influenced the depth of her disclosure within the group:

...and I'm particularly sensitive to the fact that hey I'm gonna talk and I'm gonna talk when I feel it is safe for me and it is fine for me (M1:P197)

Safety was significant to Maggie so for example Maggie's reaction to the 'happy mask' peer led her to limit her self-disclosure because '...I'm very aware of her and the way I don't want to create animosity' (M1:P280). Maggie was tip-toeing because she had a feeling that there was something darker lurking behind that happy mask and so she needed to tread carefully to avoid unleashing that darkness. Here Maggie was expressing

how important it was that she made the group safe for herself. Being in the group invoked caution and Maggie was:

...also very wary of what I say and the way I say it, it's like I'm a little bit on the defensive all the time (M1:P349)

...sensitivity to others

Maggie's caution was also linked to her sensitivity to the needs of her peers:

I might want to say something but um... maybe I'm too cautious but sometimes I let ten minutes or so go, five minutes or so... um... cos um.... I don't know, I want to kind of..... see if somebody else has got that urge to come in before me... unless I've got that urge to go straight away (M1:P209-211)

Maggie ascribed this to her perception that:

...there are a couple of people I realise that because of their experience and 'cos they've been scarred in the past I'm also very wary of what I say and the way I say it, it's like I'm a little bit on the defensive all the time (M1:P349)

Maggie's judgement of these peers' vulnerability meant that:

...I've got to be careful and really think about how to phrase things... which I find sometimes energy and emotionally consuming (M1:P358-361)

However, Maggie was emphatic in telling me that '...it's not that I'm not being genuine' (M1:P380) (see below).

Course culture

From Maggie's perception the group had a culture within which certain behaviours were valued more than others.

...taking up space

One aspect of this was the amount of space that individuals occupied within the group. Maggie could clearly state when she felt that the 'happy mask' peer '...is talking too much' (M1:P189). Maggie evaluated this individual's use of space in the group against her own understanding of the behaviours of a counsellor and judged that:

...she did pretty much monopolise the whole thing and I felt... that's really not much a counsellor kind of thing (M1:P205-206)

In this Maggie was suggesting that she was expecting her peers to behave like counsellors and that therefore she had already developed an understanding of the role.

...being non-judgemental & being congruent

Maggie reacted negatively to her judgements of her peers and this highlighted a tension that she was experiencing within the course culture. Maggie was feeling judgemental which was inappropriate in this context (e.g. M1:P247) but her awareness of this was an illustration of her congruence which was appropriate. This also highlighted another aspect of congruence; as well as comprising openness it also included self-awareness. Therefore, congruence was a significant aspect of the course culture which Maggie understood in terms of an injunction to be self-aware and open about her experiences or '...being genuine' (e.g. M1:P380).

...being yourself within limits

For Maggie, being genuine in this context could be conflated with being yourself, however, this was limited by the course culture. Maggie smiled brightly when she said:

I think it's nice when you have a break to be able to go out and have a laugh... or to have a chat and be yourself (M1:P363-364)

Maggie had stressed that she was being genuine in the group but this was different from being herself in the breaks; within the group Maggie's being genuine included restraining aspects of herself which were inappropriate to that culture. Maggie's level of congruence was therefore sensitive to the conditions of the culture.

...not rescuing

Another significant aspect of the group culture was the inappropriateness of rescuing and Maggie was clear when she playfully said that '...I know rescuing is not allowed (chuckles)' (M1:P664) even though:

...I want to go "hey come on, why don't you do what I do and see it this way" ... that's CBT, I shouldn't be doing it (laughs) (M1:P667)

Here the group culture was being defined by Maggie's understanding of the boundaries of the therapeutic approach.

Relationship with the tutors

...working them out

Maggie's descriptions of the tutors centred around her making sense of them and she often spoke of how she had '...worked [them] out' (M1:P395). This generated Maggie's personal understanding of them as individuals and could include her perception of seeing through their roles as tutors. For example, Maggie spoke often of the Lead Tutor and although she was aware that there was some disagreement amongst her peers about him (M1:P398-401) she understood him as:

...I think there is something about the bloke that I really like... that's not coming out, I think it's so much better on a one to one... it's almost like one of your colleagues... at work, that you almost want to get him out for a beer (M1:P402-405)

...transference

Maggie had a powerful reaction to Tutor 1 and wondered whether this was a '...transference thing' (M1:P447) because this tutor reminded Maggie of her mother. Maggie could also wonder if it had '...got to do with the fact that she interviewed me' (M1:P467). Maggie's reaction to Tutor 1 left her feeling small with a disabling fear in skills sessions that:

...I think that additionally I had this.... unbelievable fear of [Tutor 1] in particular turning around and telling me that was shit or whatever (M1:P478)

Maggie focused on her gut level fear around Tutor 1 and how:

...well maybe that particular [Tutor 1] maybe she scared me a little bit more... but um... just their presence (M1:P594-596)

This tutor's presence had a profound impact on Maggie's capacity to be spontaneous because:

...the fact that they are there and taking notes and everything, so it's almost like they take away the um..... um..... what can I take..... you know something that you can do blindly without even thinking... it's almost like they give you a cup of tea, you give me a cup of tea and I don't even need to think about it... I hold it I put it to my mouth I need to sip it or blah blah blah... but if I'm sitting in front of somebody... yeah... then I'm really

conscious of how I'm holding the cup... of how I'm drinking it... and it loses that natural thing (M1:P597-603)

In those situations, Maggie seemed to become disconnected from her natural flow of embodied being and to be observing herself being self-conscious.

...warmth

When Maggie found herself working with Tutor 2 who she felt was 'young, she's giggly, she's lovely I've got really warm feelings for her' (M1:P481) Maggie was more at ease in the skills sessions:

...with her skills were so much easier and I've done so much better... I was pleased with myself because I went like yeah I was nervous because of the fishbowl but I was so much more comfortable... and the last skills was really good I had some good feedback and all, I was pleased with it (M1:P486-487)

Maggie was aware of her different reactions to these two tutors and made it clear that:

...almost like if [Tutor 2] turned and said "oh I'm not happy about this and that" I would have gone OK, oh constructive criticism, absolutely fine and blah blah blah, but if the other [Tutor 1] did... I would have thought like oh God she's going to think that I'm shit (M1:P488-491)

In Tutor 1's presence Maggie could disconnect from her flowing warm comfortable connection with her feelings and retreat into a critical cognitive process.

Being Person-Centred

...formalising her foreknowledge

Maggie was enjoying learning about the Person-Centred approach and linked this with experiences of having received support in times of distress:

...so it's nice to be on this course and learning more about Person-Centred and because in hindsight if you look back that's kind of what it feels like... what made a difference then (M1:P76-77)

Her use of the phrase 'learning more...' suggested that Maggie had come onto the course with foreknowledge which she was now extending. Maggie's learning was primarily experiential rather than cognitive and was rooted in her experience of having received

therapeutic conditions from her complementary therapist; it was a feeling rather than a thinking.

Being with Maggie in our first interview

Maggie was animated throughout this interview and I noticed that she flowed between her thinking and her feelings. This seemed to be an expression of how she was responding to being with all of these new people in this new context; she was feeling cautious but not unsafe and was moving back and forwards between openness (feeling) and defence (working out/thinking). This involved Maggie's embodied reaction to others and so, for example, if she felt an uncomfortable gut reaction to someone Maggie would have to work them out.

My experience in this interview was of an easy connection and looking back it seems that Maggie's gut accepted me and allowed me in. However, on the course Maggie was in a process of working her way into all of those new individual relationships and this could include feeling judged and being judgemental as she worked them out. I did not feel that I needed to work Maggie's out process nor did I feel judged or have a need to settle or get comfortable; I felt warmly received and open to receiving her. My own 'working out' about openness and defences came later in the analysis.

Maggie's Stage 2 Interview

Maggie was eager to unpack her experiences on the course. At times this interview seemed almost breathless as we raced through her story.

Process of change

...developing congruence

Maggie often used 'congruence' to express her commitment to being herself and in so doing drew on Person-Centred theory as a way to conceptualise her process. One aspect of congruence for Maggie was her developing ability to connect more easily with her

experience. Maggie felt that previously 'I really did not recognise my feelings at all....' (M2:P44) and that she was now '...more honest with myself' (M2:P131). Maggie was allowing more of her experience into her awareness and also finding ways to express familiar aspects that she would previously have denied and/or distorted:

...hiding certain feelings or y'know... presenting myself in a certain way..... yeah, (sigh) that's what makes [me] so tired, so exhausted so.... because I have to start recognising and accepting and er and er starting to deal with er..... some feelings that I've pushed down all my life (M2:P134-138)

Maggie was evaluating her way of being via her felt experience; pushing down took physical effort and exerted a toll on her body. This illustrates why the 'happy mask' peer was having such a negative impact on Maggie; her presence in this context was challenging Maggie's process of pushing down her feelings in response to others. Through this Maggie was becoming aware of how she had previously distorted her sadness:

...and this is where my sadness is really pushing through and you know it comes through as being ill with anxiety and being ill with panic attacks (M2:P150)

Anger, however, was an emotion that Maggie had historically denied and then judged:

Um... no..... y'know what it's funny because I..... I went through not recognising my anger... to recognising my anger and feeling bad about it... to now praising my anger and loving my anger because it's what kept me alive really (M2:P158-160)

Allowing her anger into awareness and allowing herself to love it meant that Maggie could now acknowledge anger as both a resource and a defence:

...my determination, my courage y'know my, my..... adventurous side, absolutely my anger [is] what pushed me to do anything really... go travelling... my course and everything... it's good, it's a good thing... But also I recognise that it has been pushing down um... y'know other feelings that I need to recognise (M2:P168-172)

...awareness of different selves in different contexts

Maggie was becoming aware of different aspects of herself that were present in different contexts and that this '...depends who I am with' (M2:P24). The difference was in Maggie's level of disclosure and Maggie emphasised that even though she could be different she was still being herself because 'erm... and..... and I'm not a different

person... y'know in different places' (M2:P27). Maggie's willingness to disclose was based on her judgement of who she was with:

...I see a part of it [her old process] is still there... when it's necessary, when I find it's necessary to go through things that would.... I'm not being patronising but they wouldn't understand... or it's... it's unnecessary for them to understand to be honest (M2:P34-36)

...connecting more with others

Maggie's new range of disclosure and her awareness of her process around anger and sadness allowed her to connect deeply with others who she perceived to have similar struggles:

...the people I most feel... that I feel mostly close to..... not only close to but I really genuinely like and feel..... like I've got good feelings for... are... people that are mostly vulnerable and they struggle with their anger (M2:P176)

...developing her relationship with self-criticism

Maggie had become acutely aware of her self-critical process especially in situations where she was expecting judgement from significant others:

I've still got times when my anxiety and my fears take over and I'm just like oh my God! And what I had on yesterday which was something that I've had on for the last few weeks, it's like this transcription that I've um.... that I've got to do and re-listening to myself... how I can be judging myself, really harsh, really judging really um..... horrible on myself... saying this is really not good enough, this is shit, this is blah, blah, blah... and the consequences of it..... in my head are massive (M2:P471-473)

Maggie could now identify this self-criticism as an expression of her anxiety about being imperfect and she had become intensely aware of how destructive this process was:

...well what I, what I er.... I had the opportunity to process this last week because I, I needed extra counselling... and I really needed to look into it because I was ill, like I couldn't eat and I couldn't sleep (M2:P483-484)

This was familiar and Maggie described this process as:

Yeah, it was about the expectant, what I expected..... people, how I expected people to react to..... my lack of perfection (M2:P537)

For Maggie the expectation of being judged harshly for any imperfection was just ‘...what I’m used to’ (M2:P542) and therefore being assessed by a tutor in a skills session was fertile ground for this old process.

This process had been running for a long time at a level that was out of Maggie’s awareness and having it in awareness brought to Maggie’s attention the subceived pain that she had been living with:

So that really came out, really came out in the past week, I was like ahhh! y’know and I realised that and.... and by having that awareness it does help... it hurts as well... because I was able to just put it aside and not recognise it for a while (M2:P547-549)

Maggie was describing her process of denying to awareness the hurt by putting it aside and not recognising it. Maggie could now acknowledge the impact the process was having on her way of being and the injury it had been doing at a subceived level. This allowed Maggie to acknowledge a broader spectrum of her experience which included those aspects of her performance in skills sessions that met the assessment standards:

yeah..... and hopefully.....(sighs).... well I can see the change in how I’m..... I’m working on this assignment... and I’m starting to go back and to, to..... underline the good things as well as what I’ve done wrong, it’s good (M2:P559-560)

Although she spoke hesitantly and with cautious hope, Maggie could now not only allow these aspects of her experience into her awareness but she was giving them significance.

...impact and commitment

Change had been ‘really hard’ (M2:P147) but it was ‘...interesting how an awful lot of things have changed’ (M2:P674). The changes were primarily in her developing self-awareness and her increasing connection to her experience. Maggie was committed to continuing the process and she hoped that this would pay off:

Yeah..... well I hope I’m going to continue on this process and kind of see the.....(sigh) feel more comfortable with my feelings and everything, so everything I see now and recognise now to struggle less with it (M2:P677)

Alongside this commitment Maggie thought of the upcoming second year of the course with trepidation and felt that:

I hope it's not going to open new things because seriously I don't think I can take much more (laughs)... oh yeah! I hope this is it and now I'm basically working with what I've got (M2:P678-679)

Bonding with the group

...the changing environment

The environment within the group had changed as the students had continued to learn more about the course's conceptualisation of the Person-Centred approach:

.....it's different now, I think it all changed and we can um.... relate to each other a lot better and listen to each other a lot better... and we're a lot more sensitive to each other (M2:P57-58)

Maggie was reflecting on the group's process within which relating better and listening better suggested an increase in the group's abilities to allow each individual their own experience and not to cloud it with expressed judgements nor to seek to move them on from that experience. However, even with this increased sensitivity to each other's experiences there were still times when an individual's experiences could drown out their abilities to listen to their peers such that:

Um..... however I recognise sometimes that, it's almost like that in my head it almost feels like.... a er.... competition... Sometimes, if somebody comes out with a really really sad story, oh this happened to me and I'm so sad or whatever, sometimes I feel that there is not enough time to resonate to that person for people to come out and say oh you know I feel for you or whatever, what you just said resonates with me or whatever..... somebody else would come out and would say "ooh, I know what you mean because this and this happened to me" (M2:P59-60)

Maggie's use of 'resonates' seemed to express a resonance within her being rather than an expression of 'I know what you mean'. This illustrates the depth of Maggie's reflections and her process and the insights these were giving her about the group's dynamics.

...differentiation and judgement

Maggie's connection with the group was influenced by her perception of the struggles going on within the group as individual characters became more known to each other.

Witnessing these struggles had an impact on Maggie's presence in the group because through them she learnt how accepting the group was of individual difference. Maggie felt that a peer who she 'loved to bits' (M2:P70) was being judged by the group and while Maggie 'got' her peer she also acknowledged her allegiance with the course's values which prioritised feeling over thinking:

...it's true, he's not very much in contact with his feelings, he's not very much erm.... sympathises with everyone, or so it seems... on the surface..... and he can come out with things that can seem, he, they can come across as very insensitive... um... because he uses his logic and his head a lot... so when someone's talking out of his heart, he would turn around and talk out of his head... and it would feel quite, it... it would create a tension there..... but I feel that what I find particularly uncomfortable, I'm not the only one this is when the encounter group happened because some people complained about it, is almost like we feel that this person has been ostracised, almost like we can sympathise with different defences that we do have as long as we show our feelings... but we don't want to recognise the defences that this man has got..... because he's not showing his feelings (M2:P71-77)

Maggie's perception was that some members of the group judged this peer as behaving inappropriately. These judgemental peers were dominant in Maggie's perception of the group and so she distanced herself from the group:

And I think some people [in the group], and you can't say that it's wrong because that is how **they** feel, **they** feel unsafe around him... **they** feel that if **they** start talking about something that is really hard for **them**, especially if **they** cry and **they** get emotional, **they** feel uncomfortable because **they** feel like he is sitting there going "oh for fuck's sake somebody else is crying" (M2:P82-84, my added emphasis)

Maggie took a contrary position to 'them' and acknowledged the presence of others who felt in similar ways to herself:

...and I totally get him and I think that some people totally totally get him, erm..... some others feel really unsafe, feel really bitter, feel really angry towards him for showing what they probably think is a complete lack of sensitivity (M2:P86)

The group was becoming a more emotionally charged and judgemental place.

...power

Maggie's perception was that judgements from these dominant peers imposed roles on individual students which were then reinforced by the group. This became clear when Maggie spoke of the privilege she felt in spending one-to-one time with the peer who she loved to bits and of how:

...he got emotional, and I've never seen him, y'know, having tears in his eyes or anything, it was really powerful, and he also had the opportunity to talk out of his heart rather than his head and say what... what, y'know what life is about for him (M2:P94)

This heartfelt aspect was only expressed when the peer '...had the opportunity to talk out of his heart' which implied that this opportunity was not always afforded to him. This suggests an oppressive quality of the group where individuals who demonstrated inappropriate behaviours were judged and scapegoated. The scapegoating seemed to serve a purpose because it gave the group a way to demonstrate what was inappropriate while also highlighting how well the more dominant members of the group were behaving.

...connecting with individuals

Opportunities to connect with individuals in a one-to-one setting were significant to Maggie because she could get to know them while also being known by them. However, as the depth of knowing each other increased so did Maggie's awareness of her different responses to various peers:

...but at this stage..... I think there has been enough.... self-awareness knowing and shifting and um..... giving people permission to be themselves, accepting, blah, blah, blah, there's been enough of that for me to recognise that those I don't have a connection with now, or that I feel perhaps are still a bit uncomfortable with now.... it's just the way life is (M2:P196)

Maggie's 'blah, blah, blah' suggests that she was perceiving this permission and accepting to be inauthentic.

Maggie discussed her experiences of having different levels of connection with individual peers and located this within her developing conceptualisation of counselling which was now grounded in her experiences in her placement:

Because er..... as a counsellor I don't necessarily need to like everyone... and I think I'm first a person and then a counsellor... um..... and unconditional positive regard so far is always in my room as a counsellor... but in my life I can make choices... and I'm aware of my choices not to be unconditional, to give UPR to some people that I choose not to um.... (M2:P225-229)

Maggie was drawing a distinction between herself as a counsellor and herself in her life and was clearly locating her relationship with the group within her life rather than within her counselling role. As such she was free to be conditional in her liking within the group. This conditionality was dependant on Maggie's perception that in some of her peers the expression of therapeutic conditions was inauthentic. She perceived those peers as presenting a homogenised performance of the course's conceptualisation of Person-Centred attitudes rather than being authentically Person-Centred. Even so Maggie hoped that a minimal level of authentic feelings was present across the entire group 'Um..... but I want to believe that everyone feels a bit like that now' (M2:295). For Maggie it was significant that these conditions were felt rather than just understood.

...congruence, unconditional positive regard and compassion

Being with Maggie as she explored her experiences of the group from the twin perspectives of her congruent judgements and her desire for acceptance of difference within the group was often bewildering as she wrestled with these ideas in the dynamic context of her perceptions of the group. While congruence and unconditional positive regard were paramount Maggie also discussed her compassion for her peers as they all went through this intense process together:

First of all, I think that it's terribly important for everyone to feel safe with each other... because what we're going through is just massive and I feel it's important to feel safe and to feel there is integrity... and safety and also like some sort of connection in the group (M2:P212-214)

It was clear that safety within the group, integrity and connections were important to Maggie and that they were linked; safety was connected with integrity (the authentic expression of Person-Centred attitudes) and they influenced the quality of the connections in the group. However, it seemed that integrity was not being fully realised because Maggie's perception was that the group was conditional which implies that it was not fully expressing Person-Centred conditions.

Relationships with the tutors

Maggie's tutors had begun to emerge as more complex individuals.

...transference

Maggie was wrestling with transference onto Tutor 1 and this was apparent in skills sessions in which Maggie still felt that she had to produce a perfect performance for this tutor. It was important that Maggie knew she was being fully herself in these sessions but:

...but then I panic about..... is it enough?... where if it was somebody else [a different tutor] I wouldn't give a shit (M2:P414-417)

In these moments Maggie needed to '.....just remind myself that it's me and I've got no reason to feel like that' (M2:P426). Maggie would grab hold of her process ('remind myself that it's me') in these moments and check this out against her experience to find that:

I don't think that I've got any proof of it..... I don't think there is any proof... Yeah, there is no proof... Because the way she talks to me, the way she's been supportive towards me and everything (M2:P428-430)

Amid these intense feelings Maggie was starting to differentiate between her perception and her experience. However, she could get lost in her process and feel that the tutor needed to see more of her in order to like her:

...I don't make special effort or I don't act different from myself... But it's almost like maybe she hasn't seen enough of me... to like me (M2:P441-443)

On one hand Maggie could logically describe these feelings as transference but on the other she was full of a yearning to be known and 'if only she could see more of me'. There was a passionate negotiation going on between being herself and being right. Somehow Maggie had to be herself and be right for this tutor who was assessing Maggie while also evoking disempowering reactions in her.

...equality

Maggie's tone when she spoke of her relationship with Tutor 2 was more equal:

Yeah, and.... [Tutor 2] is... the kind of person I see myself and having a real good laugh with and somebody that I know that she could be my best friend and I could have a banter with (M2:P351)

...the mother I never had

Maggie had not mentioned Tutor 3 previously but their relationship had now developed into one where:

...I think she is probably one of the people, not even teachers, but people that I know and I feel from her..... have got this feeling that every time I see her I just want to hug her... oh I love her to bits (M2:P308-309)

Maggie was differentiating between 'teachers' and 'people' except in special cases as with Tutor 3. Maggie initially found it hard to understand how this relationship had appeared out of nowhere but developed a description of starting to notice this tutor:

Um..... I can't even remember what happened that changed it..... I think I started noticing her... Because in the beginning I think for some reason I avoided her, so what I could see was only the, the..... the apparent, apparent y'know stern or whatever (M2:P313-314)

'Noticing' included getting past Maggie's perception of Tutor 3 and spotting the human qualities which Maggie loved. Maggie also appreciated this tutor's way of working:

...but..... now I really notice her and she's got the softest most beautiful smile, she's got so much love in her eyes and... I think she's lovely, really, really lovely and er.... I saw her counselling in front of us and I really like her style (M2:P314-317)

This appreciation was founded on Maggie's recognition that this tutor's way of working was similar to her own. This recognition had a profound impact on Maggie's connection with Tutor 3:

...yeah I recognised it [her own counselling style] in her..... and then I think what really happened, I don't know, I felt really safe with her, something clicked at some point where I felt safe with her (M2:P319)

Maggie made sense of this in the way that 'um... [Tutor 3] is the..... is the mother and mentor, mentor I've never had' (M2:P349). As well as becoming a distinct individual Tutor 3 was also filling a vital role in Maggie's life and being a very different type of mother figure to either Maggie's own or to Tutor 1.

...seeing through the agro

Maggie's feelings about the Lead Tutor had remained constant although it took some time for Maggie to clearly formulate and express her feelings towards him:

Um.... [Lead Tutor]..... well you can... I can positively say that I still get him, somehow.... in the.....(sighs).... he's so random, he's so agro, he's so.... but I don't know but somehow I get him (M2:P360)

As in other situations in which individuals were being judged Maggie was holding a contrary position to a significant part of the group:

Yes, I still feel like that about him, I still feel like that about him, um..... and there are a lot of people that still feel quite.... resentful about him (M2:P368)

Maggie felt that she had seen through the randomness and the agro and saw qualities in the Lead Tutor that she valued. Central to this was her understanding that he was trustworthy and that he had the students' best interests at heart especially in terms of their progress on the course:

And no matter how much he behaves like that I know that if the shit hit the fan I can trust him... and that he's gonna, he.... he does want everyone to do good (M2:P381-382)

Being Person-Centred

...is it being or doing?

Maggie's understanding that her way of working was Person-Centred had been confirmed by seeing Tutor 3 counselling:

I saw her counselling in front of us and I really like her style, and I felt she's one of those ones that make me feel more comfortable about my counselling skills, and thinking..... I couldn't..... when I'm really myself in the counselling room..... I offer something that I haven't seen anybody else offer at the same level... and because at the beginning you don't know whether if you're doing it right or wrong, whether it's fine or not fine, y'know, it's weird, and then I saw her and I thought, ah! This is what I do (M2:P317-318)

However, Maggie was learning about the boundaries of the approach and about how the course (including tutors and peers) may react if her behaviour did not meet their conceptualisation of what it meant to be Person-Centred. This was evident in skills assessments in which Maggie was expected to perform in an appropriately Person-Centred way, but Maggie had an acute awareness of how 'self-resonance' in a session would move her away from this:

.....but..... when I listened to that tape just because I recognised some self-resonance and I at one point, at a couple of points and I, I know, that when I'm uncomfortable or there's something that is not right with me, that is going on with me the way it comes across in being directive, I start being directive with the client... yeah? (M2:P489)

Maggie was aware of her natural tendency to be directive and understood this awareness as congruence. For Maggie, being congruent was more important than doing non-directivity:

.....I recognise that, I talk... I'm able to talk about it, I'm able to see also why that directiveness, where that... comes from... um... so I can see it in a different way, today (M2:P527-529)

For all of Maggie's need to do perfect skills performances she felt her work with clients had confirmed her understanding of the significance of being to the Person-Centred approach:

It's almost like sometimes I just feel that all I need to do is to sit down, listen, and to be really interested, and if I'm interested I..... automatically..... use... y'know reflections and paraphrases or whatever, that I'm not judgemental, that I'm not whatever because it's just like I..... y'know? (M2:P654)

This speaks of how Maggie's sense of the significance of 'being' comprised her being fully herself with her clients in that she could allow herself to be 'automatic'. However, this reinforces the paradox between Maggie's sense of being with her clients and being in the group. In the group and in real life she was free to be judgemental and would hold back aspects of herself but with her clients she was free to be non-judgemental and could allow herself to be automatic. The way Maggie spoke of these two aspects of herself suggested to me that she was describing two configurations of her self (Acres, 2016), one that was appropriate to her being in the real world and one that was appropriate to her being as a counsellor.

Being with Maggie in the second interview

Maggie was energised and enthusiastic about her personal changes and about the learning from the course. She was bubbling over with the various relationships on the course and was feeling inspired by her placement. Reviewing a tape of her client work from her new less self-critical perspective Maggie discovered that:

...you know what you can see an awful lot of really good stuff in here...
whoever is listening to this can see that I can be a good counsellor...
(M2:P523-524)

It was confusing but beguiling to stay with Maggie as she explored her developing understanding of the relationships between congruence and unconditional positive regard. Earlier I had been holding myself back from teaching Maggie through some of her inconsistencies but now I was trusting her learning process as she worked her way through this maze. Being with this fluid process made the analysis hard but my developing trust was supported by Maggie's passionate reaching out to be in relationship which she often expressed as love for her peers, tutors, clients and for counselling. This made it easy to push aside my doubts and to reconnect with her. Our process seemed to reflect Maggie's process on the course as we moved further away from meeting at a presentational level and towards a deeper connection. This also reflected Maggie's inner process as she connected more deeply with her own experience.

Maggie's Stage 3 Interview

Maggie used this interview to reflect on the emotional impact and the turbulence that the course had created within her:

...then in the first year of the course then all of this shit hit the fan and it was like oh my God processing so much and making sense of things and things like that (M3:P3)

Process of change

...relationship with anger

Maggie spoke of how she had become more aware of her process around anger and of how this had included a distortion of her authentic sadness:

...and then I had a period of er feeling really angry, really, really angry, feeling um... sad as well but sad for me comes out as anger so I was like angry all of the time (M3:P3)

Maggie was aware that beneath this intense anger there had been suppressed feelings that needed to be processed:

It's unbelievable, unbelievable and, and because that half of that anger, the unnecessary anger, the irrational anger has gone it gave me the time to process the anger that was still there, that it was rational, that it made sense if you see what I mean... Um and also gave me the opportunity to have those spaces when I'm not angry, when I'm just like allowing myself to feel other things, so it literally has been like a godsend (M3:P8-9)

Maggie felt that through this process she had become abler to accurately symbolise her experiences and so 'Yeah, now it comes out, my feelings are more recognisable' (M3:P11). Maggie had available a broader palette of emotions which included authentic anger which gave her power to express herself transparently:

...and so, you know, one thing that I've got about my anger is when I'm angry I'm so fucking congruent, so there is no trying to er pussy foot around people, it's like kind of, you know (M3:P43)

Here Maggie used 'congruent' in a specific way that echoes the course's conceptualisation of congruence; being congruent was being immediate and unchecked in her expression of her feelings in relationship with another.

...a mix of factors

Maggie was clear that external factors had been significant to her changing relationship with anger:

I think it's been a mix of things, I think it's been the right time, the right amount of processing, the right support from my partner and everyone, and slight twitches to my lifestyle actually, um... I came off the pill... and um... I never realised because I was on the pill for twenty years I never realised how

much it was creating an unbelievable imbalance in my hormones... (M3:P4-5)

Bonding with the group

...her sub-group

There was a select sub-group of peers with whom Maggie had connected at a profound level. These peers were constantly around during the college day 'and we always used to sit together because it was a safe space' (M3:P85). Her emphasising that this loving sub-group was a safe space implied that, contrary to her earlier statements, the larger group had been relatively unsafe for her:

...we used to hug each other and I was in the middle and it was the sandwich of love, and we used to laugh and say oh come on, sandwich of love, every time that there was something that was a little bit like oh God, you know, a bit harsh (M3:P86)

...there is no such thing as a group

Aside from her sub-group the concept of 'the group!' (M3:P103) was one that Maggie struggled with. Maggie described herself as:

...I'm not, I'm not one easy to connect to people, OK let's rephrase that, I'm one easy to connect on the surface straight away, like I'm not uncomfortable, I'm not the one aloof in the corner that doesn't talk much or whatever, I'm like kind of like I can be, I can be turning like the soul of the group straight away, I'm comfortable with people around people but when it comes to er... being intimate and connecting closely... and bonding, I'm not, not easy, it's not easy for me... er so relationship, relationships for me are... a risk, because you've got to trust people, and there is for me part of me that doesn't trust, and that says I'm going to [be] safer, I'm going to be better by myself... and so I give up to a certain point but I don't... yeah? (M3:P97-99)

While Maggie could superficially connect with the group, being fully herself in that context was challenging because Maggie felt unsafe being intimate with that many unknown people. However, 'the group' and each individual's relationship within it were often discussed at college and '...every time I hear like "my relationship with the group", I don't know I just find it a bit wanky (laughs)' (M3:P104). Maggie's perception was of a collection of individuals and she linked this to her experiences in her family (M3:P116):

No, yeah, the group for me is a question of atmosphere, but atmosphere is about individual people with their individuality putting in their energy and creating an atmosphere (M3:P110)

From this perspective, Maggie rejected the concept of the group. At the heart of this was Maggie's awareness of the distinct individuals within any collection of people and of her commitment to not being hoodwinked into connecting with people who she did not like just because they were part of 'the group' (M3:P121).

Maggie saw people as blindly and foolishly committing themselves to a mythical idea that was reified by the culture:

.....but I think sometimes people are fooling themselves by thinking oh it's family so I need to stick and love everyone whatever, because at the end of the day I think it's all about individual people... it's all about how you connect and how you relate to individual people... and that's what you make out of it... (M3:P135-137)

From Maggie's perspective her peers were under the false impression that 'yeah it's like it's got its own entity' (M3:P142) whereas for her:

...I think what irritates me sometimes is, is this concept, that an awful lot of people have got, especially people with big families interestingly enough, have got that kind of group whatever (M3:P147)

The 'group whatever' was Maggie's dismissing the concept of the group as a thing that existed of itself because for Maggie 'I get a sense of people' (M3:P149) with the emphasis on people as individuals.

...groups and repression

Maggie saw a sinister side to groups:

...also I think for me the concept of family is a concept of repression... sometimes it feels like when you say family there is something to do with duty, there is something to do with sticking with people that if you met outside of the family you would not want to spend two fucking seconds with because they are awful, you know (M3:P129-130)

Maggie seemed to feel alone and oppressed and angry in a world that shared this pervasive conceptualisation of 'the group'.

...needing the individuals within it

When Maggie wanted to speak in 'the group' at college she actually wanted to communicate with those individuals that she cared about:

...when I talk I don't talk to the group I talk to some individuals... that I care for, and the others might be there, might not be there, and actually interestingly enough, I often notice that when... somebody responds to something that I said during process group, somebody I care for and I really like, I really take that on board... (M3:P168-169)

...the group as a resource

Generally, when one of those unknown others spoke, Maggie did not value their contribution but there were exceptions because sometimes she could hear something of value:

...yeah, yeah, yeah, and then again sometimes all the people I don't particularly care for come out with something quite strong like that and I feel there is a connection (M3:P172)

Therefore, Maggie's first level of availability in the group was to those who she valued but there was another level determined by the qualities of what was spoken; if one of the others said something 'quite strong' then she could hear it because she could feel it.

For all of Maggie's denial of the existence of 'the group' there was something that this particular collection of individuals offered:

I think what I will miss is... erm... the space that you get to sit down and if you wish to talk about what's going on for you, because I think it's a privilege to have that... it's a real privilege um... because not often in life you can sit down and say oh I'll take over and talk about myself, yeah?... and offering something exactly, um... but I can still have it with individual people (M3:P161-163)

Looking to the future Maggie wanted to maintain her connections with those few that she cared about and in this desire 'the group' suddenly existed as:

Um... and I can still, if I want, to create my ideal group, which is the five... four, five people that I really like (M3:P164-165)

'The group' could exist as long as it was made up of selected individuals who Maggie cared about and in this space she could find safety.

Relationships with the tutors

Maggie was very clear that 'Oh I like all of them' (M3:P221) and the most significant changes had been in her relationships with the Lead Tutor and with Tutor 1.

...the Lead Tutor

Maggie felt that she wanted to maintain her connection with the Lead Tutor and she could see that developing into a more equal relationship:

yeah and [for the Lead Tutor to] be around and stuff like that, and for me it is not an end its a new beginning, yeah... (M3:P218)

Maggie was aware that some of her peers still had very different opinions of him:

I like [Lead Tutor], I mean, I mean, he's a weird one... it's like Marmite isn't it?... but I think I, I, I like him... I like him, we're so different in many ways but I think I get him and he gets me (M3:P234-237)

The reciprocity of this 'getting' was important to Maggie. An important part of their connection was that the Lead Tutor knew Maggie and could celebrate her uniqueness:

...and this guy on a break ended up in a lift with [Lead Tutor] and [Lead Tutor] said oh hi are you enjoying the workshop? And he said oh did you do that exercise where you pick up an object and you counsel each other, oh yeah, yeah, who did you do that with? Oh Maggie and he laughed, [Lead Tutor] laughed and said oh I bet she loved that shit! (M3:P248)

...Tutor 1

The quality of Maggie's transferential relationship with Tutor 1 had been influenced by their greater exposure to each other:

But... again I had the opportunity to work with her more recently... um...[...], she saw me counselling, because we, we're getting, we're getting marked now on counselling skills... so that's changing, she marked my past two counselling skills this semester and I had a tutorial with her last week, (sighs) ah it was just so nice... it was lovely, I mean, for me I don't know if it's like because that part of me felt um, well it's that wanting to be accepted and wanted to be liked by her... she just gave me the ultimate recognition, and actually as I sat there I actually cried and hugged her, I was all oh my God! And actually what she said and I think that really clicked with me, and part of me's still saying, ooh, I'd better not fuck it up, a part of me really wanted to hear when she said you're a really good counsellor and I've got no problem recommending you to clients (M3:P261-266)

It was important for Maggie to receive this acknowledgement from Tutor 1 and it seemed profoundly healing. However, this recognition was conditional; if Maggie's counselling had not been acceptable to Tutor 1 she would not have received it.

Being Person-Centred

...being or doing the approach?

Maggie felt a philosophical connection with the approach and she valued those peers who shared that connection:

The one that I like, I mean there are people that I like that are not necessarily like that, but there are those that I feel particularly close to, and those that I experience as being, as having embraced the counselling concept, and the Person-Centred concept, in life as well as at work (M3:P177)

Maggie conflated counselling with the Person-Centred approach in a way which implies that she did not differentiate between counselling and being Person-Centred. Maggie was also closing the gap between life and work because she now valued people who expressed Person-Centred attitudes regardless of the context. This translated to her peers on the course:

...and some of the people that, that I like or I might not like, if you see what I mean... respond to me in a Person-Centred way, I know when they are bullshitting, not bullshitting but I know when they're saying it because it's a process group and they're supposed to be Person-Centred... or because the tutors are there or whatever and it... or, or if it's real, it's the way they are (M3:P178)

To feel close to people Maggie needed to perceive their expression of Person-Centred attitudes as genuine rather than as a way of doing a performance of homogenised Person-Centred behaviours. In such relationships Maggie could feel safe. This was reinforced by Maggie's response to her perception that some of her peers were inconsistent because they could do the approach in college but then revert to other behaviours outside of the course:

And I think there are some people that are, and I don't knock them for that, absolutely not, that's the way they are, um... but that, that if I talk to them outside of the process group and I said something they'd be like oh

whatever... instead of going oh I hear you and blah-blah-blah, and go like oh, performance yeah?... whereas those I feel more comfortable and safe around... and the trust more are those ones that have got a... consistency of where they are outside of university and at university... (M3:P180-182)

The impact was that around these peers who seemed to be genuinely Person-Centred Maggie knew that '...I'm going to have the same reaction' (M3:P184); she would feel consistently safe and open.

However consistency was not straightforward for Maggie herself because she perceived a distinction in being Person-Centred and being herself:

Yeah and don't get me wrong, I'm first myself, I'm Person-Centred and there are plenty of times I'm not Person-Centred, I'm like completely opposite that... um... but I think that people have been able to see that as well, I have not hidden that... um... so what I show is what I am, what you get is (M3:P191-193)

Maggie did not hide her directivity and this transparency was vital to her sense of being truly known and knowing others.

...learning about the approach

Maggie described her learning about the approach as coming from a range of sources within the course:

It's from experiencing, observing, and also being at the very, very beginning of the course what I'm... you, at the beginning of the course where you don't know very much and you're still learning... you're starting to learn, you've got an idea of what Person-Centred is supposed to be (M3:P412)

The learning therefore included an element of un-learning previous ideas about the approach and in this process this foreknowledge seems to have been judged as naïve.

However, Maggie felt that her current conceptualisation of the approach was at odds with that of the course. Maggie's conceptualisation focused on her depth of engagement with herself and with another person whereas she felt the course was more concerned with the application of stereotypical non-directive reflecting skills:

And actually when I do it I experience the best, I really enjoy it, I really enjoy it and I feel like when I'm like that the client is also more engaged... yeah... yes... because it's like yeah, it's like kind of, you know... yeah... because it

becomes a relationship and it stops being I'm the counsellor and putting skills (M3:P417-421)

...in practice and in practise

Maggie felt limited in skills sessions by the enforced passivity of the course's requirement that she perform non-directive reflecting skills which she understood as the correct way of being Classically Client-Centred. In her client work she thought that:

...as a counsellor I think... I'm the opposite of passive if you see what I mean?... it's like I'm not, I'm not a client-centred classical kind of yeah? I'm more like on the experiential kind of things... and I, and I try to be as congruent as possible, sometimes it still feels like a risk... and I'm still learning, sometimes I think oh why did I say that? (M3:P325-328)

Maggie's conceptualisation of being more 'experiential' was linked to her understanding of being active or being passive. An active counsellor was one who brought themselves into the relationship while a passive counsellor maintained a reflective stance. Being passive was contrary to Maggie's understanding of who she was and how she wanted to be in practice and therefore she found it challenging to define how she worked because she was both Person-Centred and active. With this contradiction at the heart of her practice Maggie resisted definitions beyond 'it's me':

...and I think you know if I need to give myself a name, oh God... no a name like integrative or client-centred blah-blah-blah, it's me... and I'm definitely Person-Centred... but, a part of being me and being congruent and bringing me in the relationship, that is also part of me that..... er likes, at some point in the, in the, in the relationship sometimes to bring something different or to maybe try and, and to take a risk, or to try, in a Person-Centred way that is something more like solution focused (M3:P335-338)

Maggie had learnt how she should do Classical Client-Centred skills in the classroom and now she was keen to learn what worked in practice:

But I can see myself taking more risks as well... 'cos I've got to start taking risks somehow in order to learn what is working and what is not... and part of me is very like kind of ooh (M3:P352-354)

Taking risks meant expressing the more directive aspects of her personality and that was how she would be fully present and therefore active in the relationship:

.....I think it's the way that I am with myself... because I think... part of me is like I am like that... as a person... yeah? So I can't be that much different

as a therapist, but also I think... I like a therapy that is facilitative but also effective (M3:P370-373)

Maggie's understanding was that being herself was a way to be facilitative (i.e. Person-Centred) while also being effective (i.e. active):

...I'm not much for the kind of passive yeah I'm listening to you and I'm reflecting back... mm you know (M3:P376)

Here Maggie was focused on a stereotypical image of the Person-Centred approach which she dismissed as 'yeah I'm listening to you and I'm reflecting back' and with this implied that Classical Client-Centred counselling was neither active nor effective.

Maggie's learning about being Person-Centred was also being informed by her experiences in personal counselling. Maggie felt she was having a good experience with her counsellor who was active and therefore less in keeping with Maggie's image of the stereotypically passive Person-Centred counsellor however they described themselves as 'full on Person-Centred' (M3:P397). This counsellor's immediacy, transparency and apparent congruence were significant to Maggie and, for Maggie, this counsellor was clearly committed to being herself. Maggie's experiences with this counsellor developed her conceptualisation of the Person-Centred counsellor:

...now I've got a good counsellor, I like her, she interestingly enough, she considers herself Person-Centred full on Person-Centred, but fuck me, she is really, really um... engaged... she's very... transparent, very congruent, and very immediate... very there, very present, and I like that... and I like that, and it tells me that you don't necessarily have to be integrative or something different to get the clock ticking yeah? (M3:397-400)

This was a significant aspect of Maggie's developing relationship with the approach because it gave her another perspective on what it meant to be Person-Centred. This triangulated with her experiences of identifying with Tutor 3's way of working and with Maggie's own sense of being herself with clients. Prior to this Maggie's experiences of skills assessments at college had left her no space to explore the subtler aspects of her confusion around activity and directivity:

And it just feels... it doesn't feel fluid, it doesn't feel right, it feels like skills... It feels like skills, what, what skill or what can I add? And the refreshing experience that I get from sitting down and being me with the client yeah?

It's, it's learning about congruence, it's learning about transparency, it's learning about the fact that, actually, the most, biggest message in Person-Centred is about not having facades and being yourself... and bringing yourself and, and that's what I want to do (M3:P413-416)

However, all of these contradictory learning experiences about activity and directivity and congruence could still confuse Maggie and so she fell back to defining herself as fundamentally not Person-Centred:

...it's still totally me, but I would not take risks as going for a direct question... when actually as a counsellor I can be quite directive... yeah um... and I think it's about reminding myself that I need to be focused on the fact that I'm on a Person-Centred course and I need to be Person-Centred so I can't be turning around and be directive um (M3:P433-436)

Being Person-Centred was totally Maggie, but Maggie was not totally Person-Centred because this was being presented to her as a particular conceptualisation of the Classical Client-Centred approach.

Being with Maggie in the third interview

Maggie was full of enthusiasm and spoke with passion about her work and her tutors and those peers with whom she had connected deeply. She expressed more acceptance both of herself and others and often spoke of love whether it was for the tutors, clients or peers. Love was powerfully present for Maggie and she often spoke of feeling things in or with her heart and would hug her chest as did so. Maggie also expressed gut feelings by holding her stomach as she spoke. Throughout Maggie seemed to have a fluidly expressive embodied connection with her experience. I found Maggie's depth of connection with herself and her immersion in her own process very easy to connect with. I came away full of hope, excitement and confidence for her future.

Maggie's process

Table 6: Maggie's Process Themes

Participant: Maggie (11) Process Themes Summary		
Superordinate Themes	Themes	Line
Relationship with self	Developing differentiation of experience <i>awareness and acceptance</i> <i>different selves</i> <i>a mix of factors</i>	M2:P44 M2:P131 M2:P24 M3:P4-5
Self in relationship to others	Relating to and separating from <i>informed judgements</i> <i>connecting with the separated</i> <i>staying outside</i> <i>love and safety</i> <i>denying the group while using the group</i>	M1:P177 M1:P181 M1:P347 M2:P75 M2:P83 M3:P85 M3:P86 M3:P103 M3:P110 M3:P161-163
Relationship with the approach	Adopting the course culture <i>a close fit with her own worldview</i> Developing relationship with the approach <i>formalising her foreknowledge</i> <i>an authentic way of being</i> <i>make sense of with contradictions</i> <i>something to do or a way to be</i> <i>working out the approach</i>	M1:P76-77 M1:P76-77 M2:P654 M3:P180-182 M2:P527-529 M2:P654 M3:P177 M3:P413-416 M3:P325-328 M3:P370-373 M3:P374-376 M3:P397-400

Superordinate themes

Relationship with self

Maggie developed her ability to ***differentiate her experience***. She became able to differentiate between a wide range of feelings and this was based on her developing *awareness and acceptance* of those feelings (e.g. M2:P44, P131). She became aware of how she could be *different selves* with different people while still being herself at all times (e.g. M2:P24). Maggie's perception was of having a fluid self-concept that was influenced by her relational environment. Maggie understood her developing differentiation to be the result of *a mix of factors* (M3:P4-5) which included external factors as well as experiences in the group, with her tutors and with her counsellor. In all of the relational contexts Maggie experienced empathy and acceptance which challenged her internalised judgements. This challenge reduced the impact of her self-criticism and allowed her to be more fully herself.

Self in relationship to others

Maggie's perception of her relationship with the group changed over time. In the early days she was making *informed judgements* of her peers (M1:P177) and seemed separate from the group as she listened to her gut reactions (M1:P181) and tried to work out others (M1:P347). This was an individuated process which excluded any relational/co-creational processing; she was ***relating to and separating from*** her peers.

As Maggie got to know her peers she connected with some of them as individuals. She made some powerful *connections with those who were separated* from the group (e.g. M2:P75) and this led to Maggie *staying outside* the group (M2:P82-85) which she maintained throughout the course however it was also clear that she was connecting with the group.

Maggie's developing differentiation of her experience led to her connecting deeply with a sub-group in which she perceived *love and safety* (M3:P85, P86). In the final year Maggie crystalized her perception of being with the whole group by denying the existence of the concept of 'the group' (e.g. M3:P103, P110). If groups did exist, they were repressive cultures in which she was forced to endure the company of people with whom she could

not connect (M3:P106-107). Maggie had been *denying the group while using the group* as a resource (M3:P161-163).

Love would bubble out of Maggie with physical and emotional effervescence. Love seemed to express the warmth, the safety, the enjoyment and the willingness to connect that she felt to and from others. Love was also an internal process because early on Maggie described her own psychological distress in terms of a lack of self-love (M1:P54). At the start of the course Maggie was identifying peers who she felt were lovely (e.g. M1:P334) and typically these were individuals who Maggie perceived as being vulnerable. As the course carried on Maggie expressed love for those of her peers with whom she had connected (e.g. M2:P70, M3:P69) and especially her sub-group which became her 'sandwich of love' (M3:P86). Maggie's deep connections with others were full of love (e.g. M3:P133). She loved most of the tutors (e.g. M2:P310, M3:P222) because they were lovely (e.g. M2:P312) and when they were at their most inspirational Maggie would have loved to be like them (M3:P227). She felt that counselling, when done well, was an expression of love (M2:P601) and this came across passionately in her connection with her clients, with the work, with her ambitions and with her learning (e.g. M3:P231).

Relationship with the approach

Maggie **adopted the course culture** willingly from the start of the course because it was *a close fit with her own worldview* (M1:P76-77) and this fit made Maggie openly available to the influence of the culture. This culture had rules, some of which were explicit and expressed Person-Centred attitudes while others were implicit and expressed the course's ideas about counselling and acceptable group behaviour. One aspect of this was congruence and Maggie used various terms to express this including being self-aware, being genuine/being herself and speaking openly in the group. At times these last two definitions could contradict each other because being genuine could entail not speaking openly in the group. Genuineness/being herself was complicated because Maggie felt she was being genuine in the group but also highlighted other contexts outside of the group where she expressed relief that she could be herself. She was becoming aware of different ways of being herself that she could experience in different contexts. Maggie made sense of this by categorising her way of being in the group as being herself but within acceptable limits (M1:P363-364) which were defined by Person-Centred attitudes.

Maggie's **developing relationship with the approach** was a process of *formalising her foreknowledge*. Maggie's close ideological fit with the approach meant that rather than learning a new set of values Maggie was finding theoretical concepts to affirm her existing values. During the first year Maggie developed an instrumental understanding of unconditional positive regard; it was essential in a therapeutic relationship but only desirable in real life (M2:P226, P227-229). However, for Maggie the Person-Centred approach was *an authentic way of being* in all of her relationships (M2:P654, M3:P180-182) and so she had to *make sense of contradictions* such as her own directivity (M2:P527-529) which expressed her wrestling with the question of whether the approach was *something to do or a way to be* (e.g. M2:P317-318, M3:P413-416). This was reflected in Maggie's close connections with her peers in which she felt drawn towards and safer with people who demonstrated high levels of what she perceived as authentic expressions of Person-Centred attitudes (M3:P177). It was important to Maggie that she was genuine and that others were also being genuine and as such she looked for authentic expressions of Person-Centred attitudes from her peers rather than superficial homogenised Person-Centred masks. Within this Maggie was aware that being genuine was contextually dependent and so she could be Person-Centred and directive and conditional in her liking (M3:P191-193).

Maggie was still *working out the approach* and this centred on defining directivity and activity (e.g. M3:P325-328). Maggie's understanding was that being Person-Centred meant being consistently non-directive but that this was not sufficient because some people in some contexts needed something more. Maggie also felt that her own way of working was an accurate expression of herself and was active and therefore not exclusively Person-Centred (e.g. M3:P370-373). However, her experiences as a client with a Person-Centred counsellor challenged this because they were described themselves as Person-Centred and were active in the relationship (M3:P397-400).

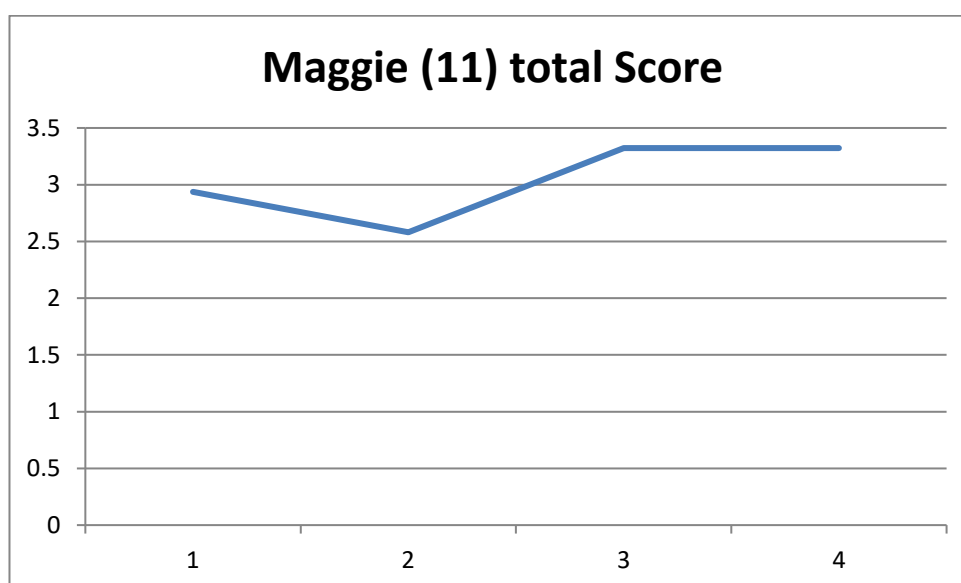
Being with Maggie's process

It was always a joy to be with Maggie's process. If she did any working out with me, Maggie did it quickly and invisibly. I felt a deep connection with Maggie and with her love

for her close peers, the tutors and the work. I wondered at times whether this connection could be blinding me to any darkness or struggle within Maggie's process and when this doubt was around I would check it out with her and we would find a way to explore it. In essence being with Maggie was about being with Maggie rather than doing an interview and in this we reflected her connections with people and with her work.

Strathclyde Inventory

Figure 8: Maggie's SI Data



The SI results showed that Maggie felt a reduction in her level of functioning at the end of the first year which seemed to be at odds with her developing openness and self-awareness unless it is understood from the perspective of her developing awareness of her incongruence. This also reflects the significant presence of her self-critical process at that time. This process was informed by internalised criticism which led Maggie to being less in contact with her experience and more cautious in her spontaneous self-expression.

By our last interview Maggie's SI results showed an increase in her levels of functioning which was supported by her developing confidence in her internal locus of evaluation. She knew when she was in her flow and felt psychological and embodied rightness about those experiences. Maggie could also express her values more clearly and confidently and was less defended in her expression of herself.

It is interesting to notice that while Maggie was clear that the course was judgemental and restrictive about how she should behave, her level of functioning rose between points 1 and 3. It is also interesting that her level of functioning levelled out in the year after she had left the environment of the course. This may be due to her being outside of the influence of Person-Centred conditions or it may be due to external factors.

In terms of Rogers's stages of process Maggie began with a relatively fixed sense of self as expressed through her self-critical process. She was imperfect and needed to work hard to appear perfect. However as the course progressed she became more fluid and began to differentiate her experience and to become aware of much wider range of experience and of different aspects of her self.

8.5 Comparing across the interviews

The Stage 1 Interviews

The emergent themes that were generated from the Stage 1 interviews are shown below under their relevant superordinate themes.

Table 7: Stage 1 Interview Themes

Summary Master table of themes: First interviews		
Superordinate themes	Emergent themes	Participant
Relationship with self	Being different	V, J, M
	Being judged	V
	Process of change	M
Self in relationship with others	Talking in the group	V
	This confrontation thing	V
	Bonding with individuals	V
	Bonding with the group	J, M
	Group culture	J
	Receiving feedback	J
	Relationships with the tutors	J, M
	Course culture	M
Making sense of experience	Congruence	V
	Developing conceptualisation of silence	V
Relationship with the approach	Being Person-Centred	V, J, M

Relationship with self

All three participants began with a unique awareness of their difference (e.g., V1:P23 & P147-150, J1:P21-23, M1:P495). This theme conveyed their understanding that they *were* different; this was not perception but fact. However, their developing relationships with their selves were influenced by the context because they each responded to the course in unique ways and the course responded differently to each of them. Victoria was met with negative judgement over her quietness (V1:P68 & 103) and responded with determination, Johnny was surprised (J1:P51-56) to find himself challenging his difference through his discovery that he enjoyed studying, although he still carried a sense of separation because of his sexuality even though this was accepted by the group. Maggie was accepted but reconceptualised her sense of difference because, unlike her peers, Maggie's perception of her life was that it was OK (M1:P651-655).

Each of the participants was different in their motivations for doing the course. I interpreted these as potentially having an influence on their expectations and perceptions of the training and consequently on their relationships with their teachers and peers. These differences were evident in the way that Victoria was embarking on a qualification to be a counsellor and expected to be taught how to counsel effectively by her tutors; the approach was secondary. Johnny was there for personal development and was focused on changing himself in ways that complied with the approach as modelled by his teachers and peers. Maggie had signed up to become a counsellor but unlike Victoria was focused on being Person-Centred. For Maggie the focus was therefore on developing a way of being that was authentic, Person-Centred and therapeutic. However, these differences were not figural in the participants' perceptions at this stage and therefore each participant's perception of difference held more meaning for them than my supposed 'actual' differences.

Self in relationship with others

The course design and the research question both focused the students on their relationships with each other and consequently this was a significant theme in all narratives across the overall sample. Victoria's early experiences of this were dominated by her relationship with shyness (V1:P47-48) and because of the intense pressure to change that she perceived from others. Johnny felt that the group was fantastic (J1:P169) and saw all of his peers as colleagues who were jointly engaged in a personal development project (J1:P556-560). Maggie held herself back from the group and relied on her gut reactions to inform her judgements of individual peers (M1:P177 & P181). At this early stage Victoria was scared in the group, Johnny was excited but tentative and Maggie was cautiously feeling and thinking her way around.

Johnny's early encounters with the group involved engaging with their cultural conditions as a way of evaluating his validity (e.g., J1:P111 & 158). Maggie connected immediately with the culture of the course at an ideological level (M1:P205-206) although she wrestled with the paradox that this presented because she 'knew' that this was all about being herself but she was being asked to behave in specific ways to fit the course's

conceptualisation of the approach (e.g., M1:P363-364) in skills practice. Therefore, Johnny and Maggie represented two facets of culture; 'group culture' and 'course culture'. Johnny's 'group culture' was concerned with how to behave in the group while Maggie's 'course culture' was concerned with her harmonious resonance with the Person-Centred approach. For Johnny the group offered direction while for Maggie it offered freedom through its close fit with her way of being.

Each participant had their own perception of what it meant to be in relationship with the course. Victoria felt intense pressure from her peers and from the tutors to be more open in the group and therefore to change in ways that she felt would be incongruent. Johnny also felt pressure from the group but perceived this to be a positive influence focused on increasing congruence. Maggie was being herself which included cautiously evaluating her levels of congruence by holding back aspects of herself in the group for safety.

Victoria mentioned the tutors only as points of the pressure to be incongruent while Johnny and Maggie spoke of them in more depth. Johnny spoke mainly in terms of his respect for their qualities (e.g., J1:P215 & P218), in connection with the Lead Tutor's workload and in connection with assessment (J1:P513 & P515). Maggie spoke of working out (M1:P395) her various reactions to them as they began to emerge as individuals (e.g., M1:P398-401).

Making sense of experience

This was figural for Victoria who found herself in another judgemental environment and could therefore withdraw from being with her experience. Victoria would make sense of her experience (e.g., V1:P234) in order to find some understanding and with that find a way to negotiate this minefield of judgement. Maggie used a similar term ('working out' e.g., M1:P347) but used this to define her way of making early assessments of others generated by her gut response.

Relationship with the approach

All three were working out their relationships with the Person-Centred approach. Victoria was struggling with the contradictions of being taught about unconditional positive regard while being judged and being required to be incongruently 'congruent'. She was also trying to make sense of contradictory skills feedback (V1:P132-135). Johnny was using his tutors' and peers' behaviour and the group culture as a model of how to be Person-Centred (e.g., J1:P398) and in this seemed to struggle with whether the approach was a thing to do or a way to be (J1:P579-581). Like Victoria, he was also confused by contradictory skills feedback (e.g., J1:P251). Maggie was enjoying learning about the approach (M1:P76-77) and was relating her learning to her previous experiences of receiving therapeutic conditions.

The Stage 2 Interviews

Table 8: Stage 2 Interview Themes

Summary Master table of themes: Second interviews		
Superordinate themes	Emergent themes	Participant
Relationship with self	Being judged	V
	Powerlessness and the curse of hope	V
	Being different	J
	A developing relationship with his experience	J
	Process of change	M
Self in relationship with others	Talking in the group	V
	This confrontation thing	V
	The Big Group	V
	Bonding with individuals	V
	Bonding with the group	J, M
	Group culture	J
	Receiving feedback	J
	Relationships with the tutors	J, M
Relationship with the approach	Being Person-Centred	M

Relationship with self

Victoria's sense of difference had receded into familiarity; she was and always would be different from other people because of her shyness. However she had a developing awareness that there was more to her than shyness and felt constrained by the limited ways in which the group understood her (V2:P148). Victoria still felt under continual pressure to behave in ways which she perceived to be incongruent and was drawing on her determination and in this way was becoming more resilient (e.g., V2:P168).

Johnny was measuring himself against his internal valuing process. His commitment to personal development left him feeling separate from those peers who were struggling with this aspect of the course (J2:P133-134). Johnny's perception of change was of a cycle of developing connection with his experience; greater self-honesty within an unconditionally accepting environment was facilitating greater self-acceptance and greater self-honesty (J2:P125-127).

Maggie perceived her change process in terms of a developing differentiation of experience; she was aware of a broader range of feelings (e.g., M2:P44) and of a broader range of contextually specific authentic ways of being (e.g., M2:P24 & P25). Maggie was becoming more self-accepting and was committed to continuing this process (e.g., M2:P677).

Victoria's principal challenge had been to remain true to herself in an environment which was demanding that she change. Johnny's principal challenge had been to his preconceptions about his worth and validity. Maggie's challenge had focused on her developing acceptance of powerful feelings that she had previously suppressed.

Self in relationship with others

Victoria received conditional acceptance from her peers and from the tutors (e.g., V2:P9, P10). This situation was exacerbated by the tutors' introduction of 'confrontation' (V2:P4) which transformed the group into The Big Group (e.g., V2:P6). However, Johnny typically did not talk about 'confrontation' but spoke of how the tutors had introduced 'challenge'. This reflects their unique perceptions of this significant change to the culture; Victoria's

confrontations were full of fear and pain while Johnny's challenges were loaded with potential personal development.

Johnny and Maggie had connected with the group in different ways (J2:P76, P234-235, M2:P57-58) but each seemed to be using it to explore their relational processes. For Johnny this meant internalising the many subtle and sometimes contradictory aspects of the group culture (e.g., J2:P40-41, P87, P334, P536-537) but he did this willingly because it aligned with his desire for personal development. Johnny used feedback from his peers and tutors (e.g., J2:P152-153) to evaluate his behaviour and to validate his change process. While Johnny spoke of the influence of the group Maggie spoke of the ways she differentiated between the individuals within it and especially those with whom she had formed meaningful bonds (M2:P196) within which she could be fully herself.

The tutors were present in all of the stories although Victoria barely mentioned them and spoke mainly of their part in the pressure to be incongruent. Johnny and Maggie spoke positively of the tutors (e.g., J2:P340). For Johnny they were a relatively homogeneous group (e.g., J2:P351-355) while for Maggie they were emerging as complex individuals (e.g., M2:P308-309, P351, P360, P414-417) with whom she was having significant relationships.

Relationship with the approach

Maggie was also developing her relationship with the approach. This came across in the ways that she was expressing her commitment to the approach as an authentic way of *being* rather than an instrumental thing to *do* (e.g., M2:P317-318).

The Stage 3 Interviews

Table 9: Stage 3 Interview Themes

Summary Master table of themes: Third interviews		
Superordinate themes	Emergent themes	Participant
Relationship with self	The impact of the course	V
	Being judged	V
	Empowerment	V
	Being different	J
	A developing relationship with his experience	J
	Process of change	J, M
Self in relationship with others	Talking in the group	V
	Bonding with the group	V, J, M
	Group culture	J
	Receiving feedback	J
	Relationships with the tutors	J, M
Making sense of her experience	Congruence	V
	Developing conceptualisation of silence	V
Relationship with the approach	Being Person-Centred	V, M

Relationship with self

Victoria reflected wearily on the impact of feeling relentlessly judged (V3:P23) and how she had resolutely remained true to herself. Johnny was still aware of his sense of his difference and this was now focused primarily on his sexuality (e.g., J3:P194, P196). Johnny's relationship with his experience was developing and at times he could be lost somewhere between his perceptions and what was 'true' (e.g., J3:P5). He felt that he was changing towards valuing himself and spoke of increased self-liking and self-understanding (J3:P204, P209-210). Uniquely Johnny also spoke of his developing ability to self-nurture. Maggie spoke of how she had changed in relation to her anger (e.g., M3:P3, P8) and of how this change had allowed other aspects of her experience into her awareness. However, Maggie felt that this change was principally due to a change in her medication rather than any effect of the course.

The environment was undoubtedly treating the participants differently. Victoria perceived an environment in which she was persistently judged, was not empathically understood and was being pressed to act in ways which were incongruent. Johnny's

perception was that he was accepted and understood and was being challenged in ways that expressed the approach and were therefore essential to his personal development. Any challenges that Johnny perceived as unjustified he dismissed as inauthentic. Maggie's perception was of being understood and accepted by the tutors and by a significant sub-group of peers.

The two who perceived acceptance (Johnny & Maggie) felt that they were changing while Victoria, who perceived judgment and pressure to change, felt that she remained the same. However, from my perspective they were all changing. Victoria had a broader sense of self and seemed more fluid in her ability to move between different configurations of self in different contexts. These different contexts were both internal and external; initially her quietness had been dependent entirely on the size of the group, now it was also dependent on her internal state (e.g., V3:P9). Johnny had developed a new conceptual vocabulary and had learned a new way to be that gave him greater personal validity. Maggie had become more fluidly self-accepting.

Self in relationship with others

Victoria still spoke of the pressure she felt from others to talk in the group (e.g., V3:P16-17). However she now did not feel that pressure from within; she was more accepting of her quietness. She was surprised by the conditional regard she had perceived on the course and was relieved and exasperated to be finally given conditional permission to be herself by a tutor (V3:P273). Victoria spoke of the bonds she had developed within the group (e.g., V3:P40, P172) and was finding the group to be a resource that offered her conditional support.

Johnny perceived the group to be universally safe and accepting. However, he spoke of how he had once lost faith in the group (e.g., J3:P4, P5) because of its competitive edge but this returned when something from within the group had resonated with him (J3:P6). Johnny was finding more freedom to be fully himself as long as this was within acceptable limits. What was acceptable was decided by his introjection of the group culture which was itself informed by the course's conceptualisation of the Person-Centred approach. Johnny was making sense of this culture and willingly internalising its conditions along

with its new language and concepts which were now delineating his relationship with his experience. Part of this was his relationship with peers' feedback which he used as a way of validating himself (e.g., J3:P66). Therefore, Johnny's perception of being more fully himself was founded on the group's cultural conditions which Johnny internalised as a way of being with himself.

Maggie spoke of individuals and denied the existence of the group (e.g., M3:P110). However, she had connected passionately and lovingly with some peers (e.g., M3:P85) and in doing so had created a place of safety. From my perspective it seemed that she was making use of the larger group as a place to be in connection with others although these connections were of different intensity with different individuals.

All of the participants spoke of their relationships with the tutors although this was a more significant theme for Johnny (e.g., J3:P19-19) and Maggie (e.g., M3:P221). From my perspective Johnny's relationships with the tutors felt more remote than Maggie's. While Maggie spoke about the individual tutors with warmth and love (e.g., M3:P216, P261-265) Johnny spoke of them as a group who were offering him models of ways to be with the exception of one who he felt had treated him unfairly (e.g., J3:P50). Here Johnny was stuck with a significant challenge for a student on this Person-Centred course; I am of worth if I am congruent but how can I be congruent with a tutor when they have the power to assess me and I have perceived them to be capable of being conditional and incongruent?

Making sense of experience

In this perpetually hostile terrain Victoria was still making sense of her experience. She was struggling to fit her understanding of congruence (e.g., V3:P7) as an instrumental therapeutic attitude that also connected with her desire to remain true to herself with the course's conceptualisation of congruence-as-confrontation. Victoria's perceptions of the group had brought a broader understanding of silence which she now saw as a resource, an opportunity, and as being occasionally uncomfortable (e.g., V3:P19, P158, P154-156). Maggie however, was no longer speaking of 'working out' anyone.

Relationship with the approach

There were different qualities to the ways that these students spoke of their relationships with the approach. Victoria felt that the approach was a relatively easy fit in her client work although it was insufficient (e.g., V3:P65, P131). This therapeutic insufficiency carried across to the training context which she felt was insufficiently directive (e.g. V: P101, P107). Johnny's perception of the approach was as a roadmap for a way to live and in as much it represented a way to do being. For Maggie the approach was an authentic way of being that she valued in herself and others (e.g., M3:P177). However, she was still working out how to be herself and be Person-Centred in her practice. Her understanding of the approach was still developing and this process was now informed by relationships with clients and with her counsellor (e.g., M3:P325-328, P397-400). This learning was focused on how much of herself she could bring to a therapeutic relationship while still fitting the course's conceptualisation of being Person-Centred, and on how her unfolding experiences of what it meant to be Person-Centred outside of the course fitted with the course's conceptualisation of the approach. In Maggie's perception the course's conceptualisation was still definitive.

8.6 Comparing the participants' processes

Table 10: Themes from the processes

Superordinate themes	Emergent themes	Participant
Relationship with self	Developing resilience	V
	Making sense of her experience	V
	Developing relationship with difference	J
	Developing differentiation of experience	V & M
Self in relationship with others	Connecting with others	V
	Becoming lost between experience, perception and external evaluation	J
	Learning a new way to be	J
	Relating to and separating from	M
Relationship with the approach	Developing relationship with the approach	V & M
	Caught between 'being' and 'doing'	J
	Adopting the course culture	M

Relationship with self

All three of the participants developed their relationships with themselves but each developed in their own ways. These were rooted in their individual senses of their selves including their potentials, motivations and histories. Significant to these were their experiences of being judged and the ways that they responded to these judgements. These responses were also influenced by the ways the course responded to them as individuals and the ways in which the respondents responded to this environment.

Victoria brought a history of external judgement and an internalised judging process (e.g., V1:P52). She was met with relentless judgements from the course with the exception of significant unconditional positive regard from one peer (V3:P23). Victoria drew on her determination (V2:P168) to pass the course and developed her resilience; she was determined to hang on to herself (V3:P7) and in doing so she became more self-accepting and empowered (V3:P57-58). One aspect of Victoria's process was to make sense of her experience. I understood this as a defence and a resource which enabled her to hold her experience at a distance so that she could engage with it without becoming overwhelmed. In talking about this process Victoria described the ways that her relationship with her experience became more fluid and differentiated.

Johnny also brought a history of internal and external judgement (e.g. J1:P26). Johnny was met with acceptance from the course which challenged these judgements. However through this Johnny became more connected with his deepest sense of difference (e.g. J3:P194) and invalidity. Johnny's way of meeting this was to find new ways to gain acceptance and this led to Johnny becoming more academic and developing ways of relating to others and to himself based on the course's conceptualisation of Person-Centred attitudes. Within this there was the potential for collusion between the course's values and Johnny's process of invalidating his experience; the course encouraged students to value difference in others which could lead to Johnny privileging differences in others over his own sense of difference.

Maggie was met with acceptance and found herself in a place which closely matched her understanding of a healthy environment while also echoing aspects of her family. It felt as though Maggie had come home but in this Maggie was confronted with the oppressive nature of groups and so she was cautious about how fully she could be herself. Maggie and Victoria both became more aware of a broader range of their experience which included different aspects of their selves (e.g., M2:P44, P131). They both also created safe spaces within the group in which they could be more freely expressive.

Self in relationship with others

The course explicitly encouraged students to relate with each other in the group and introduced confrontation/challenge as a way of being congruent. However, each of the participants found their own way of making connections with their peers. For Victoria this was through connecting with individuals so that she could know and be known by them (V2:P6, P98). Being with others was a challenge for Victoria but her strategy worked because she found her way into the group and began to know others and herself in a variety of different relational contexts. By the end of the course Victoria was able to be fully herself in a wider range of contexts including The Big Group (V1:P152-153).

Johnny's connection with the group felt more distant as he engaged with them through his sense of not being OK. From there Johnny's relationship with others was centred on his relationship with his own experiences, perceptions and judgements. Being with others

gave Johnny opportunities to connect with his own experience and at times this connection seemed solidly rooted in his felt sense (e.g., J2:P306-308) while at others he would seem confused about the 'truth' of those perceptions (J3:P5) and would seek external validation (J3:P85). Being in relationship with others was a learning environment for Johnny in which he was learning was about how to be in relationship with others in accordance with Person-Centred attitudes. Johnny's sense of not being OK was pervasive and consequently he found ways to feel OK and to connect with the group through his blossoming academic abilities.

Maggie was passionate about her relationships on the course (e.g., M3:P86). Initially she was cautious and judged her peers and tutors as she worked them out from a place of relative distance (e.g., M1:P177, P181). This led to her connecting deeply with those few peers who she perceived as genuinely embracing the attitudes whilst still feeling separate from the group (M2:P83). The group was a powerful environment for Maggie and although she denied its existence Maggie seemed to make use of the people who formed this group (e.g., M3:P103, P1100).

Relationship with the approach

For Victoria the approach offered a set of skills which were based on a philosophy with which she could connect; it was instrumental. But her experiences of being in this course's conceptualisation of the approach with all of its demands for personal visibility and confrontation left her feeling distant from the approach as a way of being. For Johnny, who had a lifetime of feeling different and not OK, the approach was a way to develop personal validity. The approach was closer to a doctrine which he could willingly adopt and in doing so adapt to the conditions imposed by that doctrine. Johnny's experiences on the course were not of being judged but of carrying his internal judgements which led him towards a new academic Person-Centred self-concept. Maggie had her own history of having to be perfect to meet the conditions of others but for Maggie the approach was a close fit with her sense of self and she did not perceive any need to change in order to fit the culture.

The environment of the course would undoubtedly have responded to each of these students differently because of their individual characteristics and responses. The resilient one who carried internalised judgements and who primarily wanted to be a counsellor did not fit the culture; she felt judged and found her own way to develop. The one who carried significant internalised judgements and was seeking personal development welcomed the culture as a new way to be; he adapted to meet its conditions and found a way to be OK through that culture. The one who was an easy fit with the culture wanted to become a counsellor and was open to personal development; she merged with the culture easily and became a part of it without having to adapt. Participants' relationships with the approach, their motivation for choosing it, and the course's relationship with the approach were all significant to their engagement with the training.

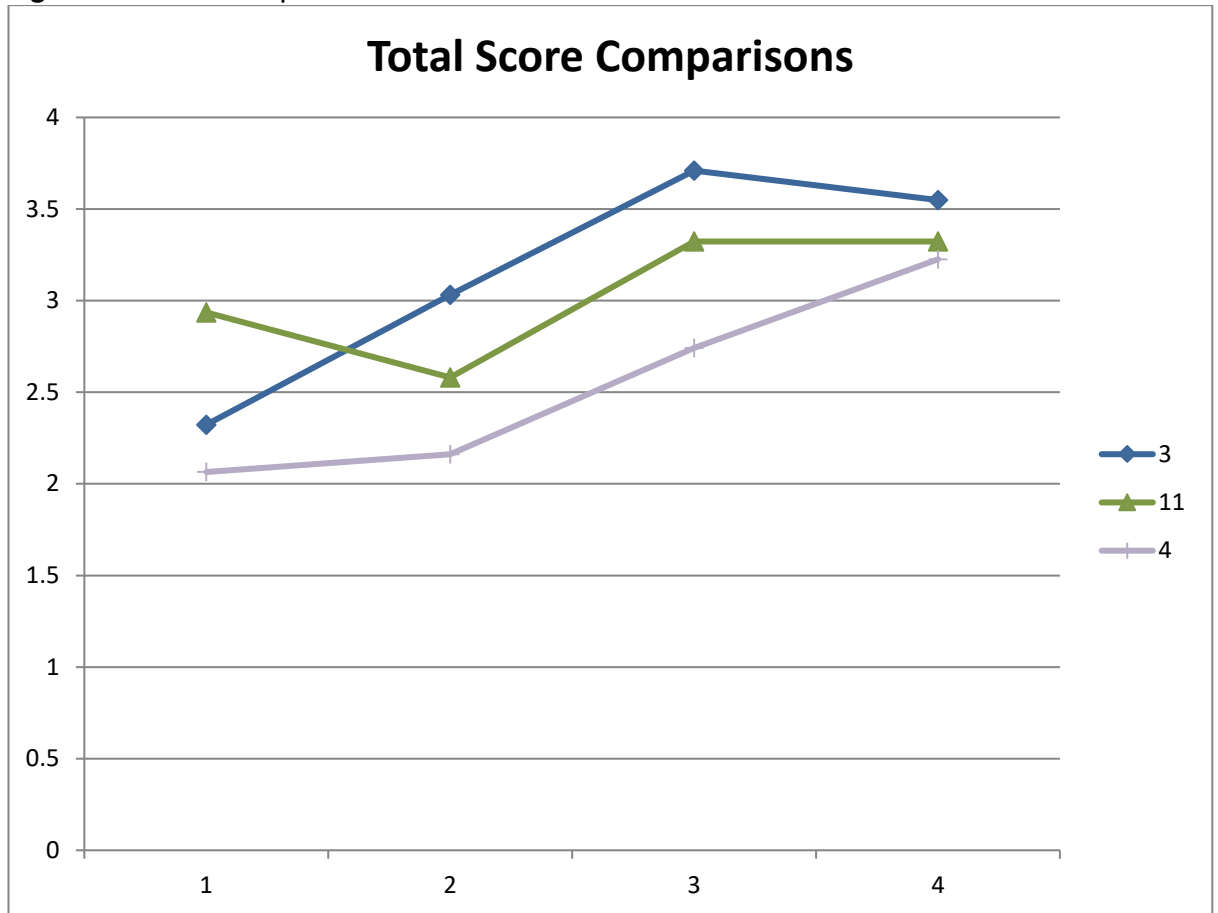
Strathclyde Inventory comparisons

The following graph shows the 3 participants' SI results. No attempt was made to compare the scores across individual interviews because the SI results are subjective and therefore the only meaningful comparisons could be within each participant and across any trends.

All three participants showed an increase in their levels of functioning between points 1 and 4 which was a common experience across the overall sample.

Victoria showed a steady increase in her level of functioning while Johnny showed an increase while he was on the course and a decrease after he finished. This could imply that Victoria's increase in level of functioning was internally referenced and therefore more resilient to changes in the environment while Johnny's may have been more sensitive to environmental factors. However, the students' time on the course included many factors including personal therapy (it is not known whether the participants continued their counselling after leaving the course) and other life events. In Johnny's case it could be that the course supported his development and that once he left that environment with its positive and affirming external valuing processes his level of functioning suffered.

Figure 9: SI Data Comparisons



Victoria = 4, Johnny = 3, Maggie = 11

Maggie showed a dip in the middle of the course when she was most connected with her internal self-critical process but then responded to her deep connections with her peers and the acknowledgement of her tutors. After the course Maggie's level of functioning remained constant. It is interesting to notice that both Johnny and Maggie who perceived the course as a non-judgemental but affirming environment and therefore had a positive relationship with external validation in that context showed increases on the course but this effect diminished after the course. However, Victoria who struggled with being judged on the course and had to draw on her internal valuing process maintained her increase in functioning after leaving the course.

Chapter 9: Literature review

The literature has been presented at this stage in the thesis to respect the primacy of the participants' stories in this phenomenological study. This approach was chosen to ensure that the extent of the literature that was reviewed was determined by the breadth of those stories rather than vice versa.

This review focuses on the key terms *counselling training* and *counsellor training*.

Searches were conducted on the databases of PsychINFO, PsychARTICLES, Professional Development Collection, EThOS, SocINDEX, PubMed, Sage Journals, Google Scholar, Google Books. When literature had been identified it was then searched for material that addressed the process of counselling training and that specifically raised issues about the relationships students may experience during their training. The results are presented below in chronological order to illustrate the ways that the literature evolved over time. To respect the voices of authors I have used specific terms (i.e., counsellor education, trainee, trainer etc.) as they are employed by those authors.

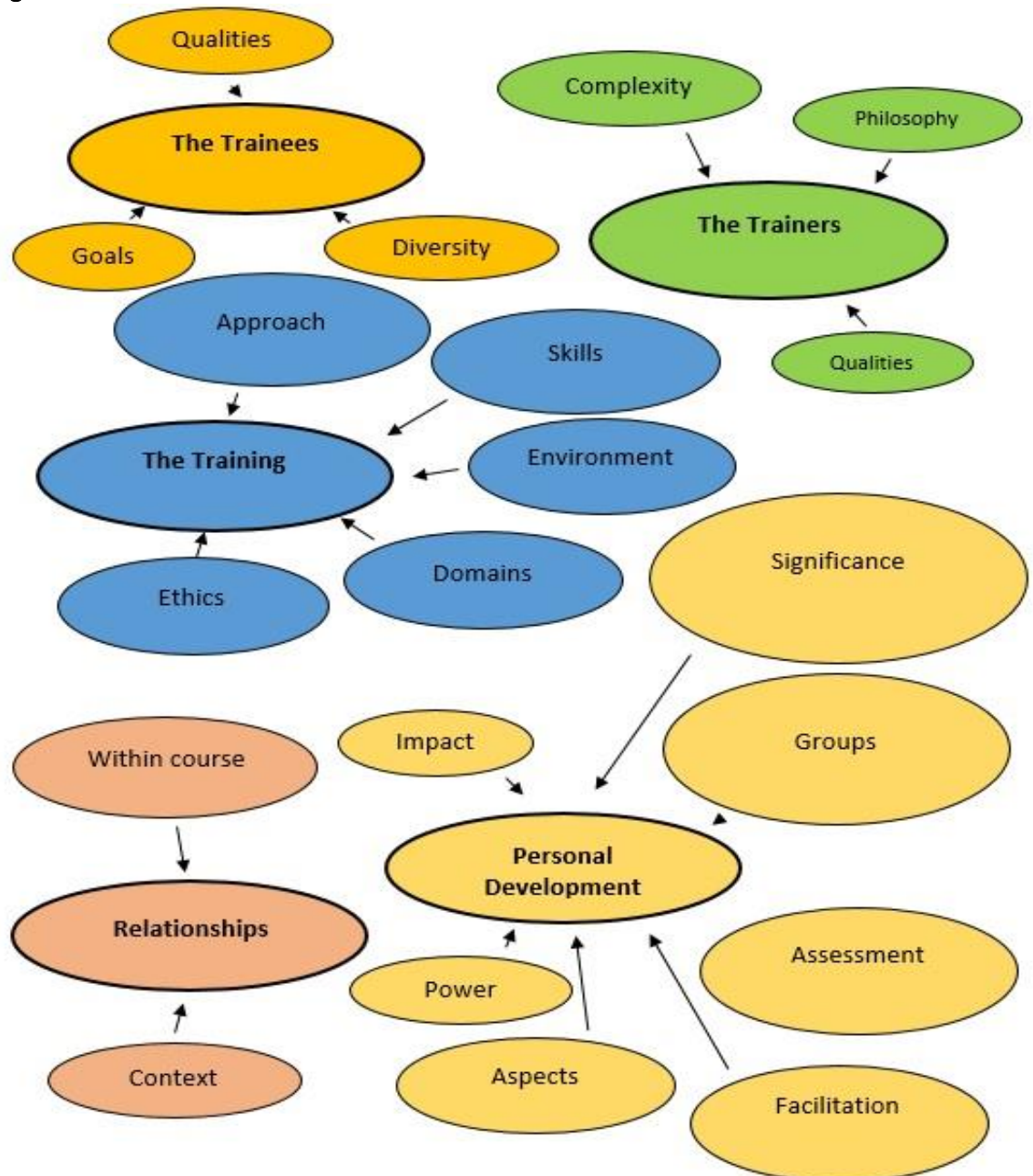
Reviewing the literature generated three broad *types* which provide a structure for this chapter. These are *discussions*, *empirical studies* and *first person accounts*. Layers of themes were developed beneath each type and cluster diagrams are included to illustrate some of the relationships within each type. In these diagrams the number of themes within each cluster illustrates its complexity and the size of each bubble illustrates the number of authors associated with that theme. Themes rotate clockwise with the largest bubble in the 12 o'clock position.

9.1 Discussions about Counselling Training

This type contained the following themes:

- Personal Development
- The Training
- The Trainees
- The Trainers
- Relationships

Figure 10: Discussions



The discussions

Truax and Carkhuff (1976) discuss a training model which reflects Person-Centred theory (Charles Truax was a member of Rogers' research team in the Wisconsin Project (Sanders, 2012)). They highlight experiential aspects of the process:

Above all, Rogers has stressed the need for a teaching atmosphere where the supervisor offers facilitative therapeutic conditions (1976:211)

Their use of 'supervisor' reflects the contemporary situation in the USA in which counsellor training primarily focused on supervised practice. The authors propose an approach which comprises:

...elements of a didactic approach without doing violence to the more experiential aspects stressed by such theorists as Rogers (1976:212)

This is supported by a small scale study with a group of graduate students which suggested that when teachers offered therapeutic conditions students moved towards greater equality and took more responsibility for their learning (1976:259). Truax and Carkhuff highlight two aspects of the trainer's role; focusing on facilitating the student's learning about themselves and focusing on teaching. They suggest aims for the development of counsellors which go beyond the acquisition of skills:

[a counsellor is]... not simply a technician skilled in the employment of a variety of techniques - although he certainly must be that... He is more, much more. He is [...] an open and flexible person possessed with a great amount of self-awareness and self-knowledge (1976:218)

Truax and Carkhuff highlight the relational aspects of training and suggest that purely didactic teaching of therapeutic skills might result in an inauthentic performance of these skills rather than a genuine expression of values (1976:222). This is based on their understanding that counselling training is a 'special case':

...a learning process that takes place in the context of a particular kind of deep and meaningful relationship which facilitates positive change (1976:238)

Although the work is based on the assumption that therapeutic skills can be learned (1976:232) the authors also suggest that the selection of trainees is typically based on their personal qualities. While this suggestion appears anecdotal it raises questions about

teachers' and students' preconceptions about how much of being a counsellor is learned and how much is inherent.

Citing Baldwin and Lee's (1965) argument for the significance of therapeutic experiences within training Truax and Carkhuff propose the inclusion of groupwork in addition to personal therapy. They suggest that groupwork is 'free of classroom cues...' (1976:283) and provides an opportunity for:

...self-exploration of [students'] own goals, values, and experiences in relation to their emerging role as counsellor or therapist (ibid)

From a USA perspective Blocher (1987) suggests that counselling:

...call[s] for an impressive range of knowledge and skill, this role demands a set of attitudes about self, others, and the profession that can only flow from a high level of cognitive development and personal security (1987:17)

Blocher emphasises the importance of developing counsellors' attitudes stressing that:

Perhaps the most critical area of concern for counsellor education is the extent to which programs are themselves growth-producing, developmentally-potent learning environments (1987:18)

To counter his concern that courses might fail students in this area by offering an environment which promotes competition and evaluation Blocher suggests that courses are most rewarding for students when they offer:

...a climate of warm, caring, and supporting relationships divorced from competition and external evaluation (1987:19)

From the UK Thorne and Dryden (1991) stress that 'self-exploration' should be given a high priority within course structures and timetables. They acknowledge that self-exploration may occur in various ways depending on the nature of individual trainees:

...for some trainees, indeed the opportunity to be quietly with themselves as they study for an essay or reflect on a day's work is more productive than the most dramatic encounter group (1991:5)

The authors (1991:18) warn that trainers should not assume that personal development 'will take place automatically' and that for some students it will be a painful and/or distressing process (ibid).

Dryden and Thorne (1991a) suggest that a course's goals will be 'inextricably linked with the trainers' view of the effective practitioner' (1991a:16). However, the authors then raise questions about how the course's goals might align with students' aims and how this might lead to confusion about the relevance of particular teaching strategies (1991a:16). The authors go on to query the influence of the relationships within the training course:

(a) what is the quality of the relationship (bond) between trainers and trainees and amongst trainees themselves and how does that affect trainees' engagement with learning...? (1991a:16)

In their later discussions of counselling training Dryden and Thorne (1991b:pp3-9) again acknowledge that self-exploration is an idiosyncratic process and that groups may not always be the most effective strategy. However, the authors seem to imply that groups will be employed.

Later, Dryden and Feltham (1994) stress the importance of personal development during counselling training. Discussing the recommendations of the then BAC (now BACP) they explain that personal development is a formal expectation and a discrete part of training although it is not normally assessed. To put this work in context it should be acknowledged that from this the BACP developed their course accreditation scheme which in turn evolved into the Gold Book Accreditation Scheme (BACP, 2016a) which still reflects significant elements of Dryden et al.'s initial work. The authors suggest that personal development is generally achieved through the use of groups and ask whether it is ethical for these groups to be facilitated by tutors because of the potential for, or the fear of, hidden assessment. However, the authors suggest that facilitation by course tutors can occur and may have a theoretical or economic basis.

Dryden et al. (1995) continue their discussion of their work with the then-BAC's Course Recognition Group (CRG) and describe professional counselling training as providing:

...an education and training in counselling to a high level of competence, enabling counsellors to practice safely and effectively with a wide range of clients (1995:12)

They stress that training includes an 'in-depth study of a counselling approach based on a core theoretical model' (1995:13) and that the various elements of the course must be interrelated, coherent and internally consistent. Failure here could lead to students becoming confused and to possibly:

...follow their own interests, ignoring important aspects and missing the opportunity to become rounded professionals (1995:pp16-17)

Dryden et al. propose that the learning environment is a significant aspect of training:

For students to get the most out of professional counsellor training, they need to experience a consistent, continuous environment in which they can learn to trust one another and, as a result, use and learn from the dynamics of a stable and developing group and involve themselves in the group at a deeply personal level (1995:17)

They propose that the expression of a course's approach should occur in the experiential and didactic elements (1995:30) and indeed 'during admissions procedures, in theory sessions, during assessment and evaluation exercises and in informal contacts' (ibid). They suggest that at the admissions stage potential students should be assessed for their 'fit' with the course's approach and that:

...courses which ignored that fit would be doing the applicant a disservice to select him or her for training in an inappropriate core theoretical model (1995:62)

The authors discuss the significance of personal development and suggest that this needs to go beyond any development students might identify for themselves (1995:97). To this end they propose that tutors and supervisors offer students opportunities for development by highlighting any blind spots students may have.

Dryden et al. explore the pros and cons for using either core teaching staff or external facilitators for groupwork. Using core staff offers the potential for greater coherence in

the expression of the approach while in favour of external facilitators is the potential for students to be more open:

If the assessment role of the core staff results in trainees being reluctant to divulge and explore aspects of self lest they be assessed as incompetent or inadequate, then the personal development functions are in danger of not being met (1995:103)

Johns appears twice within the literature, her 1996 discussion of personal development suggests that:

Personal development is not an event but a process, life-long and career-long: it must and will happen incidentally before and after any training course, through all aspects of life and work. I will argue that in counselling training it should be purposeful, integrated and at the heart of the learning journey of becoming a counsellor (1996:xi)

Johns argues that personal development in training is 'enmeshed with [the course's] values and core attitudes' (1996:xii). The author suggests that personal development is about discovering the self which can be an uncertain and confusing process (1996:4). Johns argues that personal development is essential to ensure that learning is not merely the acquisition of skills to enable mechanistic practice and proposes that the trainer's qualities are central to this:

...in terms of personal development, I believe that a key element is the person of the trainer, the attitudes, values, understandings she models and the stimulus/energy she provides for all those processes at the heart of training (1996:15-16)

Johns acknowledges however, that this can be challenged by the values and attitudes of academic institutions.

Johns draws our attention (1996:42-63) to the diversity of student experiences and histories and to the spectrum of personal development stories that can be told and the range of ways in which they can be explored. In doing so Johns stresses the complexity of the trainer's role and suggests a wide range of factors which contribute to this complexity including the different roles-within-the role, the resources needed, issues of power and responsibility, the paradox of needing confidence *and* humility, offering therapeutic

conditions within a complicated setting involving personhood, ethics and boundaries, and holding the diverse training needs of students (1996:65). Drawing on Proctor (1993) Johns extends this discussion suggesting a range of archetypal trainer roles including transferential/counter-transferential roles such as caretaker, absentee, spokesperson, judge, scapegoat, or person in need of looking after. Johns also highlights the resources needed to hold this complexity (1996:65).

Johns suggests that trainers have legitimate power in that they are there to influence their students but that there is also the responsibility to avoid power-as-the-ability-to-control. Johns highlights the need for trainer awareness of these issues and for open dialogue in order to facilitate students' personal development:

...if a trainer/counsellor/helper is perceived as expert, attractive and trustworthy, then he or she inevitably has the potential for disproportionate power over the trainee/client, which must be acknowledged and worked through (1996:68)

Johns also acknowledges students' influence on this process and discusses the potential for students to 'send' roles to their trainers through transference responses. Johns proposes that personal development is essential for trainers and that a significant aspect of this is trainers' awareness of their responses to students and of their educational philosophies (1996:75).

Johns proposes a range of factors which are facilitative of personal development including:

...a warmth of climate... positive relationships of trust... a high degree of bonding in the group... an increase in openness and therefore more willingness to take risks... (1996:108)

Groupwork is justified through Johns' perception of its efficacy in developing participants' self-knowledge and self-acceptance. She suggests that an individual's core assumptions, beliefs, values and attitudes:

...can only be fully revealed and tested in open comparison with others' attitudes, by responses and feedback from other people and by seeing and feeling how behaviour driven by our values directly affects and is perceived by others members of our world; hence, groups! (1996:111)

Johns also acknowledges that groups can be challenging and painful for some participants:

...many trainees report that their most frightening, uncomfortable and sometimes unusable experiences of groups is in... the large group, the whole course (1996:113)

Consequently, Johns questions the commitment to large groups and suggests that this is rooted in history and myth (1996:114). However, Johns cautions against the use of smaller groups because they can lead to 'splitting' in the group at the cost of cohesion, trust and sharing (1996:109).

Johns acknowledges the significance of a course's theoretical approach in terms of the ways it may influence the facilitation of groups. Johns argues, from a Person-Centred perspective, for the use of core staff in this role to provide continuity and consistency and to ensure that students' processes and potential difficulties remain visible (1996:126). Johns argues that formal assessment of personal development is 'inappropriate' (1996:126) however:

...questions and judgements for trainee counsellors around "good enough" standards of self-awareness and interpersonal relationships seem unavoidable, if difficult and delicate. At the heart of all issues of facilitation and group membership must be the recognition that trainees are engaged in a developmental journey, are in the process of becoming counsellors; assessment and evaluation are then in the service of learning and growth, to be embraced (however tentatively) and not feared (ibid)

Johns suggests that groups have great potential but that trainers need to be aware that students often can feel ambivalent and unenthusiastic about groupwork. Johns suggests that trainers therefore, need to question any assumptions they have about the necessity of groups in this context.

Wheeler also appears twice in this review of the discussions. In 1996 she draws on her work with the then-BAC's CRG. Wheeler asserts the necessity of assessment within counselling training because counsellors work alone with vulnerable people (1996:4). Wheeler also highlights the relationship between a course and processes of 'external accountability and evaluation' (1996:125).

Wheeler highlights the significance of student selection and suggests that this is '...probably the most crucial assessment procedure for any course' (1996:28):

Counselling competence is not achieved through academic study alone. A student could read every book on counselling available, write excellent essays and yet be quite unsuitable and unskilled for clinical practice. Who they are, how they relate to others, how they conceptualise clients' difficulties, how they manage their own concerns, are all crucial to counselling competence, and these aspects of counselling course candidates must be assessed at the outset (1996:42)

Wheeler suggests that personal development is an essential requirement of counsellor training and defines this as 'self-awareness and change' (1996:74). The author suggests that this will comprise 'shifts in attitudes, perception and response modes' (ibid). In cases where these shifts do not occur Wheeler points to failure to establish and maintain contact between teacher and student and/or a lack of openness to change on the behalf of the student. Wheeler discusses groupwork in this context and cites Small & Manthei's (1988) review of studies in which they report on 17 years of research and experience within a counsellor training programme at a New Zealand university. From this Wheeler suggests that 'students often report that they have benefitted from such a group' (1996:22). Wheeler suggests that Person-Centred courses might typically use a member of the core staff to facilitate these groups when assessment tasks are distributed amongst the group and tutors.

Mearns (1997) discusses Person-Centred counselling training and stresses the significance of the 'personal and relational qualities of the counsellor' (1997:x). He suggests the possibility of an individual possessing these qualities without any training, however, Mearns goes on to say that 'unfortunately I have never met this fictional person who needed no specialist training' (ibid) and underlines the ethical necessity for training to facilitate safe as well as effective practice. Mearns suggests that:

Person-centred counselling probably requires more training and a greater intensity of training than most other mainstream counselling approaches because of the daunting personal development objectives which require to be met (ibid)

Mearns describes a process involving both 'learning how to do it' and personal development 'since it is the "Self" of the counsellor that is the central ingredient in the endeavour' (1997:xi). Mearns suggests that to offer training *in* counselling rather than a course *about* counselling a course should provide 'considerable human contact' both with tutors and between peers (1997:xii).

Mearns proposes that the teacher-student relationship within Person-Centred counselling training is fundamentally different to the counsellor-client relationship. Similarities might include that teachers 'will be able and willing to empathise with the students, to value them as individuals of worth and be congruent in relating' (1997:9). Differences include a requirement to focus on all students rather than exclusively on one person. Boundaries around confidentiality are also different with course members having a responsibility to share pertinent information where appropriate. Students are also expected to take a greater share of the responsibility in the relationship and this might include, for example, challenging the teachers or asking to have their needs met. Mearns also suggests that teachers have a greater responsibility to their students than counsellors do to their clients. This is an expression of the responsibility to the profession and to future clients that comes with the teacher's role as assessor (1997:pp 30-24). Mearns proposes that teachers need to maintain the tension between being responsible *to* their students and being responsible *for* them (1997:35) and that this may facilitate the development of the student's internal locus of evaluation.

Mearns discusses the challenges of training students to be able to meet clients at relational depth (1997:27; Mearns and Cooper, 2005) and proposes that one aspect of this is facilitating a shift from conscious competence to unconscious competence. He proposes that this '...is facilitated by the fostering of the course member's congruence' (1997:27) which may be a lengthy process extending beyond training. Mearns proposes that in order to be able to work in this way students need to go through a stepped personal development process comprising awareness, understanding and experimentation with self (1997:94) and that opportunities for this can be provided by workshops and large groups. Mearns cites Johns' (1996) scepticism about the necessity of large groups but argues that:

...it is the *fact* that small groups are much more easily normed and thereby contained which makes them qualitatively different from large groups which can touch parts of the Self unreached by other methods (1997:105 emphasis from original)

Mearns offers no support for his assertion that this is 'the fact' but acknowledges that some students can struggle in this context and that it may 'take some time for course members to become convinced about the veracity of unstructured large group working' (ibid).

Mearns proposes that the unconditional positive regard of trainers is a significant aspect of training because it may 'contribute to the course member's developing self-acceptance' (1997:37). However, he suggests that the trainer assumes that the student has a more internalised locus of evaluation than a client and therefore the trainer can offer interventions more focused on the student's internal process (1997:38). Mearns' argument is that this is located within a context in which students are allowed opportunities to come out about parts of themselves that they fear, dislike or hate. The intention is to facilitate the development of students' self-acceptance through the internalisation of the unconditional acceptance of others. However, Mearns suggests that while Person-Centred training needs to hold the attitudes of the approach it also needs to attend to students' expectations, fears and to the diverse levels of commitment about their training and therefore, needs to avoid the paradox of imposing Person-Centred 'dogma' (1997:12).

Mearns explores issues around assessment in the context of offering a professional qualification and discusses how a Person-Centred approach may rely on self-assessment but suggests that this would philosophically preclude the offering of any certificate because that would imply external assessment (1997:51). However, he suggests that self-assessment can be demanding, meaningful and robust part of the assessment process within which tutors still have a vital role (1997:48)

Mearns offers a list of desirable personal qualities for a Person-Centred trainer (1997:pp51-61) including non-defensiveness, transparency, empathy, unconditional positive regard, expertise in holding the responsibility dynamic, expertise as a demonstrator in order to relate theory to counselling practice, and expertise as a

facilitator. Likewise, Mearns suggests that non-defensiveness is also an essential aspect of a potential student's 'readiness' for training (1997:pp66-67). Discussing diversity within student groups Mearns advocates heterogeneity among cohorts to create a 'vibrant context for personal development' (1997:68).

Mearns acknowledges that Person-Centred counselling is a skilful activity 'albeit that the skills are grounded in the practitioner's personal development' (1997:109). He suggests that the development of skills should be 'from the inside out', for example, teaching how to respond empathically should be a process of helping the student to 'release her empathic sensitivity' (1997:115):

The training emphasis then is on helping the course member to disassemble the various blocks to his congruent relating (1997:116)

Discussing blocks to congruent relating, Mearns proposes that part of the trainer's role is to emphasise the 'norm of simply being oneself when practising counselling and allowing oneself to make mistakes' (1997:125). Part of this will be offering the student 'enormous support' through the trainer's 'genuine care as the course member fights his own fear of failure' (ibid).

Mearns reminds us that transference may be present in relationships between trainers and trainees (1997:189) and expands this to include issues of structural power but suggests that:

If the appropriate responsibility dynamic has been achieved then the power difference should be much reduced... However, it is still important that the trainer really attends to the course member's perspective as well as her own and does not too easily presume that the trainee views the relationship with the same equality as does the trainer (1997:189-190)

Johns presents a collection of discussions about counselling training (1998) and suggests that:

...the quality of relationships is as central in counselling training as it is in counselling (1998:217)

Within Johns' collection, Thomas (1998b) reflects on her experiences as a trainer and proposes that:

Being a counselling trainer requires us to work in a space *between*: between being a trainer and a counsellor; between being a trainer and a supervisor; between the training we ourselves received and the training we are offering; between the organisation that hosts and administrates the course and the participants (1998b:18)

Thomas also explores the ways in which students can become confused, frustrated, angry and/or discouraged by the complexities of training. Thomas reflects on the complexities of endeavouring to act as a 'conduit' for the group's expression of such feelings whilst also holding her own reactions to those feelings, which might include fear, inadequacy, guilt and confusion (1998b:21).

Thomas describes one significant aspect of the trainer's role as being the 'negotiating of the boundary between facilitating and offering counselling' (1998b:21). A lack of clear boundaries around what is appropriate material for the training and what is therapeutic can lead to confusion about the trainers' roles. Thomas suggests that students' childhood experiences of education can contribute to this confusion and reflects on how:

...even simply acknowledging it [therapeutic material] made me more available as a target for transference feelings of all kinds. People could appreciate me for listening, or resent me for not giving them enough attention and for neglecting their real needs (1998b:23)

Thomas suggests that being a trainer is a stressful occupation and one in which trainers will:

...inevitably make mistakes or have to make difficult choices where the path of action which we take can be criticised. Students and colleagues will sometimes be angry with us or idealise us, and our personality and its limitations will become painfully transparent to the entire learning community in which we work (1998b:24-25)

Discussing the training of Person-Centred counsellors Merry (1999) proposes that:

Person-centred counsellors need to be able to communicate their empathic understanding, their personal congruence and their willingness to accept and respect their clients with as little judgement as possible [...] Counsellors

who stick rigidly to a set of rules, or who try to use whatever technique comes to mind, are in danger of making the process mechanical and contrived (1999:85)

Merry argues that the Person-Centred approach reflects a way of being based on a set of attitudes, values and personal qualities (ibid). He defines qualities as distinctive attributes or characteristics, attitudes as ways of thinking and behaving, and values as being 'concerned with... judgement about what is and what is not important in a situation' (ibid).

In 'The Trainee Handbook' (Bor and Watts, 1999) Woolfe (1999:10) discusses the influence that a course's theoretical approach will have on its teaching style and argues that inevitably, this will go on to impact the learning experiences offered to the students. Thus on a Person-Centred course the understanding that the client knows best 'is likely to be paralleled by an emphasis on student-centred learning' (1999:11). Woolfe suggests that this will involve experiential learning in groups such that the student can explore aspects of self and can experience therapeutic conditions.

Wheeler (2000) asks 'What makes a good counsellor?' and explores the ways in which trainers define good and bad trainees. Citing Skovolt & Ronnestad (1995), Wheeler suggests that 'Personal development is considered to be an essential aspect of counsellor or therapist training' (2000:67) and drawing from Johns (1996) proposes that:

Selected candidates for counsellor training do not have to be perfect when they start a course but they do need to be open to change through the therapeutic process (2000:67)

This implies that in order to meet personal development requirements students need to be willing to engage in a process of therapeutic change. However, Wheeler also suggests that the selection of candidates is a subjective process upon which rests the success of any trainee and the wellbeing of their potential clients (2000:67). Wheeler comments on the attitude of trainers towards trainees' potential for change and suggests that:

It is ironic that in a profession dedicated to personal development, there may be little faith that a potential trainee can change sufficiently to meet the demands of the counselling profession. Given the constructs that were most frequently elicited from counsellor trainers, the implication is that counsellors are indeed 'born' and not 'made' (Wheeler, 2000:80)

Citing Mearns (1997), Wheeler goes on to suggest that:

...trainers have a tendency to choose trainees who are like themselves and hence tend to be anxious about selecting people whose psychological make-up differs from their own, perhaps interpreting it to be more pathological than it really is (2000:80)

Proctor (2002) explores the significance of power and discusses the view that counselling can be understood as a form of social control (e.g. Masson, 1993; Spinelli, 1994) in which individuals may be oppressed when power is exerted to influence that which is accepted as normal or pathological, and that a perceived lack of power can be a constituent of mental disorders themselves. However, Proctor also raises our awareness of the limitations imposed by a structural view in which power may be perceived as negative, unidirectional and embedded such that the oppressed are passive victims; this ignores the possibility for power to be a positive force. Proctor also explores the related concept of authority; a tutor or counsellor can be seen to have power vested in the authority imbued by their role. With authority comes responsibility to communicate the power dynamic congruently, i.e. consistently and transparently. While it could be argued that transparency does not undo the power dynamic, a lack of transparency could render authority figures unavailable for scrutiny leading to a situation in which implicit oppression takes place. This may result, for example, in students being incongruent in order to fit the leadership of the trainers; they may hide their cultural roots or values in order to suit the values of the dominant staff team.

Donati and Watts (2005) discuss personal development in counselling training and suggest that it is intrinsically linked with professional development. However, citing Wilkins (1997), they suggest these aspects can be differentiated such that professional development centres on skills and knowledge while personal development embraces

‘everything else’. They suggest that professional development attends to ‘doing needs’ while personal development attends to ‘being needs’ (2005). They add that the primary focus of personal development lies in the development of the attitudes necessary to practise and alert us to the confusion that can arise when personal development is seen as personal growth which they see as a less professionally focused activity.

Lhulier (2005) discusses the training of Psychodynamic therapists and highlights the role of modelling during the development of identity. The author draws attention to the ways students develop an attachment to a theoretical approach or to teachers in order to provide them with modelling and/or security. Lhulier acknowledges that this process may be problematic in cases where the student feels under threat from their teacher(s) and may then suffer the ‘...consequences of inauthentically assigning meaning to complicated phenomena’ (2005:463).

Discussing the future of training in counselling, Rowan suggests that there are ‘three ways of doing therapy’ each of which need to be addressed during training (2005:ix). The *instrumental* focuses on treating the client, the *relational* (or authentic) focuses on meeting the client and the *transpersonal* focuses on ‘on linking with the client in a rather intimate way’ (ibid). For Rowan, the instrumental approach includes training in skills which can then be practised whereas he sees the development of a relational approach as ‘a process of unlearning assumptions and attitudes which we thought were obvious and necessary before’ (2005:35). The transpersonal approach, Rowan argues, relies more on the development of the being of the therapist which includes ‘initiation’ into a comprehensive system for conceptualising the transpersonal domain of human experience (2005:36).

For Rowan, training is about gaining wisdom and he suggests that:

One of the most extraordinary things about training is that it historically has been so narrow. Trainees have been indoctrinated with the teachings of a particular school and left with the conclusion this is enough. It is not. (2005:41)

Here he raises the issue of training as a form of indoctrination into an approach rather than education and the blinkeredness that indoctrination can engender.

Rowan suggests that groupwork within training can be a useful way to raise participants' awareness of any blocks they may have to 'being oneself' (2005:117) and proposes that within groups:

...there is no assumption made that people are sick or inferior or defective in any way. [...] The journey begins with the permission and encouragement to be real (2005:120)

Rowan suggests that within the Person-Centred approach the focus is on 'genuineness, empathy and acceptance' (ibid) and group participants are 'enabled and supported in expressing directly and genuinely the feelings that arise for them in the group' (ibid). Rowan argues that trust is a significant factor that can influence participant openness; trust is required in order for individuals to be able to take risks but whether a group or individual is trustworthy may not be evident until a risk is taken (2005:124). This dynamic is set within a context in which:

...openness is certainly to be aimed at: partly because it is one of the goals of groupwork in terms of personal growth. This means the owning of behaviour, and taking responsibility for our actions or, in other words, authenticity (2005:125)

Rowan defines safety as a function of the group's ability to share risk taking, of clarity of boundaries, and of the ways that 'power structures and hidden agendas are brought out into the open' (ibid). Rowan suggests that challenge can be 'fruitful' and proposes that it should be done with empathy and with awareness of the reasons behind any challenge.

Rowan discusses the mixture of academic and experiential learning highlighting the relative values of each to a rounded course (2005:134). Rowan argues that either aspect may be dismissed by advocates of the other and the tutor's role therefore, might include elements of 'wrestling' with students in order to meet the course's academic and/or experiential requirements.

While not specifically discussing communication between teachers and students, but rather discussing communication between counsellors and clients, Rowan proposes that:

Communication is only possible between equals, and if one person tries to control another, that necessary sense of equality is lost. One of the joys of genuine human development is dropping the need to control, the need to defend one's ego, the need to be right (2005:154)

This could be interpreted as suggesting that communication is not possible between students and teachers because of the inequality between the roles. Rowan suggests that in this context the teacher's need to control may be an expression of personal defensiveness and/or it may be an expression of their responsibility to control the context to ensure that necessary objectives are met and that a curriculum is followed. Therefore, is 'genuine human development' possible in these relationships?

Rowan highlights the differences between skills and qualities suggesting that skills are only valuable as means of applying the necessary attitudes '[b]ut we can only teach the skills of applying them if they are there to start with' (2005:155). He goes on to stress that there is a difference between 'putting on a performance' and being Person-Centred (ibid).

Pieterse et al. (2013), a team of US and Australian researchers, discuss the development of self-awareness within counselling training and propose an Integrated Model of Self-Awareness Development (IMSAD). Citing a range of authors (e.g. Edwards and Bess, 1998) they argue that the development of self-awareness is a significant element of counselling training but one which has not been sufficiently formalised. The authors discuss the ambiguity that currently exists about the effectiveness of groupwork in this context, drawing on the outcome evaluations of O'Leary (1994) which support the use of groups and on Lennie (2007) who suggested that:

...the complicated role requirements of group membership (with members having to be both client and counsellor) at times served to complicate the self-awareness enhancement process (in Pieterse et al., 2013:193)

Reviewing the discussions

The authors of this type of literature were predominantly respected and established theorists and trainers (for example, Traux and Carkhuff, 1976; Dryden and Feltham, 1994; Mearns, 1997; Wheeler, 1996).

The significance of personal development is a consistent theme (e.g. Dryden and Thorne, 1991b; Mearns, 1997; Wheeler, 1996) and there is a strong argument (e.g. Dryden et al., 1995) that personal development must be focused on the process of training with the implication that tutors are therefore responsible for the agenda and the depth of this work. This raises questions about the ways that students might perceive their tutors when students are engaging in this individual, personal and potentially stressful endeavour.

Authors (e.g. Dryden and Feltham, 1994; Mearns, 1997) argue for groupwork as a way to facilitate this process. However, Johns (1996) and others ask whether large groups are appropriate to all students and suggests that some may struggle with this learning context. The value of large groups seems to be unresolved and Pieterse et al. (2013) seem to challenge the reliance on any form of group for this essential aspect of training.

The potential impact of assessment on personal development is explored and the consensus is that, from a Person-Centred perspective this may hinder the process (e.g. Rogers and Freiberg, 1983; Mearns, 1997). However, there is a strong argument that assessment is an essential and ethical requirement of professional training (e.g. Mearns, 1997). The theme of assessment also echoes through the discussion of the facilitative conditions for training with most authors arguing for conditions which closely resemble those of a therapeutic relationship albeit with significant differences to respect the ethical aspects of training (e.g. Traux and Carkhuff, 1976; Blocher, 1987; Dryden et al., 1995). This sheds light on the complexity of the roles of trainers and students and therefore, of the relationships between them.

The issues surrounding the extent and focus of personal development and the ways it is facilitated and assessed brings up the topic of power within Person-Centred training. This highlights potential conflicts between the philosophy of the approach and the responsibilities of professional training. Likewise, there is argument within the literature

for consistency in the ways the approach is expressed throughout training which is balanced with arguments against dogmatism (Mearns, 1997) and indoctrination (Rowan, 2005).

A dominant theme is that of the relationship between learning skills and becoming a counsellor. Authors (e.g. Traux and Carkhuff, 1976; Mearns, 1997; Merry, 1999) argue that this process involves more than the acquisition of skills and that personal development is key to developing the necessary attitudes such that practice might be authentic rather than mechanistic. The concepts of *doing* skills and/or *being* a counsellor emerge here.

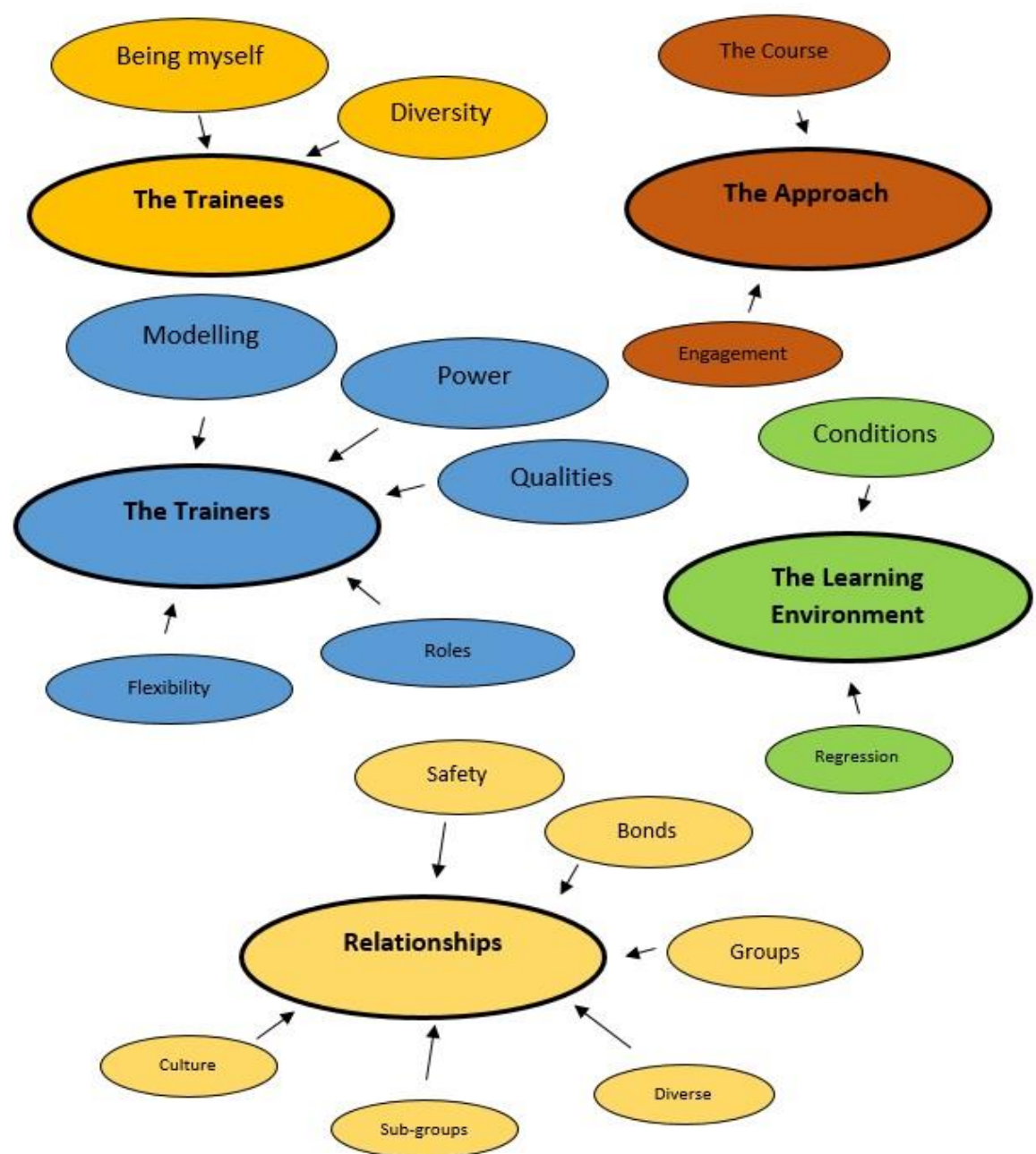
While acknowledging the inevitability and the value of diverse student groups (e.g. Mearns, 1997) authors also delineate desirable qualities for student counsellors suggesting that an ideal group would possess some aspects of homogeneity and others of heterogeneity. This raises questions about how students may feel around these potentially opposing issues; might they feel conflicting needs to conform and to be different? The literature starts to open up the issue of student diversity beyond stereotypical themes of, for example, race, culture and gender. Students' learning styles, goals, ways of processing and educational histories are introduced among other aspects of diversity in this context.

9.2 Empirical studies

The literature under this type produced the following themes:

- The Approach
- Trainers
- The Trainees
- The Learning Environment
- Relationships

Figure 11: Empirical Studies



The empirical studies

Based on a qualitative study employing Grounded Theory and conducted over five years (n=120) Skovolt and Ronnestad (1995) propose an eight-stage model of development for counsellors. The first two stages of this model map approximately to UK qualifying level training. They suggest that students begin with the 'Transition to Professional Training Stage' (1995:22) and that an individual's motivations for training may not be fully understood when they enrol on a training course. The central task here is the:

...assimilation of an extensive amount of new information which the individual is acquiring primarily from graduate classes and then using this information in practicum (1995:23)

Skovolt and Ronnestad suggest that professors, supervisors and peers are major influences on this process.

In the 'Imitation of Experts Stage' (1995:pp 30-41) students focus on becoming competent which may involve imitation as a form of modelling. Modelling may come from trainers, personal counsellors, peers or figures in the literature and feedback from trainers is still a vital part of the process. The authors argue that a dogmatically oriented approach may offer quick gains but these will be at the expense of deeper learning. Skovolt and Ronnestad suggest that this is a confusing and complex stage in which students may begin to feel dissatisfied with their courses.

This is followed by the 'Conditional Autonomy Stage' (1995pp:42-49) in which students work as full-time interns. This context differs from the UK where students are typically required to complete 100 hours of client work during training (BACP, 2016a). In the UK, the conditional autonomy stage might occur after qualification when counsellors may still be in placement or working or in private practice. This then suggests that the outcomes of UK training may be limited to the stage of 'imitation of experts'. The internship stage may relate more closely to the process of working towards individual accreditation, which UK counsellors can choose to undertake post-qualifying.

Skovolt and Ronnestad (1995) propose an overall trajectory for training:

Ideally, the long term result of the professional Individuation process is an optimal therapeutic self which consists of a unique personal blend of the

developed professional and personal selves. Overall, the sources of influence have gone from heavily external to heavily internal over the course of the professional Individuation process (1995:101)

This involves moving from received knowledge towards constructed knowledge (1995:110) and is an idiosyncratic process in which students experience multiple influencing factors in both common and unique ways (1995:112). The authors suggest that within this 'interpersonal encounters are more influential than impersonal data' (1995:116).

Speedy (1998) conducted a qualitative study (n=13) exploring issues of power for women counselling trainers and included herself within the sample. Speedy found that her participants distinguished between power as a possession and power as a process. As a possession power could be ascribed, owned and disguised (1998:32). Ascribed power could be tempting while owned power is 'a mantle worn more comfortably' (1998:33); a legitimate use of power around issues such as the course structure. Speedy identified disguised power as:

...a potential misuse of power [...]. Descriptions were littered with words such as "abusive", "sneaky" and "oppressive" (1998:35)

Speedy's definition of power as a process is a verb-like construct with links to empowerment (1998:36); a force within the group which could be tapped into, harnessed or channelled.

Hiebert et al. (1998) completed a quantitative study of graduate counselling students (n=95) to explore their hypothesis that anxiety had a negative impact on students' ability to learn and to perform in counselling practice sessions. Participants completed Counsellor Self-Talk Inventories (CSTI) and State-Trait Anxiety Inventories and their performance was determined by course instructors' ratings of a 20-minute videotape submitted as part of the course requirements. The use of course instructors to assess skills performance raises a concern about the reliability of the findings because their assessments may have been biased by external factors including prior knowledge of the

students. My interpretation was that the study was measuring students' abilities to perform in assessed skills sessions rather than their ability to perform as counsellors. This is reflected in the argument about the invalidity of skills sessions as effective ways to practise and/or to assess counselling abilities which was raised by many of my participants across the overall sample. Hiebert et al. concluded that their study confirmed their initial hypothesis that student performance might be improved by the inclusion of a course element which focused on positive self-talk:

...counsellor training programs might be enhanced by expanding the scope of training to include instruction and practice in developing a facilitative and encouraging self-talk.... (1998:169)

In my experience many teachers informally use such an approach as part of their pastoral role in tutorials and in skills feedback sessions.

Buchanan and Hughes (2000) offer a compendium of case study vignettes from students of Person-Centred counselling. They suggest that 'many trainees notice that a strong bond is created during training between course participants, including tutors' (2000:73). Buchanan and Hughes argue that a combination of stimulation and support may help students to explore issues previously found too frightening. The authors highlight the diversity of experiences of these relationships including a student's painful experiences when they shared a sense of their personal and professional limitations and found that:

There was no empathy. There was judgement. And I found I could not be true. I lost my hard-fought-for sense of self (2000:78)

The authors also cite a student who struggled with some members of the larger group but who developed deep connections with a small sub-group of their peers.

One contributor described how large groups:

...were a challenging place to speak and I did not do this very often though I tried to find them as safe as the smaller groups. Some course members expressed strong emotions in the large group – love, anger – and I felt OK with that and envied their ability to be themselves in the group (2000:78)

The authors discuss the range of responses that students can have to their tutors including one student who went from initially feeling defensive and wary in those relationships to feeling open and spontaneous and gaining insight into their own processes (ibid). Buchanan and Hughes propose that challenge can be 'a vital part of learning' (2000:99) which may come via 'insightful observations' from tutors and peers. They suggest that tutors are 'only human' and can make mistakes while students 'might marvel at the skills, intuition and awareness of tutors' (ibid). Contributors reported experiences of tutors who they valued and found supportive and informative alongside others who were inexperienced, unsupportive and/or 'not very good at holding groups' (2000:100). Some tutors could be seen as valuable models of how to be Person-Centred counsellors while others could be perceived as offering 'dogmatic interpretations of famous psychologists and therapists' (2000:101) which was found to be unhelpful. Still others could be perceived as inconsistent models of the approach who integrated other ideas into their teaching which one contributor found confusing.

When asked how their training could be improved one contributor felt that more time could have been given to exploring the dynamics between tutors and students (2000:125). Another felt that Person-Centred courses:

...should be run in a person-centred way. The focus should be on the individual not the establishment in which [the course] is run (2000:126)

Another contributor asked that 'certain decisions... should be made by course tutors/course directors' because the responsibility for self-directed learning would be new to many students (2000:127). Another experienced the Person-Centred approach as being 'sink or swim' for students who needed help and support from the tutors or from their peers (2000:126).

Buchanan and Hughes drew attention to ways that some students 'want to develop these [Person-Centred] attitudes as part of *their* "way of being"' (2000:130 emphasis from original) while others might argue that being Person-Centred in the counselling room is 'somewhat irrelevant to how a person is otherwise' (ibid). Therapeutically, some contributors reported that their ways of working were based on the approach but also drew on other ideas. However, others expressed this as being essentially Person-Centred

because they were being flexible and attending to their own processes and those of their clients rather than dogmatically adhering to the model.

Truell (2001) completed a qualitative study of recently qualified counselling students in the UK (n=6) (theoretical approach undisclosed). The study focused on the harm that students may experience through their training. The researcher interviewed students who had been selected by their tutor and this raises a question about the reliability of the subsequent data. Participants were asked about stressful events during their learning process:

The following is a typical response: Not letting myself be free to be myself. I didn't/don't know how to be myself and be a counsellor (2001:82)

This suggests that the participant was making a distinction between 'being myself' and 'being a counsellor' and was struggling to integrate the two.

Truell also reported that:

...[a]nother major stressful experience identified by four participants was the confusion caused by not knowing the exact role of the tutor. It was unclear to them if the tutor was acting as an academic teacher or a counsellor. One student said: Everything got blurred. The role of the student got blurred. The role of the tutor got blurred. That was very stressful, not knowing what the boundaries were (2001:83)

Bennetts (2003) completed a qualitative study (n=6) into students' experiences on Person-Centred training courses. The aim of the study was '...to understand the student experience of becoming professional' (2003:36). Participants were recruited from two diploma courses and 'self-selected for this study' (2003:308). The research methodology is described as 'Person-Centred and qualitative' (Bennetts, 2003) but the brief details provided make it hard to critically evaluate the research. The author reported that:

Students were in the main appreciative of their tutors, although remarks were made about perceived hierarchy, and how university requirements concerning paperwork did little to assist development, but had the opposite effect of removing autonomy (2003:310)

Tang, et al. (2004) completed an exploratory qualitative study of factors that influenced self-efficacy in graduate level counselling students (n=116) at the end of their training, proposing that:

...self-efficacy is an important determinant of their [students] ability to assume their roles as professionals with success and confidence (2004:71)

Their findings suggest three significant factors (the greater the amount of time spent on courses, the larger the number of internship hours, the greater the student's previous experience) were directly related to counsellor self-efficacy. They suggest that self-efficacy was directly associated with the number of courses studied and also highlight conflicting reports in the literature about the influence that counsellor education has on students' self-efficacy suggesting that prior experience or hours of internship were possibly as influential.

Orlinsky and Ronnestad (2005) completed a long-term study (over 15 years, n=4923) that was initiated by the Society for Psychotherapy Research (SPR) Collaborative Research Network (CRN). To address the complexity of the topic and to 'collect extensive descriptive information about therapists in different countries' (2005:19) the study employed Psychotherapists Common Core Questionnaire (DPCCQ) as developed by the authors. The instrument comprises 392 items including structured-response questions and those asking for narrative responses. The authors acknowledge its length may deter potential respondents. Participants in the study came from a wide range of professional backgrounds, theoretical approaches and career levels (2005:7).

The study found that therapists who identified as 'broad-spectrum integrative-eclectic practitioners' were the 'most growing' therapists (2005:120) more likely to experience progress and less likely to show stasis in their development. The authors hypothesised that this may 'reflect a link between theoretical breadth and a tendency to experiment in practice' (ibid). They also reported that:

The experience of felt progress also characterised a majority of the mainly humanistic therapists, perhaps reflecting the emphasis of their orientation on openness to experience (ibid)

The findings suggested that for novice therapists (i.e. less than eighteen months experience) client work is 'the most important positive and one of the few negative influences on their current development' (2005:128). This stage closely relates to the participants in the current study. Training, supervision and personal therapy were also highly rated as positive influences (ibid). The study also found that for novice therapists, supervision was:

...more salient as a positive influence than was direct clinical experience with clients, which in other cohorts was always first. (2005:156)

Likewise, novices' reports of discussing cases informally with colleagues were more salient than for other cohorts however, novices reported '...taking courses or seminars as less important... although (or possibly because) that is a more common experience for novices' (ibid).

The authors suggest a range of 'implications for clinical education' one of which was that:

The initial theoretical and technical orientation given to students should be offered in a pragmatic rather than ideological or dogmatic spirit, to maximise flexibility of application and openness to further learning and the eventual cultivation of theoretical breadth (2005:182)

This raises questions about any course's relationship to its chosen approach and to 'theoretical breadth' as a helpful concept or a desirable end result.

Robson and Robson (2006) completed a qualitative study of personal development groups in counselling training. Volunteers were drawn from two courses and thematic analysis was employed to analyse participants' reflective accounts of their experiences in personal development groups. A system of inter-rater triangulation was used to address issues of reliability. Insufficient details were provided of the sampling procedure to adequately critique this project however it does speak to the current study. The authors suggest that psychological safety was important to students' development but that safety in this context is a complicated concept. They found that:

- students need to experience safety in order to take risks
- safety can be established and lost

- trust is linked with safety
- safety can be established through congruence
- safety can be promoted by clear guidelines, shared acceptance and physical boundaries

Robson and Robson also suggest that the size of a group may have an impact on experiences of safety although this issue was 'unresolved' (2006:22).

Lennie (2007) completed a study into the role of personal development groups in counsellor training using both quantitative and qualitative methods. There were complexities with the self-reporting of self-awareness in this study which may limit the reliability of the findings and these were not adequately discussed. Focus groups were used to study the group experience, which may bias the findings because those students struggling with the personal development groups may also have struggled with the focus groups. However the study offers insight to the students' perspective highlighting the significance of the relationships between students, training and course philosophy. The study also raises the issue of the tension created by the un-assessed and unstructured personal development group within the otherwise structured and task oriented nature of the course.

Jones et.al. (2008) explored the relationship between student counsellors and their teachers. Their quantitative study (n=260) was situated in the USA and drew from skills-based courses in Master's and Doctoral programmes in clinical and counselling psychology. The theoretical approach of the course was not discussed although it is likely that students were exposed to a broad range of models and the language suggests that Psychodynamic ideas were influential.

The authors set out to develop a research instrument which could measure these relationships: the Teaching Alliance Inventory (TAI). TAI proved to have high internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) and high concurrent validity when tested against comparable instruments. This study was an initial use of TAI and the authors acknowledge

that the findings were limited by the small scale of the study and that further research would need to be undertaken with the instrument.

The authors conclude that safety within the student teacher relationship is significant to learning and is present when students:

...are in agreement with the instructor about the appropriate tasks and topics for a course, and when they describe the instructor as attuned, non-defensive, capable of managing difficult interpersonal interchanges and maintaining appropriate boundaries, they are also likely to evaluate the instructor and the course very positively. (2008:233)

Jones et al. go on to suggest that modelling is significant in this context and that:

...trust in the instructor's ability to manage interpersonal issues inside and outside of the classroom is related to learning... (2008:233)

They develop this theme to suggest that:

...students are more likely to be influenced (or persuaded) in the classroom if instructors are perceived as experts, as attractive, and as trustworthy... Many instructors in clinical and counselling psychology use modeling in the classroom, demonstrating the behaviors and thinking processes of a therapist or evaluator. From a dynamic perspective, the use of modeling is based on the idea that the student must "internalize" the teacher's ways of working in order to benefit from the modelling [...] The trainee therefore must be able to "identify" with the instructor in order to learn effectively through modeling. For this reason, it could be argued that a positive working alliance between the instructor and the students in the classroom is essential to the learning of clinical/counselling skills (2008:224)

Within their discussion of the elements that may facilitate a good alliance the authors mention that 'It is our experience in the educational environment that students sometimes complain about instructors' "insensitivity"' (2008:234).

Greason and Cashwell (2009) carried out a quantitative study of counselling students (n=179) at Master's and Doctoral level in the USA. They explored the relationships between mean scores of mindfulness, attention, empathy, and counselling self-efficacy, and sought to establish the relationships between these factors within a path model that

specified a relationship between mindfulness skills and counselling self-efficacy mediated by attention and empathy. Greason and Cashwell suggest that:

[counsellor] education programs leave much cognitive skill development to chance..... and that this inattention to the cultivation of internal skills may result in decreased counseling self-efficacy, increased anxiety, decreased counseling performance, and decreased ability to learn new skills... (2009:2)

The authors identified attention and empathy as 'two essential skills for successful counseling' (2009:2) and:

...hypothesised that mindfulness would be a significant predictor of counseling self-efficacy when attention and empathy were entered in the model as mediators (2009:11)

The authors concluded that their study provided empirical support for their hypothesis and suggested that educators:

...should consider incorporating mastery-based experiences in the five core mindfulness skills (i.e., observing, describing, nonjudging, nonreacting, and acting with awareness)..... into counselor preparation curriculum.... (2009:15)

They also suggested that these skills should be assessed. While this offers some tools for potentially improving curricula there is an unexplored and potentially problematic circularity to their suggestion of teaching and assessing students in skills that may help with the anxiety that may be blocking their ability to learn new skills.

As part of her Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, Clifford (2010) completed a qualitative research project (n=7) using IPA which studied personal change through counselling psychology training. Purposeful sampling was employed and participants were from six London universities. Clifford identified themes across a range of domains including personal changes (2010:2). Among these Clifford included themes relating to students becoming more reflective and self-aware, more aware of their own needs and expressing and prioritising them more, increased self-confidence and self-acceptance, a sense of peacefulness arising from not having to prove self and putting less pressure on self, feeling more present and engaged with life, and a sense of liberation and fulfilment

(2010:100). Clifford suggested factors which contributed to these changes including students' readiness for training and change, and learning about self and others through group experiences (2010:101). Within these Clifford proposes that 'being challenged by other trainees contributes to greater self-awareness' (2010:104) from which:

There is a sense that participants are now facing up to and confronting their feelings and aspects of self and others which they have previously avoided or tried to keep from their awareness (2010:107)

Folkes-Skinner (2011) completed a mixed methods study across three counsellor training programmes (n=64) in the UK '...to examine how trainee counsellors change during their training' (2011:5). Folkes-Skinner found that training had a positive impact on personal and professional development but also found evidence of negative effects. From this the author concluded that:

Low levels of distress and increased emotional functioning were positively related to the completion of training. It is proposed that although the achievement of key competencies is the ultimate aim of practitioner counsellor training that it is the ability of trainees to assimilate problematic experiences and integrate different kinds of knowledge that is likely to result in therapeutic expertise (2011:i)

Folkes-Skinner also concluded that training courses are:

...most effective when they facilitate normal change and avoid pathologising trainee distress (2011:302)

Smith (2011b) employed focus groups drawn from two cohorts on a UK postgraduate diploma in counselling (n=15) to study the role of the student–tutor relationship. Eight participants were from the first year of the course and the remainder from the second year. Template analysis was employed from a phenomenological perspective. The researcher's reflexivity in some areas, particularly with regard to her theoretical approach, was missing. Smith acknowledged the potential limitations of this study particularly in terms of its reliance on one course.

Smith describes counselling training as a context within which students are required to learn via:

...practising on peers, critically observing others (including use of modelling), self-reflection and personal development, obtaining feedback and supervision of client work (2011b:235)

Smith concluded that the tutor-student relationship is significant to student learning. Aspects of this relationship included: non-judgemental acceptance, support, empowering the students, a positive attitude to student potential from the outset of the course and the ways the tutors behaved as valued role models (2011b:240). Smith noted how consistency in tutor modelling was significant and how:

Lack of consistency and predictability was one of the factors which caused significant anxiety, particularly to the second-year group (2011b:241)

The author concluded that there were factors within the student-tutor relationship which were similar to those associated with positive outcomes in counselling and supervision. Smith commented particularly on the similarities she found between these factors and Rogers' (1959) conditions of empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence. It would have been helpful if the author had discussed the theoretical orientation of the course and her own theoretical orientation because these may have had an impact on this finding.

Smith discussed how:

Therapy or counselling is clearly distinct in many respects from teaching or training. Counselling has a curative focus and the counsellor has a very clearly delineated role which includes well-defined professional boundaries. In addition, the relationship aims to be non-evaluative and is usually entered into voluntarily, whereas there are inevitably both evaluative and compulsory components in the tutor–student relationship. The dangers of conceptualising the teaching alliance as a purely therapeutic one are many, with the real need for tutors to avoid adopting the role of therapist with their trainees so as to minimise role conflict and ensure the presence of adequate boundaries. However, there do exist areas of overlap both in terms of process and outcomes (2011b:241)

Smith concludes that learning is 'likely to be enhanced when tutors draw on therapeutic relational skills and qualities' (2011b:241). Smith suggests that this assumes '...a high level

of self-awareness and reflexive ability on the part of tutors' (2011b:242). Smith proposes an open and dialogic teaching and learning environment in which 'negative relational features' (ibid) can be explored and suggests that the aim is to generate a safe environment in which students are open to learning. The author acknowledges that there is a structural power imbalance between tutor and student and that this dynamic should be explored by the tutors in supervision and should also be discussed with the students. Smith proposes that, where appropriate, power can be shared with the students:

For example, students could be encouraged to choose the focus of supervision or personal development sessions, so long as this is not obviously due to some kind of avoidance of other relevant issues (2011b:242-243)

This however, raises the question of who holds the power to decide what is relevant and what is 'avoidance' in this context.

As part of an MA in Integrative Counselling Bavridge (2012) completed a qualitative research study of the impact of training to be an integrative therapist 'on personal process and close personal relationships'. Bavridge employed semi-structured interviews with IPA to study the experiences of four participants and reported that:

...in the early stages of training, there were many regressed experiences of being overwhelmed, confused, anxious, fearful and sometimes traumatised [...] Further along the journey, and particularly experienced through the experiential processes such as fishbowl, group work and bodywork, were perceptions of feeling different or isolated, feeling split in some way, cut off intraphysically and physically, feeling conflicted about self-perceptions of identity and sexuality (2012:29).

The participants' relationships with the training organisation arose as a significant theme under which fell their perceptions of the relationship as one in which parallel process, transference and modelling could occur.

In the USA Cornelius-White and Carver (2012) studied the effects of a 16-week encounter group on student counsellors' development of empathy, unconditional positive regard

and authenticity (n=30). These mandatory groups took place during the first semester of training and the group was conducted in a classical Person-Centred style. The facilitator had previously been assessed as being highly competent in this role and was not involved in student assessment in other contexts within the course. The study employed qualitative and quantitative measures covering participants' self-report, observer's content analysis and facilitator's ratings to study 2 groups of students. The facilitator's rating was carried out after completion of the groups to ensure that evaluation did not contaminate the non-directive group process. Drawing on past studies the authors propose that:

Counselor educators who demonstrate higher levels of empathy, warmth and genuineness help facilitate these qualities to emerge in counsellors-in-training (2012:206)

The authors acknowledge that the study had limitations but suggest that the holistic nature of data collection and analysis provided reliability in the study. They also acknowledge that the changes reported may also have been influenced by external factors such as personal counselling in addition to the encounter group. From the results the authors conclude that:

Classical person-centered encounter groups can provide for substantial development along the core-conditions for counselors-in-training (2012:219)

Hill et al. (2014) compared the results of their three studies (Chui et al., 2014; Jackson et al., 2014; Spangler et al., 2014) of the development of skills in trainee counsellors in the USA. The authors acknowledge that these studies were all carried out at the same university and that the samples of students and the teachers within the studies were therefore relatively homogenous across the studies. Hill et al. found that students placed a lower emphasis on modelling than previously suggested within this review. Defining 'practice' in terms of 'responding to written vignettes, large group practice, dyad practice, and the use of real stimuli as well as scripted stimuli' the authors found that:

One of our most exciting findings was the effectiveness of practice for teaching insight skills. Especially when retrospectively (at the end of

training) rating the relative effectiveness of all the components, students in all three classes valued the opportunity to practice the skill. They felt that other components (reading, lecture, and modeling) were helpful in preparing them for using the skill, but it was through practice that they believed they really learned how to use the skills (2014:16)

The authors found that 'cultural variables' may influence the uptake of skills:

Students commented about how values in their families and cultures toward challenging or being immediate either facilitated or inhibited their ability to learn and use these skills. [...] Similarly, gender seemed relevant in that students who had been socialized to follow gender-appropriate expressions of how direct and open to be with others, had difficulty learning and using these skills (2014:14)

The authors concluded that:

Finally, given that the effects of training seemed to vary across individuals, another implication is to tailor training to fit the audience. Rather than being rigid about how the skills "should" be used or taught, we encourage trainers to teach trainees to be personal scientists and determine what works for them. It is important for trainees to observe the effects of their interventions on clients, and on themselves when they are clients, to see what works (2014:17)

Following on from their previous work and citing a lack of longitudinal studies in this field, Hill et al. (2015) carried out a longitudinal mixed-methods study tracking change over time in student counsellors on a pre-doctoral Counselling/Clinical Psychology training. The training had a Psychodynamic focus although it also addressed 'all major theoretical approaches' (2015:3). Trainees reported that the most helpful factors in their change process were:

Hands-on experiences with clients, being in personal therapy, and receiving supervision were perceived as the most helpful factors in therapists' growth, whereas coursework, seminars, and theories were perceived as less helpful (Hill et al., 2015:2)

The changes that the trainees spoke of included increasing abilities to be authentic with their clients and of being '...freer to be themselves and act genuinely rather than putting on the professional mask of being a therapist' (2015:11).

Folkes-Skinner (2016) studied one student's experiences during full-time Person-Centred counsellor training on a UK based course. A series of five semi-structured interviews over the duration of the training was employed to explore the ways that problematic experiences were assimilated within the student's development. The study began with the assumption that students may experience difficulties because training can be an emotionally demanding experience. The analysis identified three distinct voices within the participant's material: reflective learner, idealistic learner and rejected little girl (2016: pp164-165). The 'reflective' learner was a dominant voice that fitted with the course's stated aim of developing reflexive practitioners. This offered the student ('Mandy') a position from which to reflect on her training while the idealistic learner could be critical of self, of other students and of the tutors. However, Folkes-Skinner suggested that vulnerability of the rejected little girl:

Provided Mandy with legitimate reasons to keep this part of her in the shadows because she had decided the course was not compassionate enough (2016:167)

The author proposed that through the process of assimilation all of these voices began to work together. From here it is proposed that training can 'provoke problematic emotional experiences and that their assimilation may lead to personal and professional growth' (2016:168). However, Folkes-Skinner also acknowledges that training can generate significant levels of distress which can lead to students developing avoidant coping strategies (ibid). The author also suggests that Mandy's example highlights the 'benefits and the challenges of personal development group work' (ibid). Folkes-Skinner describes how Mandy was 'strongly allied' to the Person-Centred approach and suggests that therefore 'she knew, to certain extent, what she was aiming to become and why' (ibid). It is interesting to note that this training did not require students to also undertake personal counselling and so the group was the primary focus of personal development, therefore Mandy had to do this work in this context to meet her aims.

Smith (2016) employed semi-structured interviews with thematic analysis to explore the impact of self-disclosure within skills practice sessions with volunteers (n=12) from one cohort of 20 students on a BSc in Psychology and Counselling in the UK. The researcher

was the lead tutor and coordinator of these skills sessions and the potential biases this may introduce are acknowledged. Self-disclosure was not mandatory in these sessions but students were encouraged to bring real material, thus individual students chose their own levels of self-disclosure. However, this was still found to be a potentially stressful experience. The study found that sharing in skills sessions served as a catalyst for personal development and that the participants 'appear to have taken the first steps towards building a therapeutic community' (2016:129). The author also suggested that the tutors' 'continued and stable presence' (2016:129) was a significant factor in this. The author suggested that training providers need to be aware of the demands this type of training places on students and should make applicants aware of this at an early stage. Students should also be monitored by tutors throughout the training and tutors need to appreciate that the interpersonal aspects of training may draw students' focus away from learning about skills. The author highlighted diversity within students' levels of engagement in different activities within training. Smith suggested that:

This study reveals the tension within and between students, who manage their learning activities by deliberate personal choice-making in terms of disclosure and sharing. This leads to a sense, at times, of voluntary disengagement (2016:129)

Reviewing the empirical studies

The literature under this type was predominantly authored by established theorists and trainers, and were small scale, either conducted by research students or as trial studies. The exceptions are Skovolt and Ronnestad (1995) and Orlinsky and Ronnestad (2005) which are long term studies with relatively large sample sizes. This illustrates the relative immaturity of the research base in this field compared with that of counselling itself.

Different aspects of the theme of tutor modelling emerged in these studies; the modelling of therapeutic skills through demonstrations (in practice sessions and in interactions with students) (Jones et al., 2008) and the modelling of attitudes (Skovolt and Ronnestad, 1995). This supports the significance of theoretical consistency that arose from the discussions and suggests that it is required across all aspects of the course

including for example, curriculum design, teaching activities and in tutors' behaviour in all interactions with the students.

Buchanan and Hughes (2000), Skovolt and Ronnestad (1995), Orlinsky and Ronnestad (2005) and Hill et al. (2015) found that a dogmatic expression of a theoretical approach may be unhelpful, another theme that also arose in the discussions (e.g. Mearns, 1997). Within this is the potential that there may be a relationship between the continua of tutors' dogmatism/flexibility and students' mechanistic skills/authentic expression of therapeutic self.

The theme of teacher-student relationships includes the significance of specific qualities which echo those of a therapeutic relationship (e.g. Dryden et al., 1995; Johns, 1996; Smith, 2011b; Folkes-Skinner, 2011). However, as in the discussions section, important distinctions emerged between training relationships and therapeutic relationships including issues of the tutors' structural power, boundaries and the influence of assessment. The relative complexity of this theme within the empirical studies suggests that relationships in training are more nuanced than the discussions section suggested. Issues of safety (e.g. Robson and Robson, 2006; Buchanan and Hughes, 2000) and openness within teacher-student relationships arise as significant themes, however, Buchanan and Hughes (2000) suggest that safety may limit personal development unless it is allied with stimulation.

Although Personal Development is less present in the empirical studies, the theme of groupwork is significant. While the previous discussions focused on the usefulness of groups and acknowledged some of their potential risks, the empirical studies speak more of these risks and of the potential for groups to be problematic or painful experiences. However, Clifford (2010) reports of the value of groupwork for personal development and this is supported by Cornelius-White and Carver (2012) who found that groupwork can facilitate the development of the core conditions among students. However, it must be acknowledged that the Cornelius-White and Carver study focused on the use of non-directive encounter groups. The Cornelius-White and Carver study also used a broad range of measures to focus on the development of trainees' empathy, unconditional positive regard and authenticity rather than relying on tutor assessment of a single

condition; trainees' congruence as evidenced through confrontational/challenging behaviour within the group.

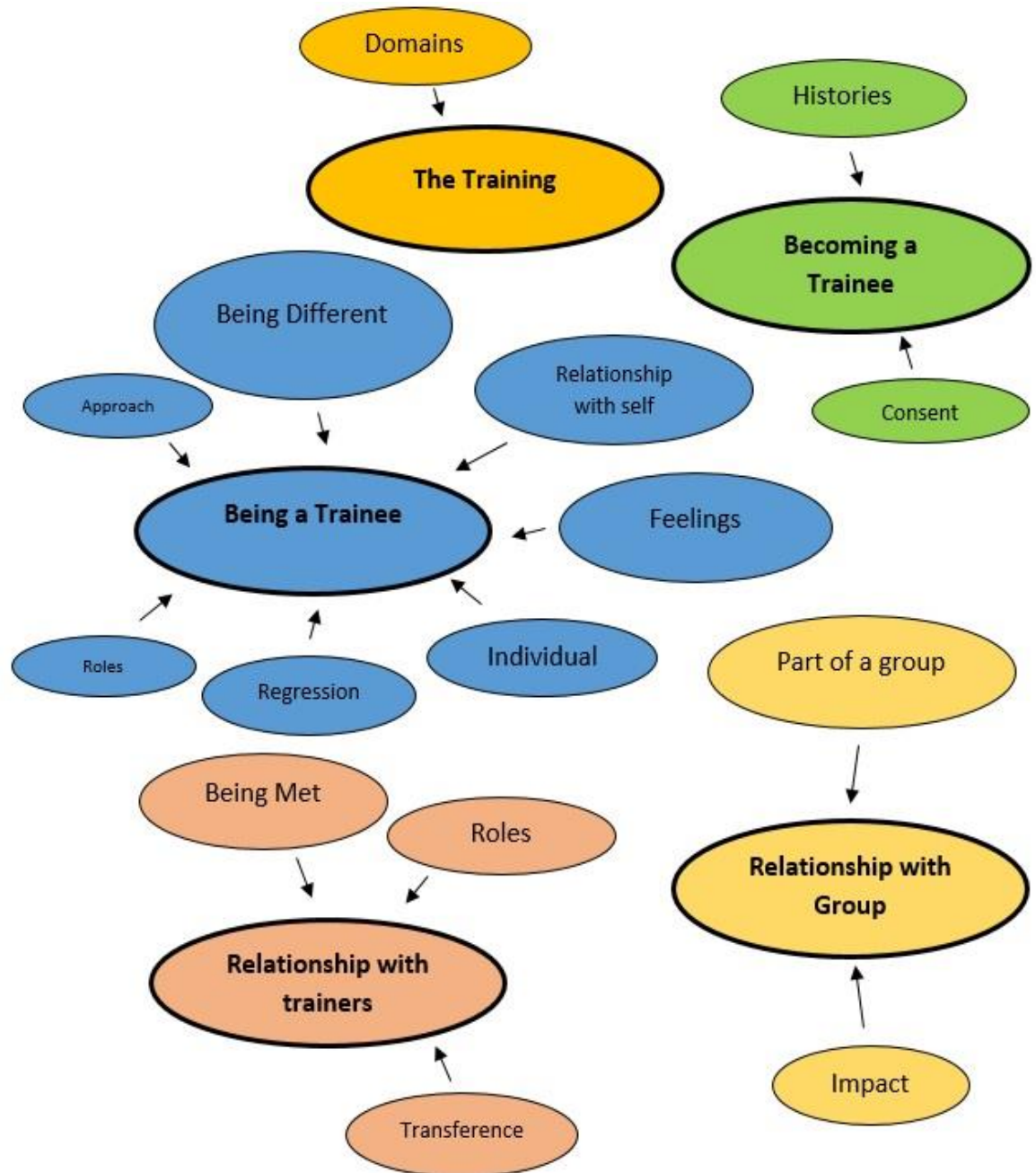
The theme of being myself while being a student counsellor begins to emerge (Truell, 2001; Buchanan and Hughes, 2000; Hill et al., 2015) which links to the concept of authentic vs mechanistic practice which arose in the previous section. However, we now hear about the struggles to be authentic in a group context and in a situation in which learning is being assessed through observed behaviours and skills practice. This implies that trainers and theorists may intend and expect students to be authentic but that students may struggle to be so because of the structural and relational aspects inherent in training. In this context issues around student diversity become more complicated as does the flexibility tutors require in order to hold groups of diverse students with appropriate authority and compassion.

9.3 First person accounts

The literature under this type produced the following themes:

- The Training
- Becoming a trainee
- Being a trainee
- Relationship with trainers
- Relationship with group

Figure 12: First Person Accounts



The first person accounts

Maybank (1998) discusses being assessed as a student counsellor which was influenced by her previous struggles with conventional learning. She spoke of how 'I did not really recognise how trampled on I felt, until I experienced something different' (1998:164). On her MSc in Counselling Supervision and Training Maybank felt she was met by trainers who:

...really endeavoured to not only learn my language but to speak it and learn how to communicate with me (ibid)

Maybank felt that the trainers accepted her individuality and were committed to 'battle hard on my behalf' (ibid) against the possible strictures of the university's assessment processes.

Alred appears twice in these accounts, here (1999) and in Harding Davies et al. (2004a). Reflecting soon after completing his training, Alred, an experienced teacher in HE, suggests that 'it is common, perhaps essential, to regress when learning as a trainee' (1999:254). He describes training as providing an environment 'which offers both support and challenge' (ibid) whereby the student is challenged 'to get to know oneself better' (ibid) and 'to be true to oneself'. Alred suggests that this is set within a context in which each student plays a part in the group experience. He describes the many roles that students might find themselves occupying during their training including those of 'friend, fellow novice professional, counsellor, client, learner, peer assessor, assessed student' (ibid).

Alred reflects on the individuality of the training experience and highlights the importance of learning in relationship with peers:

Being in a group and being oneself in a group become an important arena for much of the learning in training; it is unavoidable, and rightly so. There will be rich experiences, both positive and negative, and a sense of being caught up in the lives of others (1999:259)

Alred speaks of the diversity in his peers' reactions to groupwork and how some initially struggled but could later find this valuable.

Alred speaks of the complexity of the tutor's role:

They stand between trainees and the formal requirements of the course; they are facilitators in the process of becoming a therapeutic helper and gatekeepers of professional standards (1999:261)

He suggests that tutors hold a multiplicity of roles and 'must have the flexibility to move between them' (ibid). Alred gives significance to the need he perceives for the tutor to maintain 'adult-adult' relationships with the student although, in light of his previous comment about the regressive nature of training this could be challenging for both tutors and students.

Reflecting on his experiences of training to be a Person-Centred counsellor, Gillon (2002) highlights social class and gender as two dynamics that might undermine those from minority groups within this context such as, he suggests, working-class students and men. Gillon goes on to suggest that students can be empowered through learning to reflect critically on what they are learning and doing and that teachers therefore have a responsibility to 'act as guides in drawing this out' and in facilitating a process of critical reflection on the process of training.

Harding et al. (2004a) present an anthology of accounts from students who had recently completed counselling training. At the start of his training Tran (2004) recalls feeling a mixture of anxiety and excitement and of feeling different from his peers. He speaks of how his training was significant in the process of 'becoming who I am' (2004:8) and of how the course was both valuable and challenging. Tran relates the influence of his upbringing in the UK as the child of a Vietnamese family to feeling different to others (ibid) and of how this went on to influence his engagement with the course. Tran perceived that the course could be subtly blind to his experience of difference and spoke of experiencing this as a push and pull between wishing he could be 'just like them' and feeling alone and alienated (2004:15). While he was initially surprised and relieved to find that his peers came from diverse cultural origins Tran had a sense that the workshops on difference were 'added on' rather than being intrinsic aspects of his training.

Tran's course was Person-Centred and his initial response was to find the approach challenging and irritating. One aspect of this was linked to the way the course addressed structural aspects of the training:

...I really hated sharing responsibility for the self-selection of tutorial groups. It felt like we were doing the staff's jobs (2004:13)

Tran later found that the course had provided a clear description and rationale for this within the course handbook, however, he discussed how these 'were not fully digested in advance' (2004:14). This raises questions about the nature of informed consent in training; can a prospective student give informed consent to a novel experience?

Tran found himself struggling with 'being "congruent", "genuine" or whatever you want to call it' (2004:17) and initially ascribed this to his previous Psychodynamic training although later felt that this was just a 'convenient intellectual hiding place' (ibid). One significant learning was that:

There is no escape from the paradox of being "alone" in our experience while "being with others" (2004:23)

Taylor-Smith (in Harding Davies et al., 2004a) also explores feelings of difference:

I felt very strongly that as a black mature student I was not going to submit to the tokenism and casual white racism that I had experienced in other educational settings (2004:25)

Although Taylor-Smith was confident when she began her Person-Centred course she soon found that the 'relentless' focus on openness and honesty with herself led to a quality of personal clarity which sapped that early confidence. She initially drew comfort and security from the presence of other African-Caribbean and Indian women in her cohort. However, Taylor-Smith felt that issues of difference, particularly related to race and culture were not given sufficient attention within the course:

It seemed that the behaviour of the tutors and the students changed whenever the black students raised issues around race and cultural difference. I believe that their personal fears and anxieties around issues of race negatively affected their responses in discussions (2004:27)

Tensions over difference persisted within the group until they found ways to discuss and process them. Taylor-Smith attributes this in part to the determination of certain group members, both black and white, to confront these issues.

Rogers (in Harding Davies et al., 2004a) locates her experiences of 'humanistic, person-centred' (2004:38) counselling training within the broader context of 'other relationships, and most especially, the counselling relationship' (2004:37). Rogers speaks of the tension she perceived between skills training and personal development. The author acknowledged the necessity of skills in facilitating a therapeutic relationship but placed greater significance on the development of her self as '...I now know that they can never substitute for the self in the relationship' (2004:38).

Rogers spoke in terms of '*being* herself' (2004:39, author's emphasis) which was enshrined in the course philosophy and which represented an expression of broadly Humanistic and Person-Centred ideas. At the outset Rogers did not appreciate this fully and 'I used to wonder what earthly use this could be' (2004:39). Instead of connecting with herself she looked for 'better technique, or expertise' (ibid). Working in the course's 'sensitivity group' Rogers was 'most forcefully reminded' of her own vulnerability and of the impact of encountering others in relationship. Rogers highlighted the significance she gave to receiving unconditional positive regard from one of the tutors on her course. This was not only significant in her training to be a counsellor but 'life changing' for Rogers personally.

Kitcatt (In Harding Davies et al., 2004a) studied on a one-year intensive Person-Centred counselling diploma. She spoke of the intensity she experienced in her relationships with her peers and how these sometimes erupted into conflict within the group. Kitcatt also spoke of how her relationships with the tutors changed from 'initial awe to respect and a more realistic appreciation' (2004:55). She described how she had initially struggled with 'seeing' a male tutor and of how this was linked to her history with male authority figures. However, she felt that she was allowed to voice this and that this led to them being able

to process this between them. Kitcatt explained how the most significant change was in her relationship with herself and that:

I have a high level of self-awareness, I can hold on to my sense of self when I feel vulnerable and challenged, I feel more comfortable with my own power, but I also understand that I can be perceived as threatening in both my strength and my vulnerability (2004:57)

Kidd (in Harding Davies et al., 2004a) writes about how Person-Centred counselling training is a 'personal and individual matter' (2004:58). At the start she felt:

...a mixture of sheer panic (will I be good enough, will I cope?), excitement (where may this lead?), and dread (it feels too big, too overwhelming) (2004:59)

Kidd speaks of feeling different because of her:

...conviction the everyone else would be more intelligent, more competent, more articulate than I was. I felt tongue-tied and inadequate in the warm up exercise and asked myself. Why do the others all seem so at ease, so able to talk readily to others in this assembled group of strangers? (2004:59)

Kidd learnt how to 'master' these feelings by challenging the irrational beliefs which supported them. She described how the personal development accrued through the course 'outclassed' any other period in her life leading to increased self-awareness, self-confidence and self-belief which she conceptualised from a Person-Centred perspective.

Kidd initially found the groupwork to be 'excruciating' but over time this became 'fairly excruciating' (2004:62) however, Kidd acknowledged that this was significant and led to her feeling closer to others. Kidd felt that groupwork was an essential element of the course and one in which she learnt about herself in relationship with others. However:

The pressure to conform and to participate by revealing personal insights felt very powerful at times, and the knowledge that the group leader and members would be offering feedback on our participation removed a sense of autonomous choice. Even though I inwardly railed against this at times, it also prevented me from opting out and taking on the role of listener in group sessions, which is my natural tendency (2004:63)

Kidd valued the counselling practice sessions which offered a space to experiment with different ways of working and also provided an opportunity to open up about personal issues with a small and safe group of peers. However, the times when tutors observed these sessions led to them feeling like a performance but, although the feedback could be challenging, Kidd found the learning to be invaluable. Significant to this was Kidd's perception of '[t]he tutors' unwavering support and belief in my abilities and potential' (2004:64).

Kidd felt that she derived significant learning from her relationships with the tutors:

My interactions with staff on the course offered a valuable learning experience as well. While I never entirely overcame my deferential feelings towards the staff, and my desire to perform well in order to win their approval, I learnt a lot from them, perhaps above all through their example. This was the case not only when watching them in action, but also from their professionalism blended with humanity, their approachability, and their way of being with the trainees – no mean feat when you consider what a mixed bag we were (2004:64)

Kidd found that as the course progressed she became able to counsel 'more naturally, with more of an innate ability to do what feels right at the time' (2004:65). Kidd asserts that this ability to trust herself in her counselling relationships was rooted in the personal growth and increased self-awareness that she gained during her diploma.

Kenward (in Harding Davies et al., 2004a) writes about her experience of counselling training as a permanent wheelchair user. Difference was evident from the start of the course when students were invited to 'walk around and mingle' because 'In a wheelchair it's pretty nigh impossible' (2004:83). Kenward speaks of how her relationship with one tutor was influenced by transference to a previous school teacher and to other professionals. One aspect of this was the tutor's expressed desire to 'stay in role' which Kenward heard from her perspective of having been "'cared for" by people who were "in role"...' (2004:85). In this context Kenward strove to be the good student and felt that she could not confront this tutor with her feelings and reactions.

In the personal development group Kenward felt that her peers were overwhelmed by her disability and that she was met with silence until the tutor moved the group away from Kenward's experiences. Kenward felt that her differences were being ignored and that any problems were hers and not theirs or society's.

Although she generally felt accepted by her peers Kenward felt unsupported by 'those in charge' and that she was not a student but a problem (2004:89). Kenward felt that she needed more self-directed learning and the space to address issues and attention to practical issues around access. The institution's failure to meet her needs or to show understanding of how it was to be a wheelchair user resulted in Kenward withdrawing from the course with a deep sense of having been abused by an uncaring system.

Garrigan (in Harding Davies et al., 2004a) explores her process of studying for an MA in counselling which eventually led to the realisation that counselling was not for her. Garrigan's experiences began with initial excitement and enthusiasm which were tempered with a feeling being 'slightly daunted' by her perceptions of her peers' various levels of expertise and experience. The author closes her reflection with a quotation from the end of her dissertation which serves as a warning to any potential students of counselling:

For those embarking on counsellor training, I would say: Don't underestimate the stresses and confusions that can arise during training. Make time for yourself, take care of yourself, share your anxieties, arrange for good supervision and pay attention to your learning process (2004:106)

Fear (in Harding Davies et al., 2004a) reflects on her experiences as a Master's level counselling student:

My experience has led me to believe that the creation of an environment within which informal and formal learning blend together is at the heart of counselling training (2004:110)

Fear discusses a critical incident which centred around her relationship with a tutor who she perceived as '...nurturing the flowering of my abilities, of my academic self and of my

counsellor self' (2004:118). This led to the author experiencing an increase in self-confidence through 'a process of introjecting another's belief in me' (ibid).

Five years after his initial reflections (1999) Alred (in Harding Davies et al., 2004a) revisits the experiences of Person-Centred counselling training which led to him becoming a counsellor and a counselling trainer. He emphasises how confused he felt at the start of the training and of how he:

...was suspending, more or less consciously, some parts of myself to allow space for others. My emotional self and a determination to be congruent took time to gather momentum (2004:130)

Alred valued the environment that the course's tutors created and especially the:

...spaciousness, a quality of space and safety that allowed for trying out, showing vulnerability, gaining direction, clarifying understanding, setting new goals (ibid)

Alred speaks of how the tutors were explicit about the course's teaching strategy from the start. This included their view of the teacher as a facilitator of significant learning and of the:

...parallel between learning on a counselling training course and a client learning in counselling (2004:131)

These offered Alred a useful way to hold the learning while he was immersed in the process. One aspect of this was that the students were encouraged to take responsibility for their learning while the tutors 'were part of the background' (ibid):

They did not intrude as teachers but were very present as people with a clear role... Their readiness to practice what they preached, to walk the talk, chimed with my intention on the course to be as congruent as I know how (ibid)

Discussing his relationships with his peers Alred speaks of how 'there seemed to be a lot of coming together and true sharing, genuine liking among us' (2004:132).

Harding Davies et al. (2004b) bring these accounts together (2004b) and highlight one significant part of being a student on a counselling course:

...they do not know how emotionally vulnerable they might become, and, what is more, they do not know that they do not know how vulnerable they might become. Seemingly innocuous beginning activities, so common to counselling courses and perhaps regarded as fairly low-key by seasoned trainers, can have a profound influence on how an individual perceives the journey ahead and prepares for it. Sitting in a circle, sharing names, or simply saying something about reasons for joining the course, can have a major impact, and set the scene for what is to come (2004b:147)

They also comment on the ways that students bring their previous experiences of learning to their training and can therefore be surprised and possibly confused by 'some of the unusual ingredients' (ibid) of the courses. The authors describe how successful training would result in students moving away from their old models of learning such that 'there is a shift not only in what is learned but how it is learned' (2004b:148). They highlight the individuality of counselling training and liken it to a map on which individuals plot their own unique routes to a common destination.

The group arises as a significant theme and Harding et al. suggest that while many students, on reflection, seem to have valued these groups they nevertheless offered challenges and difficulty. Citing Mearns (1997), the authors propose that the issues raised in these groups need to be worked through in order that learning can be derived, requiring:

...total commitment from all, staff and students, that difficult issues will be explored and worked through rather than buried (2004b:149)

The authors conclude with:

It is the process of encountering the self in so many aspects of counselling training that creates the potential for training to be a highly significant and indeed transforming episode in a person's life. The self-discovery process is relentless. Whether appraising theory, writing essays, keeping a personal journal, or engaging in the many practical aspects of the course, it makes little difference, the whole experience amounts to a continuous focus on the self, the paradoxical prerequisite for claiming the professional authority to focus on others when in distress (2004b:152)

Reviewing the first person accounts

This literature is authored by ex-students and, while some empirical studies included the student voice, the distinction here is between research in which student voices are analysed by the researcher (these fall within empirical studies) and research authored directly by ex-students.

The theme of being different emerged powerfully in this section of the literature (e.g. Kenward, 2004; Gillon, 2002; Tran, 2004). The accounts emphasise the depth of these experiences and a significant aspect of this was the profound distress that could be generated by a deep sense of personal difference when this was not appropriately addressed by the course. This connects to themes of diversity that arose in the discussions (e.g. Mearns, 1997) and empirical studies (e.g. Buchanan and Hughes, 2000). However, the first person accounts suggest that issues of difference are not consistently being met. This suggests a gap between trainers' and theorists' proposals for heterogeneous groups and students' experiences of being actively accepted for their uniqueness.

Diversity now becomes a theme of student individuality (Alred, 1999; Kidd, 2004; Harding Davies et al., 2004a) with links to themes of authentic practice and 'being myself' from the discussions and empirical Studies. Rogers (2004), for example, gives greater emphasis to the development of self than to learning skills and speaks of how 'being who I am' and/or 'becoming who I am' were 'enshrined in the course philosophy'. However, here we are hearing about students' complicated struggles to be/become themselves within a context which possesses structural power and an enshrined trajectory towards 'being themselves' but in which their individuality may be not be recognised, valued or adequately acknowledged. Person-Centred theory suggests that in order for people to be able to be more fully themselves they need an environment that is safe and that power structures can inhibit this process:

[w]hat is allowed and, in humans is allowed into awareness, is determined by the power structure of the social grouping, with the result that minority discourses may be submerged by others designed to maintain the status quo. An awareness of this within the therapeutic relationship is of course essential. Internalised oppression may make it difficult for clients to allow

into awareness aspects of themselves that are not valued by the dominant discourses in society (Baughan and Merry, 2001:6)

Acknowledging the differences between students and clients, this suggests that in order to engage fully with this process students need to feel safe enough to be able to allow into awareness aspects of themselves that comprise who they are at any point in time during the process. This links with Mearns ideas about 'coming out' about aspects of the self from the discussions. Safety was a significant theme in the above accounts (e.g. Robson and Robson, 2006).

However, this is not a simple matter of tutors always getting it wrong because students are also speaking of being met by their tutors (e.g. Maybank, 1998; Rogers, 2004; Kidd, 2004) and peers and of the profound impact this has on their process of learning and becoming. Students also speak of their awareness of the ways their histories with past teachers affect their abilities to see their tutors clearly (e.g. Kidd, 2004; Kenward, 2004). Likewise, students discuss their awareness of the complicated roles involved in being a tutor and of how these interact with their own roles-within-roles as student counsellors (Alred, 1999; Gillon, 2002; Kidd, 2004).

Harding Davies et al. (2004b) adds another layer to this potent dynamic by suggesting that because of the unique combination of educational and developmental work involved in counselling training prospective students cannot give informed consent before they engage with the process. This needs to be understood also from the perspective of students beginning their training who may be experiencing potent mixtures of fear, anxiety and excitement (e.g. Garrigan, 2004; Kidd, 2004) and who, as Tran (2004) suggests, may not be in a position to digest important information about the course structure and philosophy even if it is given to them.

Chapter 10: Discussion

Three meta-themes were generated from the participants' material:

- *On being a stranger in a strange land*
- *What are we all doing here?*
- *Therapist congruence; being myself and/or being Person-Centred*

10.1 On being a stranger in a strange land

The participants' stories of finding themselves in this new context reminded me of Heidegger's concept of 'thrownness' (1962). However, each student had chosen to put themselves into this strange land and could therefore feel thrown *and* feel responsible for throwing themselves into the experience.

Each story began with the participant's perception of difference but on hearing those stories I consistently perceived further idiosyncratic qualities. These may not have been figural to the participants but they were significant to my analysis. Another aspect of this was that it seemed as if each participant had attended a different course. Paradoxically this multi-dimensional perception of difference was shared by all.

Being a stranger

Being different was an expression of an existential truth for the participants; they were not *feeling* different they were *being* different. These perceptions were individual and participants perceived that they were different because of their shyness, sexuality, educational background, marital status, life experiences, age, professional history and many more factors. Difference was experienced at a profound depth, which included feelings of aloneness, isolation, shame and invalidity as well as pride and strength. The intensity of these feelings seemed to echo Husserl's understanding of the fundamental uniqueness of being (Welton, 1999). Notably, within a group which espoused Person-Centred attitudes the participants perceived judgements about what types of difference

were acceptable. For example, this was subtly evident in Maggie's comment that she was '...not the one aloof in the corner that doesn't talk much...' (M3:P97) with which she seemed to be quietly judging Victoria and the other 'quiet ones'.

...being different from

Each of the students saw themselves as being different *from* their peers; difference was not an awareness of the fundamental diversity of human experience but was a perception of being different from all of these others who therefore, possessed qualities of sameness. This theme is supported by the first person accounts in the literature (e.g. Maybank, 1998; Tran, 2004; Kenward, 2004). Perceptions of sameness were idiosyncratic because each participant saw the group in different ways; others were less anxious, all straight, had previously studied together and so on. This resulted in individuals perceiving the group in different ways and at times I seemed to be hearing a series of stories about different but parallel groups. The parallel factors were that the groups were all Person-Centred (although this had different connotations for each participant) and that the group seemed to hold greater influence in the story than did the individual who was telling the story (issues of power will be discussed below).

I see this as an expression of Bourdieu's (1990) concepts of practice and habitus. The stories suggest that habitus can be generated by the context prior to the formation of the social group. The participants arrived into a society which they perceived as already having practices previously defined by the context i.e. by the students' and tutors' conceptualisations of what it meant to be Person-Centred and by the course structure. Therefore, each student perceived these practices in their unique ways even though these were informed by a sense of there being shared practices. The participants seemed to perceive this at the beginning of the course in terms of finding themselves newly arrived into an existing and coherent social reality that possessed a distinct culture including defined and explicit behaviours which acted as capital. Therefore, the perception of each of the participants was that the group was a presence even though Maggie's perception was of a presence that was not an entity in its own right. The ways that each student responded seemed in part to be informed by their individual senses of

personal agency in this context and by their histories in their families, in groups and in education. The range of these responses is potentially as large as the number of students who might attend training, but some likely responses (as illustrated by this sample) include: shutting down, opening up, making sense, connecting with the felt-sense, self-resilience and adaptation.

...reaching out and reaching back

I had a sense of the participants reaching out from their differences to connect with their peers and tutors. This must be understood within the context of a structured environment in which the students were being encouraged to be in a particular type of relationship with each other and with the tutors (see below). Again, the way that each student reached out was idiosyncratic both in terms of expression and in others' perception. Victoria reached out to individuals through her commitment to her sense of self in the midst of an environment which she perceived to be demanding her incongruence, Johnny reached out by earnestly expressing his sense of the course's culture and Maggie reached out openly to the individual tutors and to her loving subgroup of peers.

Thomas (1998a) discussed various conceptualisations of the group process citing Berne's concept of the group 'imago' or 'any mental picture, conscious, pre-conscious, or unconscious, of what a group is or should be like' (1998a:99) and the potential influence this may have on the students' and tutors' experiences of being in the group. Thomas also discussed the Tuckman model (1998a:99) which suggests a series of group stages (forming, storming, norming and performing) with an implied trajectory. From this basis Thomas suggested that tutors will have definite roles relating to each of these stages. The current study suggests that this would be a complicated task because of the idiosyncratic nature of individual students' processes and the unique ways in which students perceive groups and tutors. One student's perception of a group's norming might be another's perception of storming, a student's perception of the tutor appropriately holding a storming group might feel inappropriately challenging to another depending on their perceptions of the group and of the tutor's behaviour.

The current study highlights students' active roles in these processes and suggests that these are influenced by an individual student's unique group imago especially in the early stages when the others are yet to arise from the perceived sameness of the group. However, this suggests a typical process in which students perceive individuals arising from the group yet the participants' stories suggest that this is an idiosyncratic process. For example, Victoria's shyness and the group's response to that led her to connect with individuals as a way to feel safe, Johnny typically only ever referred to the group rather than to any specific individuals within it, and Maggie refuted the existence of the group and only perceived individuals.

Thomas (1998a) explores ways in which groups can be creative and facilitative as well as full of destructive forces that can feel out of the control of individuals. This echoes Victoria's sense of 'what them bastards did to me' and Maggie's conceptualisation of groups as an oppressive force. However, here Maggie contradicted her denial of the existence of groups; to be oppressive, groups must exist. This incongruence suggests that Maggie's conceptualisation of groups-as-non-existent might be understood as a rebellious and disappointed reaction to the potentially oppressive power of groups based on her family history.

Thomas takes a position that reifies the group as an entity:

...people exist in relation to each other in the group, not as separate entities. The group is something that all the members, present and implied, create and are part of together. (1998a:99)

Thomas suggests that the group exists but is created through the relationships *between* its constituent members rather than through relationships *with* the group. In this statement Thomas also introduces the concept of 'implied' members echoing aspects of Charon's (2009) concept of 'reference groups' that we may employ to symbolise groups. The current study suggests that implied members might include individuals' family members, members of previous groups and key theoretical figures who may be influencing the group culture. Therefore, implied members were elements of the prior and on-going culture which generated and maintained the habitus. However, the influence of an implied member is only felt via the individuals who bring them and is therefore affected by that individual's relationship with the implied member. This can

lead to confusion when different individuals bring their subjective perceptions of the same implied member. Additionally, it is worth considering that the presence-in-the-group of these implied members is subjective for each individual and therefore one individual's implied members may or may not exist for others. Thus the boundaries around any group can become permeable and the perceptions of people within any group can be confusing; who is there, how do we reach out to them and how might they be reaching out to us?

...being anxious

Anxiety was a consistent theme across the overall sample and is supported by the literature. For example, in a qualitative study of the experiences of trainee integrative counsellors Lowndes and Hanley (2010:169) found that '[t]he participants' experiences suggest learning to be an integrative counsellor is an ambiguous and anxious process'. While the training context in that study was different and had its unique challenges that centred on the students' individual integration of a broad range of theoretical concepts, the authors' acknowledgment of anxiety as a significant theme is supported by other literature on this subject from a range of approaches. For example, in her discussion of Psychoanalytic training Lhulier suggested that the dynamics of the tutor/student relationship could generate anxiety because:

[t]he power inherent in this type of relationship is necessarily going to stir up a great deal of anxiety and emotion in the trainee and supervisor (2005:486)

Lhulier's acknowledgement that tutors could also experience anxiety adds further detail to these complicated relationships.

Thomas (1998a:97) discussed the anxiety of a new student group and the ways this may be expressed through criticisms of the course or tutors and also acknowledged possible countertransference from tutors. Thomas suggested that this could be an expression of students' anxieties about being accepted in the group or of being good enough. In the current study, criticisms of the tutors typically focused on their contradictory skills feedback and this could be interpreted as students' anxiety about how to be good enough

in a situation in which the definition of good enough was inconsistent. However, Johnny also was highly critical of one tutor who marked him down in skills assessment and expressed concern about how this might affect his final grade, so it could have been that Johnny's criticism included anxiety about passing the course.

Hiebert et al. (1998) concluded that students might benefit from courses including an element addressing this issue formally; this may have benefitted Johnny who spoke frequently of how his initial engagement with the course had involved a considerable element of learning how to learn. This was a common theme among many participants, which echoed my experiences of teaching on counselling courses where I have often felt that some students can initially struggle with knowing how to learn in this context. One way to understand this is through Bourdieu's concept of 'illusio' (Bourdieu, 1990:66) that suggests that participants in a 'game' can struggle until they have learned the rules and that at no point is the meaningfulness of these rules questioned. Before the rules are understood the game can appear absurd, afterwards the game makes sense and the participants can then invest in it. However, in the training context there are a range of learning domains and therefore a number of games-within-the-game. These games may appear contradictory, for example, the rules of 'being congruent' may contradict the rules of 'offering unconditional positive regard'. In this case students may struggle and may feel they have to choose which game they are good at and wish to invest in.

This can be especially significant given the typical demographic of counselling students which comprises a large proportion of mature students who often bring complicated educational histories (e.g. Harding Davies et al., 2004b). This struggle can be heightened by the requirement to learn within the different teaching domains of counselling courses each of which may draw on different learning skills.

This discussion suggests that anxiety can be a significant influence on students' abilities to learn and could therefore be usefully addressed within the courses. The current findings suggest that anxiety was insufficiently addressed by tutors because, although it was acknowledged, anxiety seemed to have been treated as an inevitable element of training and one which students should have the resources to wrestle with alone and/or in personal counselling. Alternatively, because anxiety may be a common experience among

students, it could be used as a starting point which may facilitate bonding and learning within the group.

In a strange land

The participants' stories offered a range of different perceptions of the course which echo Rogers' understanding that 'there are as many realities as there are persons' (Rogers, 1996). From this it became clear that each participant's experiences were influenced by their perceptions of the context and the individual ways in which the context responded to them.

...students' motivations and expectations meeting the course's intentions

A significant aspect of the way each participant perceived their training was linked with their motivation, which was in turn influenced by their engagement with the course. One student's motivation might be unaffected by their engagement with the course while another's might be altered by those experiences. For example, Victoria's and Johnny's initial motivations remained relatively constant throughout while Maggie's evolved.

Each participant brought their own understanding of how to train as a counsellor and this influenced their engagement with the learning. This reflects a postmodern (Lyotard, 1984) perspective on the 'truth' of the process of counselling training. Therefore, a student's engagement with their course can represent a struggle between contrasting and possibly competing narratives (e.g. theirs, their peers, the tutors, their personal counsellors, supervisors, placements, the profession). From the participants' perspectives it seemed that the tutors' intentions were relatively fixed and were not necessarily open to the diversity of student motivations.

Victoria's motivation was to obtain a qualification as a counsellor and her focus was primarily on the development of therapeutic skills. Victoria set out to make use of the course as a way to develop skills and saw anything outside of her understanding of what was relevant to this focus as being a meaningless and painful distraction. Johnny's focus was on personal development within the Person-Centred approach and he used the

course as a way to develop within this model. Maggie's initial motivation was to become a Person-Centred counsellor, however, her understanding of the approach developed in line with the course's conceptualisation which was at odds with her sense of how to be effectively therapeutic and so this motivation changed. Maggie became motivated towards becoming an active and effective counsellor rather than a Person-Centred one as defined by the course's conceptualisation of Classical Client-Centred counselling.

...students' foreknowledge meeting the course's conceptualisation of the approach

Throughout this study I have used the phrase 'the course's conceptualisation of the approach' because it became clear that the course was maintaining a particular stance with regard to the approach. This acknowledges that there are many ways of interpreting the approach (Sanders, 2012). From the participants' stories it was also clear that a range of ways of being Person-Centred had been acknowledged within the course; however, the participants' perceptions seemed to be that the teaching addressed the course's understanding of the classical interpretation of the approach.

It seems that the course defined their approach as being 'classically Person-Centred' and that their conceptualisation focused on two objectives:

- an increase in congruence demonstrated through openness to engage in confrontation across the group (see below for a discussion of therapist congruence in this context)
- the consistent expression of a non-directive attitude demonstrated through skills assessments

This suggests a paradox in the teaching strategy because the course was directing students to be challenging/confrontational even when this was incongruent for an individual and was also directing them to be non-directive in skills practice whilst ideologically withholding any direction about how to be non-directive.

It was clear that the course also required students to develop their abilities to offer the consistent expression of unconditional positive regard however this was less figural in the participants' stories.

The ways the participants engaged with the course were linked to ways that their foreknowledge about the Person-Centred approach related to the course's conceptualisation. Victoria had little foreknowledge other than a sense that it fitted with her way of working with students and the negative view of the approach expressed by her previous teachers. Johnny had previously studied at the current college and was immersed in their conceptualisation of the approach and his motivation for personal development was aligned with 'becoming more congruent' as per the course's conceptualisation. Maggie's foreknowledge was rooted in the way she made sense of her previous experience of healing but, because this did not fit with the course's conceptualisation, she sought learning from elsewhere and engaged in a process of integrating a broad range of learning. Maggie was confused by the incongruence generated because the course's conceptualisation of the approach did not fit with her developing experiences of what it meant to be an effective counsellor nor what it might mean to be 'full on Person-Centred'.

...making use of this strange land

Johnny's engagement with the course could be understood in terms of adaptive instrumentalism (Pendleton, 1991) as he made use of the course to learn how to be in ways that were appropriate to the Person-Centred approach and which expressed authenticity. This might also reflect Bourdieu's concept of social capital (1990) because he acquired a way of being that had value to the group. This suggests a possible correlation between Rogers' conditions of worth (1959) and Bourdieu's capital in that we might adopt conditions from significant others because they represent currency. Maggie's use of the course suggests that counselling training goes beyond the acquisition of skills and induction into a set of values to also embrace flexibility to suit client needs. Therefore, it could be argued that Maggie received an education that fell under the umbrellas of liberal humanist and progressivist ideology (Pendleton, 1991). Maggie's expressions of love also speak of a transpersonal way of being in relationship (Rowan and Jacobs, 2003). However, Victoria's story is one of instrumentalism (Rowan and Jacobs, 2003) because she resolutely used the course for training in a defined skillset.

Rowan and Jacobs suggest that each of these positions (instrumental, authentic and transpersonal) have validity and relate to the therapist's use of self, suggesting therefore that Johnny was developing his authentic self, Victoria was developing her instrumental self, and Maggie's focus was her transpersonal self. While these concepts validate individual learning positions they can also reduce students' multi-dimensional and contextually situated learning to a primary focus. Johnny's story, for example, suggests that his motivation to develop his authentic self was instrumental. Rowan and Jacobs (2003:29) argue that this represents a false self built on compliance with the training but I question whether this makes it any less valid because we also need to hold Rowan's argument about the paradoxical nature of counselling; it involves playing a role which involves being authentic (1998:167). Also, we can only judge Johnny's authenticity if we step outside of his frame of reference and if we fail to recognise this as an aspect of process and therefore liable to evolve. Students are in a process of transition and, therefore, Rogers' suggestion that a counsellor's basic ideology must be genuine (1961:432) needs to be held tentatively to avoid imposing authenticity on a developmental process because to do so may impede the development of this authenticity. As Rowan and Jacobs (2003) suggest:

Some of the therapist's use of self, perhaps much of it, consists of qualities, not skills; and although qualities can be encouraged to grow, they can only be talked about or modelled by a trainer or supervisor to a trainee (2003:89)

If we assume that authenticity is a quality, this suggests that Johnny's conscious adoption of his tutors' and peers' models of authenticity (as perceived by Johnny) may be a meaningful part of the process of developing his own authenticity. The other side of this modelling however is unavailable; there is no way of assessing whether Johnny's peers or tutors were being authentic when he perceived them to be. Therefore, the significant factors are Johnny's perception of their authenticity, the capital that authenticity held within the culture, Johnny's consequent commitment to being authentic, and his belief that he was being authentic. However, this discussion implies that authenticity (which is taken here to embrace congruence) is a state, while the current study suggests that it is a process that is sensitive to environmental conditions.

The small sample from the current study shows the diverse ways students may make use of training because of the ways that their individual motivations and foreknowledge generate subjective and contextually situated educational philosophies. These may be independent of the course's own philosophy and/or may evolve in relationship with the course depending on the qualities of that relationship. From this study I would suggest that an ideal situation would be one in which these relationships can be explored and evolved collaboratively, but that an 'unsafe' relationship may lead to disparity between these philosophies which could dissipate the energy available for development. Collaborative evolution could be complicated because the potential to explore these relationships in dialogue would be influenced by each student's individual relationship with the course and the tutors. This is borne out by the current study in which Maggie was able to process these relationships and to thrive because of her perception of being equal with her tutors whereas Victoria and Johnny seemed to struggle with open discussion with their tutors.

10.2 What are we all doing here?

...relating to an approach

This study suggests that in the early stages of training students are still evolving their understanding of the therapeutic approach, of the relationships between the approach and practice, and of which approach/es will most closely fit their developing understanding of themselves as a counsellor. Their developing relationship with each of these factors is undoubtedly being influenced by their engagement with the course and other professional acquaintances.

Levy (1998), drawing on Kolb's experiential learning cycle (2014), suggested that counselling training involves an interplay between two distinct learning activities:

.....[t]he endless learning spiral involves a *doing* component and a *reflective* component, the synthesis of which results in what Schon (1983) has labelled 'the reflective practitioner' (1998:68)

In this context the reflective component is inextricably linked to the theoretical approach. Therefore, one aspect of Person-Centred training is the development of the student's

ability to reflect on their learning from a Person-Centred perspective. In the current study participants understood this process in their own ways, based on their individual ideologies and motivations and the ways these fitted with the teachers' ideologies, intentions and behaviours. Victoria perceived the course as counselling training and focused on the performance of an appropriate skillset which was not necessarily Person-Centred. Johnny's focus was on meeting the conditions of the course's conceptualisation of a Person-Centred model of developing congruence. However Maggie used the course to begin her education about the complexities of the approach as a way of being and a way of working. In this, Maggie found confirmation for her way of being but rejected the course's affordance of training in a skillset because she perceived it as being dogmatic and limiting.

...what was the course setting out to achieve?

Buchanan and Hughes (2000:1) described counselling as a 'job that people develop into' and the current study raises questions about what 'develop' means and who has authorship over that meaning. Each of the participants had their own agendas for the course as did each of those within the overall sample and in many cases these seemed to be at odds with the agendas of the course. The Person-Centred course's objectives were assessed through observing students' behaviours in various contexts and therefore focused on behavioural change as an expression of the development of a specific definition of Person-Centred attitudes.

This study has raised questions about what we might be doing in Person-Centred counselling training: Are we teaching theories and skillsets from a theoretical approach? Are we developing people? Are we indoctrinating people into the approach? Are we developing specific aspects of people in order that they might be therapeutic? Are we employing a protracted method of selecting those that fit the approach? Or, are we doing some or all of these? And, in the complicated dynamics between teachers, students, the approach and the culture of counselling, who holds authorship of what we are doing and do we negotiate this ownership within our profession or is ownership being implicitly assumed and/or abdicated?

A structural model would suggest that training has the potential to be autocratic with the teachers holding the power. Traditionally this might have been assumed in Higher Education however this seems less clear in an evolving market in which students are taking the role of consumers. This might have implications for a course which offers an experience of learning from within the Person-Centred approach and which might therefore espouse a democratic structure with the power being shared between the students and the teachers, or which might take an abdicratic form with the students as the source of power. My initial interpretation was that the course espoused Person-Centred attitudes but was autocratic in its practices with the teachers filling the roles of the leaders. However, this study revealed a much more complicated situation where one person's offer of democracy (whether it be a teacher or a student) could be perceived as autocratic by some students, democratic by others or abdicratic by still others. It could also be perceived in different ways by the same student in different contexts.

...power

My interpretations of these stories was informed by my understanding of Foucault's conceptualisation of power as a complex web rather than a linear process and that individual students:

...are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application (Gordon, 1980:98)

This was echoed in the literature when Speedy (1998) suggested that power could be understood as a verb with links to empowerment. However, this study suggests that students may not always be aware of their potential agency and may perceive themselves to be the points of power's application. This suggests that although teachers on a Person-Centred course may intend student empowerment they are immersed in a complex web of power which students will be responding to in diverse ways.

In a discussion on the co-training relationship Edwards (1998) suggested that there are layers to a counselling teacher's power and authority, each of which need attending to. A tutor:

...must realise his/her own 'power-from-within'... in order to realise his/her own 'power-with'... and each needs to monitor his/her 'power-over' [the students]... (1998:63)

The current study suggests that this is a complicated interpersonal process rather than purely an intrapersonal one on the behalf of the tutors because individual students will experience each tutor in their own ways. Therefore, one student's perception of a tutor's power-with may be perceived by another student as power-over. To complicate this issue further, individual students and teachers will make sense of their unique perceptions in their own contextually dependent ways. So, for example in the context of skills feedback, Victoria felt it would have been helpful if the tutors had exerted their power-over her by offering her direction but she felt over-powered by their directivity during groupwork. Johnny also felt that the tutors' lack of power-over in skills was unhelpful but did not feel over-powered in groupwork. Maggie, however, perceived a tutor's power-over acutely because of a strong transference reaction which left her open to her expectations of negative judgement.

In the literature review, Speedy (1998:33) explored the legitimate uses of the power 'owned' by the trainer such as in defining the structure of the course. Speedy highlighted the difficulty in separating this structural power from the personal power of the trainer and their professional expertise as a trainer and counsellor. This suggests an autocratic culture. Quoting from a participant, Speedy suggested that 'If you are going to be able to empower other people you need to be able to use first stage skills well' (1998:3), implying that the trainer needs to be self-aware and reflective. But based on the current study I would ask whether it is possible to empower someone else; can we give someone power or is such an act still an expression of our own power?

I would suggest that with authority comes the responsibility to be aware of our position within structural power dynamics and to congruently express our power in ways which are consistent with the course's espoused philosophy. Again this relates back to the relationship between the teachers' educational philosophies, their conceptualisations of the theoretical approach and their self-awareness, and the ways these are expressed through teacher behaviour. This discussion also suggests that this dynamic can have an impact on the students' development, as was evident in Victoria's comment about 'what

them bastards done to me' where 'them bastards' included both peers and teachers. It was also evident in Maggie's transference reaction to Tutor 1.

Johnny's perceptions highlighted the question of whether students can ever be fully congruent with their teachers when the teachers inevitably had the power of assessment. This study suggests that it could be useful if this issue was available for reflection within teacher/student relationships. However, because the structural dynamic might give teachers power-over the students it follows that the teachers need to be the ones to offer this material to the group for processing. Similarly, the efficacy of such an exploration is questionable in a context where structural power, and particularly the power of assessment, is in effect. In this case it may be helpful to offer a space within the course to explore these issues and to address these dynamics. For example, on a course in which the teachers aspire to be part of the group and to be seen as 'human, not just tutors' a context might be provided in which the whole group (including the teachers) is externally facilitated. In such a setting these dynamics may be explored and issues of power within any 'encounter' addressed openly. This would call for high levels of availability from the teachers and clear contracting regarding the roles of the external facilitators. The assessment dynamic would inevitably still be present but such a strategy may open this topic up for processing.

While it could be argued that transparency would not necessarily undo the power that is imbued in a role, a lack of transparency makes authority figures unavailable for scrutiny and this could create a situation in which implicit oppression (rather than transparent and appropriate authority) takes place. In the context of counselling training this could contribute to a culture in which students perceive a need to be incongruent in order to fit the cultural conditions imposed by the course. For example, rather than openly exploring their value systems and processes they may hide them in order to demonstrate compliance with those of the teachers. This was echoed by Gillon's (2002) reflections on his experiences of training when he suggested that learners have to 'play by the rules of the game'. Likewise, Rowan and Jacobs (2003) suggest that counselling training has a long history of conformity and that:

...any trainee, simply because he wishes to qualify in a profession (which today is more regulated than ever), may conform to what is laid down and

expected, and so possibly diminish the development of their true self (2003:89)

...generating confusion: the relationships between the students and the tutors

This discussion demonstrates how, while the students bring their own motivations and foreknowledge, which will generate their subjective philosophies and which will in turn influence the use they make of the course, teachers are inevitably influential. Indeed, it could be argued that if students are to learn, it is essential that the teachers are influential. I would suggest that this influence can be broadly described as operating within two domains: that which is taught (e.g. theories, philosophy and skills) and that which is experienced (the process of being on the course). The latter includes:

...the way in which tutors affect the course members, or empower them, by their way of being and behaving (Thomas, 1998a:106)

My position is that counselling training is situated within an existing political and social culture and will therefore inevitably reflect elements of that culture. Therefore, the influence of teachers is itself influenced by the teacher's relationships with the many aspects of a multi-dimensional cultural climate.

Johns (1996) suggested that the personal development of tutors is a significant element in counsellor training and that the extent to which tutors have developed their own educational philosophies is significant to the process. I would suggest that this development must include awareness of the relationship between an individual tutor's educational philosophy and their therapeutic approach, and of the relationships of both of these to those of their peers and those of the course within the culture of counselling. The question is; how coherent, consistent and collaborative are the relationships between these concentric rings of relationships that spread outwards (and inwards) from the individual teacher?

Participants spoke of the influence of the teachers in ways I interpreted as modelling the course's conceptualisation of the approach. Some of the confusion that the participants experienced could be understood from the perspective of the teachers' relationships between their educational ideologies and their therapeutic approaches. I use the term

therapeutic approaches because it was clear that although the course was Person-Centred each teacher had their own conceptualisation of the approach. Therefore, it seems that some of the participants' confusions arose because of their perceptions of inconsistencies in this modelling across the staff team. However, many of the students understood this inconsistency as an expression of the individualism that lies at the heart of the approach. While students held this understanding, they could still be confused by the teachers' contradictory feedback and could seek consistent guidance about how to be sufficiently Person-Centred in order to pass assessments. This was further complicated because individual teachers could also have flexible conceptualisations depending on the individual context; there were as many ways to model the approach as there were teachers and contexts.

While the teachers may have been accurately modelling an idiosyncratic approach this did not necessarily fit the educational needs and ideologies of all of their students. This was illustrated by Victoria's sense that the teachers' adherence to a non-directive approach blocked her learning because she needed more direction, Maggie's sense that it blocked her learning because she needed less direction and Johnny's exasperation about 'how are we supposed to make sense of that?'

Teacher influence was also revealed in the ways they related to each student, possibly complicated by the teachers' roles as teachers and counsellors. While the teachers were not counselling any of the students, they were all known by the students to be professional counsellors. This may add another aspect to these relationships as, in my own experience, being a counsellor is an active aspect of my personality in most contexts and especially in those that connect with the profession. Discussing the complicated push and pull of these issues within a context which is both educative and therapeutic, Thomas (1998b:26) acknowledged the tendency of groups to hold their members and facilitators in fixed positions, especially because transference issues may be present. Thomas (1998a:105) suggested that trainers can be seen as cold and remote if they stay in trainer role and do not respond to personal disclosures, alternatively students can 'struggle... with seeing trainers as human or weak rather than authoritarian and strong' (Johns in Thomas, 1998a:105) if they *do* respond.

The current study reveals how complicated this can become because the participants each perceived the teachers differently. Victoria spoke of feeling overpowered by her teachers and was exasperated because of their fixed sense of who she was. Her perception was that they remained in their roles as trainers (although they did not meet her need for didactic training) and showed little empathy. Victoria never spoke of their humanity or vulnerability but rather of their power. Johnny's generally positive feelings about the teachers were influenced by his perception of their willingness to be seen as human beings. This was a quality he valued and found therapeutic because it fitted the course's conceptualisation of the approach. Johnny remained consistently positive about the teachers except for one whom he developed a fixed sense of dislike for because he felt that they displayed inappropriate humanity through their inauthentic expression of dislike for him. Maggie, however, spoke warmly of the teachers' willingness to reveal their humanity even though at times she could struggle to see this through her transference reaction to Tutor 1. These diverse perceptions underline the potential for students to be overwhelmed by the structural power of the teachers when they are close to their individual vulnerabilities. In this respect the students seemed to be in relationship with the structure rather than with the people who were teachers.

This offers another perspective on the ways the students made use of the teachers. Victoria found that their attitudes towards her forced her to draw on determination to succeed; Johnny took them as useful models of how to be. Maggie welcomed them as people with whom she could connect, however this was also imbued with a sense of the teachers' value to her because they were potential colleagues who were further down the road than she was.

This again suggests that there is potential for further development if these relationships could be explored during courses. However, this study suggests it is unlikely that there would be the resources to address this with a cohort of twenty students each with their own unique processes in relation to a team of individual teachers within a busy academic context. I acknowledge that my experiences of struggling to meet individual students at depth within a busy academic timetable influence this aspect of the discussion.

...generating confusion: roles and roles-within-roles

This study demonstrates the complexity within the roles of students and teachers and the ways that these roles are enacted within a network of roles-within-roles. From the students' perspective, one facet of this is that while they are studying they are also practising as counsellors, attending supervision and undertaking personal counselling. Their roles therefore encompass student-counsellor-supervisee-client and the host of other roles they may inhabit outside of the course. From the perspective of their experiences as Psychodynamic students, Bruzzone et al. focused on one aspect of this and suggested that:

...the candidate is faced with the task of learning to discriminate between his condition as patient and his condition as student and therapist (1985:413)

As has previously been discussed, this confusion is set within a context in which teaching staff on counselling courses are also practising counsellors and therefore occupy at least two professional roles: teacher and counsellor. They will also be supervisees, may also be supervisors, clients and even students, again all within a host of other roles. This may lead to confusion amongst the teachers as to their role. Bruzzone et al. described how:

On reviewing the behaviour of our teachers in their interaction with the group of candidates, we believe we observed in them a generally unclear, uncertain attitude which we felt did not clearly differentiate the analytic from the didactic functions (1985:413)

This may complicate the expectations that students have of their teachers: are they expecting teachers or counsellors or even supervisors or colleagues, or a hybrid of all, and how then do they respond? Likewise, in her reflections, Thomas suggests that counselling trainers may:

...wear many different hats, including those of designer, teacher, administrator, interviewer, assessor, counsellor, tutor, group facilitator and housekeeper (1998b:18)

Focusing exclusively on the teacher/counsellor elements of the role, Thomas explores two potential positions, one in which the teacher focuses on their teaching role and the other

in which they focus on their facilitative role (1998a:100). Thomas suggests that both have merit. Focusing on the teaching aspects ensures that the course meets its academic aims while focusing on the facilitative role can provide a uniquely powerful personal development opportunity for the students. Thomas argues for a middle ground which acknowledges that the teacher's professional self will invite therapeutic contact and that this, combined with the material and process, makes an environment in which it would be unethical not to address therapeutic issues.

Thomas explored the co-created nature of these issues and suggested that the joint ongoing negotiation of this boundary between teaching and facilitation creates an environment which encourages student openness and self-disclosure such that 'therapeutic material thus becomes freely available' in an environment which is however not a therapy group (1998b:21-22). Thomas also suggested that this situation is further complicated because students may know, either implicitly or explicitly, that the course may be an arena in which they can be heard and that this sits within a culture that offers few opportunities to be heard, and may even be critical of this need (1998a:101). However, Thomas also suggests that students may not realise what deep water they are stepping into (1998a:104). This is supported by the current study in which participants often commented on the surprising depth and intimacy of the relationships, disclosures and individual processes within the group.

Thomas (1998b) suggested:

...confusion can also arise in the students about the role of the facilitators, who may appear to behave in a tantalising and neglectful way, by seeming to elicit and encourage personal expression of deep feelings but leave the students 'high and dry' and expect them to sort it out for themselves (1998:22)

These arguments suggest a complicated interplay between all of these roles because these interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships may be complex, fluid and dynamic. For example, a teacher who is involved in reflective practice may also be learning from their students, they will also be a supervisee and may possibly be a client as well as having previous experiences of being a student themselves. This leaves me with a developing awareness of the complexity of studying student/teacher relationships and a

sense that all these roles and roles-within-roles cannot be separated in a meaningful way. This picture of the complex experiences of roles-within-roles suggests that students and teachers may be getting lost between their roles of student-client-counsellor and teacher-counsellor rather than activating the hyphen (Humphrey, 2007) and holding all roles. For example, was Maggie getting lost in seeing her teachers as peers while also seeking their approval, and was Victoria's teacher getting lost between roles when he suggested that she needed to take more risks in the group while also reflecting her anxiety and giving her permission to be true to herself?

Aponte (1994) makes a connection between these complex roles and the personal development elements of counselling training. Aponte suggests that because personal development is inherent in training it could be argued that trainer/student relationships are inherently dual relationships in which a trainer might also offer therapy to a student. However, Aponte argues instead that:

They are relationships with dual qualities in contrast to a dual relationship in which a trainer paid to train a therapist simultaneously accepts payment from the trainee as patient (1994:5)

Aponte suggests that abuse of power, the intent to exploit, and harm done to the trainee may be suitable measures of whether there is any exploitation of the student (1994:5). He also suggests guidelines to ensure that the complications inherent in training do not result in exploitative relationships. The guidelines include forming an explicit contract that transparently addresses these issues. This assumes that students could give informed consent when the literature (e.g. Harding Davies et al., 2004b; Tran, 2004) suggests that this is unlikely. Aponte seems to be assuming that students have the voice or the power to ask for what they need in situations in which they may feel vulnerable and/or overwhelmed. Victoria showed how problematic how it can be to make such an assumption.

Johns (1996) discusses her belief in the significance of modelling in counsellor development in terms of the ways students might take cues about the right way to be from the values and attitudes of their tutors. Johns focuses on the issue of power in the tutor/student relationship and suggested the possibility of accepting the reality of the situation by acknowledging that tutors are in a position of influence. This supports

Humphrey's suggestion to activate the hyphen[s] (2007) in the teacher's multi-faceted role. This argument is further supported by Thomas who suggested that:

...being a counselling trainer requires us to work in a space *between*: between being a counsellor and a trainer; between being a trainer and a supervisor; between the training that we ourselves received and the training that we are offering; between the organisation that hosts and administrates the course and the participants (1998b:18)

Thomas further suggests that trainers need to operate between the expectations of students and employers, between what they want and/or are able to offer, between their selves and their colleagues, and between the professional requirements of accrediting bodies and emotional and practical difficulties experienced by students.

This leads me to suggest that counselling training could benefit from embracing all of these roles-within-roles through awareness and transparency. Awareness could enable teachers to hold the complexities of their own roles and of the students' along with the complex and dynamic interplay between all of the facets of the role. However, the costs of holding so much material may be that teachers become lost in contradiction.

10.3 Therapist congruence; being myself and/or being Person-Centred

Rogers discussed the Person-Centred approach as 'a way of being' (1996) rather than as a set of instrumental behaviours. The difference between these two perspectives was revealed in my participants' negotiations over whether they should be *being* the approach or *doing* it. *Doing* the approach describes a way of employing Rogers' conditions instrumentally whereas *being* the approach describes the congruent expression of Person-Centred attitudes. Victoria was focused on *doing* counselling and the course's adherence to a strictly Classical Client-Centred skillset was almost an inconvenience for her. Johnny wanted to be Person-Centred and this manifested as *doing* congruence via language that expressed an embodied connection with his experience and as confrontation/challenge. Maggie wanted to *be* Person-Centred. These distinctions highlight the tension experienced by many of my participants between being themselves and being Person-Centred; being Person-Centred includes being congruent but what if

being congruent does not include being Person-Centred? This was complicated by the assessment process which focused on students' abilities to *do* specific behaviours.

This raises important questions; is it appropriate for a student to express congruent judgements, or a congruent lack of empathic understanding, or should they instead *do* an appropriate performance of the conditions? Or, In Victoria's case, is it appropriate for a student to congruently express their quietness in a group which is requiring confrontational/challenging engagement between its members? Victoria received contradictory feedback about whether she needed to change in order to become 'more congruent' or whether she needed to remain true to herself. This suggests confusion about the nature of congruence; was it congruence-as-confrontation/challenge or congruence as being true to experience-of-self? Either of these definitions reflect oversimplifications which do not embrace the complexity of congruence as a relational process that is susceptible to environmental influences.

...being themselves or doing the right thing

Johnny thrived while he was immersed in the course because he willingly adopted the cultural conditions as a structure for his personal development. He perceived those conditions as offering an appropriate and aspirational way of being and therefore, adopted inter- and intra-personal behaviours and attitudes reflecting those conditions. Johnny was therefore engaged in adapting himself in a way that reflected doing the right thing. However, Victoria struggled with the conditionality of the course which she perceived as pressurising her to be incongruent. Victoria resolved the paradox of being treated conditionally in an avowedly Person-Centred environment by resiliently hanging onto being herself while also challenging herself to change in ways that reflected her own desire to be more self-confident and which, coincidentally, colluded with the course's conditionality. In this situation, although Victoria felt oppressed within the course, she developed towards feeling abler to be herself in social situations with her peers. Maggie felt free to be herself.

As developing counsellors, Maggie and Victoria spoke of how they were looking forward to being away from the confines of the course so that they could be free to be themselves

in their practices. This suggests that they were beginning to seek individualised learning through which to develop into more autonomous practitioners. Reflecting on this from the perspectives of the various developmental models previously discussed (e.g. Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1980; Benner, 1984; Skovolt and Ronnestad, 1995; Orlinsky and Ronnestad, 2005) suggests that Maggie and Victoria were at a transitional stage encompassing proficiency and competence whilst still being within their apprenticeships, including learning through the imitation of experts. These experts were no longer their course tutors but were their counsellors and supervisors and a broader range of role models from within the counselling literature.

...expertise and autonomy

Autonomy, or the 'respect for the client's right to be self-governing' (BACP, 2007), is one of the central ethical principles of counselling. In this context autonomy is typically viewed from a Millian perspective (1982) which sees individuals as bounded (Gergen, 1999) and responsible for their own actions. Dualism is inherent in this perspective because it suggests that while individuals are located *within* society and therefore arguably have responsibilities *to* society they are also somehow separate *from* society. My understanding however is that individuals are inseparable from their environment which includes society. Informed by socio-cultural psychology (Vygotsky, 1978) my view is that our individual experience is co-created in the interaction between ourselves and society. Victoria, Johnny and Maggie demonstrated that these interactions are idiosyncratic.

Autonomy therefore becomes an individual and iterative process of ongoing interaction between the individual and their environment (Gendlin, 1981). My understanding is that individuals are an inseparable part of the social context and each individual's experience of autonomy is contextually specific. I would argue that the development of a counsellor possesses directionality towards becoming an autonomous practitioner and that during training students begin a process which includes this implied directionality. Therefore, the foundation of each student's autonomous practice is evolving through their on-going and idiosyncratic interactions with their training in all of its complexity; their ongoing

presence as students include their evolving pasts and their implied futures (Gendlin, 1981).

Rogers (1951) proposed that effective counsellors are primarily genuine and that they should be free to choose their therapeutic approach rather than have one imposed on them. Rogers' proposal was that counsellors evolve an idiosyncratic approach founded on knowledge gained from direct experience. This illustrates Rogers' commitment to a scientific approach; the counsellor's continually evolving idiosyncratic approach is to be informed by their commitment to reflective practice. Therefore, Rogers was implying that developing counsellors need to hone their reflexivity and engage in an ongoing research project into what makes their counselling effective. However, this seems to contradict the views of the profession with, for example, the BACP (2016a) requiring courses to have a core theoretical approach. This may point to divergence between Rogers' concept of development and that of the profession; the BACP suggests that students need the support of a defined approach during their training. However limiting students to an approach that may not resonate with them may restrict the development of therapist congruence and result in inauthentic and/or mechanistic practice.

...social control and autonomy

In broad terms counselling could be seen to exist on a political continuum between social control (e.g. Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Masson, 1993) and autonomy (e.g. Rogers, 1961). Counselling can be critiqued as a form of treatment which involves concepts such as psychopathology and diagnosis which identify experiences that deviate from the 'norm' and classifies individuals as cases or patients who need treatment in order to be 'cured', or returned to the socially sanctioned 'norm' (Hansen, 2007). However, it has also been argued that concepts such as psychopathology are social constructions (Foucault, 1989) and that counselling is a critical activity directed toward client emancipation (Habermass in Crotty, 2003). My understanding is the Person-Centred counsellor offers a relationship in which the client has an opportunity to connect with their internal valuing process in preference to introjected value systems (Rogers, 1959).

The significance of autonomy in the context of Person-Centred training is illustrated by Gillon's (2002) experiences as a student within which he:

...gradually learned the 'rules' regarding appropriate 'counsellor-like' expression of 'who' and 'how' I was

Gillon cites Kearney (1997) in suggesting that there is a 'hidden curriculum' which results in the de-skilling of 'trainees whose values are not akin to those dominant within the profession' (Gillon, 2002). Victoria's story suggests that those who may be de-skilled could include any individuals who feel invalid within the dominant course culture.

Therefore, I would extend Gillon's suggestion to include those values dominant within the course's conceptualisation of the therapeutic approach. Gillon suggested that students can be empowered through learning to reflect critically and that teachers have a responsibility to facilitate critical reflection on the process of education itself. This is supported by the struggle generated by Victoria's perception that the responsibility to comply with the course's dominant values was handed to her to resolve alone.

The stories of the participants in the current study remind me of Rousseau's (1998) suggestion that true freedom comes from willingly subscribing to the rules of a culture. The three participants illustrate different ways of relating to such cultural rules; Johnny willingly subscribed to the rules and adapted to fit them, Maggie found freedom through rules that fitted her developing ideology, and Victoria found oppression and sought ways to circumvent the rules. I would therefore suggest that cultures are defined by their conditions and that no culture can offer universal autonomy because every individual will seek different conditions and have their own perceptions of autonomy and of the culture. Therefore, one individual might embrace a culture because its conditions are a match for their own, another might willingly adapt to those conditions and so develop a self-concept that fits the culture, while others might struggle with those same conditions which they may experience as oppressive. Therefore, teachers can only intend their conceptualisation of an autonomous culture, they cannot be responsible for every students' relationship to that intending.

...self-efficacy and autonomy

Victoria's story highlights the relationship between autonomy and self-efficacy that was addressed by Tang, et al. (2004). Their findings associated self-efficacy with the number of courses studied but they also suggested that prior experience or hours of internship were possibly as influential. This is supported by the diversity of influences within the current study. Victoria attributed her developing confidence to her placement and supervision while Maggie connected her developing sense of herself as a counsellor with her client work, her personal counselling and with the role modelling of a significant teacher. Significantly, these participants also had previous professional experiences of working facilitatively with clients.

...being assessed

The participants were in a process of transition that involved development towards meeting external criteria that focused on their behaviour and their academic abilities. This implies that at points in this process they will have experienced judgement via assessment processes and therefore, pressure to develop in specific ways. Judgement is ideologically significant to the Person-Centred approach but it is worth acknowledging that similar tensions may exist in other therapeutic cultures. Thomas (1998a:106) discussed this from a Psychodynamic perspective and suggested that tutors need to be aware that students' perceptions may be based on their experiences of previous teachers who may have handled the pedagogy in different ways than contemporary tutors in adult and higher education. Thomas suggested that, therefore, students might battle to take responsibility for their own learning. In response to students' potential transference reactions, Thomas also proposed that trainers need to maintain their 'legitimate authority' around assessment. This could offer some insight into Person-Centred training where a teacher may perceive such authority as illegitimate and/or incongruent with their therapeutic approach.

However, reflecting on the assessment dynamic from the perspective of her experiences as a student counsellor, Maybank (1998) suggested that:

...in what seems to me a totally incongruent way, trainees have to show that ability by methods which are dictatorial and constraining (1998:164)

Maybank described how she felt 'inadequate compared with the expectations of the established [academic] system' (1998:164) and linked this to her experiences during her schooldays. This echoes Victoria's struggles and touches on all three participants' confusion about how to be themselves whilst also meeting the tutors' requirements for how to be Person-Centred. It also supports arguments for the potentially regressive and/or transferential nature of training. However, Maybank also highlighted the potential for training to be a healing process because she perceived that her counselling tutors successfully understood and validated her individuality.

...doing in order to be

Training which might embrace an institution's professional responsibilities and Person-Centred theory could teach students the appropriate theoretical and professional elements while allowing them to develop their individual senses of self. Simplistically, this relies on separation between these aspects of the training such that appropriate teaching strategies would be employed for each aspect. Didactic strategies might be employed for professional development and abdicratic ones for personal development. However, this implies that it is possible to separate professional development from personal development while the literature (e.g. Donati and Watts, 2005) suggests that this cannot be done in practice. Although authors have discussed the different domains of counsellor education, Goss and Mearns (1997) have suggested that it is not helpful to reduce the process in this way. This is supported by a Vygotskian (1978) perspective from which learning is considered not to be limited to didactic educational contexts.

Counselling students learn about how to be their individual therapeutic selves through an active engagement with the many learning domains and contexts that express their course's understanding of appropriate ways to train in the therapeutic approach. This involves an individual synthesis of the various contexts including the role models (the various teachers) within these contexts. These 'teachers' will not be limited to the course

tutors but may include peers, counsellors, supervisors, clients, figures in the literature and other influential characters.

The current study suggests that the participants' engagement with this process was idiosyncratic and founded in each student's individuality. Victoria's instrumental approach to the course led her to seek didactic role models to facilitate her development of a therapeutic skillset. This was to enable her to gain her a qualification so that she could then practise in a way that was personally meaningful in that it would provide her with employment as a counsellor. Johnny's particular sense of self had been informed by his history as a gay man and his desire for personal development led him to new ways of being. My interpretation of the resulting process was that he found didactic models from which he could acquire a Person-Centred self-concept replete with conditions of worth as imposed by the course. Maggie however sought an environment in which she could develop a therapeutic configuration of self; a unique and fluid way of being which was authentic and appropriate to a particular context (e.g. Mearns and Thorne, 2000; Acres, 2016).

For Victoria it was appropriate that she should learn skills which would enable her to *do* Person-Centred counselling. However, Johnny was committed to developing a Person-Centred way of *being* which led to his introjection of the course's values into a set of Person-Centred conditions of worth; an externally validated way to *do being*. Maggie was concerned with developing an authentic and effective way of *being* as a counsellor. Interestingly, all three of these students passed the course because they met the course's criteria in terms of their behaviours but none of them felt that they had become Person-Centred counsellors. Victoria became a qualified counsellor and was applying for jobs in the profession but was not declaring her Person-Centred training, Johnny took on the approach but did not feel ready to call himself a counsellor, and Maggie was fully herself as a counsellor but not fully Person-Centred.

This suggests a potential gap between Person-Centred training and the development of Person-Centred counsellors because of the tensions between being non-directive and educative, between assessing and being non-judgemental and between being and doing. So how do we facilitate the student in their process whilst also training them to be

counsellors? This study suggests that the focus on non-directivity is significant to this question. Could this therefore be re-conceptualised as allowing the student to be self-directing in their process while directing the content (professional and theoretical issues) without implicitly directing the process? However, this seems complicated from the perspective of the problematic division between professional and personal development.

This discussion highlights a potential paradox in Person-Centred counselling training; is it possible to teach someone to be more themselves within an approach that promotes individuation? This becomes more complicated when we acknowledge that the training sits within an institution that has its own specific regulations and constraints.

Chapter 11: Conclusions and implications of this study

This chapter draws together the material from the thesis, beginning with reflections on my involvement with the project and its impact on me. The limitations of the study are covered before the chapter looks at the findings, and draws conclusions before presenting implications for practice. Ideas for further research and a discussion of the development of our being-and-doing-in-relationship complete the chapter.

11.1 Some reflections on the research process

The project progressed through a series of stages each of which brought their own challenges and learning. My relationship with each stage typically went through a cycle of excitement, engagement, reflection, development and completion before moving onto the next stage. During the transcription stage I also struggled with frustration and longing to move on.

I initially drew on the experiences from my MA that led me to develop a relatively open research question for this project that generated a broad range of material. The structure of IPA gave me the tools to interpret this material in a systematic manner while also engaging my creativity. My creativity initially emerged in the study design and then re-emerged when I found I needed to develop systems to manage the extensive data set. However, the most significant creative phase was when I moved from analysis to writing up. I felt overwhelmed because the analysis had generated a large volume of material, all of which was essential if I was to honour the participants' stories. Reflecting on these feelings with my supervisors allowed me to re-engage with my creativity and I feel that this was facilitated by my receiving therapeutic conditions from my supervisors. This represented a parallel process between my experience and the phenomena I was researching.

I realised I needed to claim authorship of my analysis and this required me to choose specific stories to tell in order to answer my research question. From here I took control of the research and began to shape my thesis. This was directed by the question with

which I interrogated my chosen transcripts: what story do I want to tell from this material? This acknowledges that these are only some of the stories that could have been told; however, they are the ones that reflect my phenomenology.

I generated significant problems for myself through over-recruitment. This was influenced in part by leaving the question and methodology open until after the interviews were completed. This was useful in that it allowed the evolution of the design to be informed by my initial engagement with the project. This enabled me to develop a deeper awareness of my biases and to adjust the design accordingly. However, over-recruitment also provided me with a broad data set from which to draw. This led to the selection of three participants who represented interesting cases. The recruitment strategy was problematic because I was not sufficiently aware of the issues the methodology would generate when I designed the sampling, recruitment and participant triangulation processes. I had advised potential participants that they would receive transcripts of each interview and descriptive case studies and I felt committed to generating this material for all participants.

Over recruitment also had an impact on my levels of reflexivity during data collection. At this stage I focused on completing interviews and turning out transcripts to meet the timetable rather than engaging with my reflexivity. Greater reflexivity came after I had selected the participants for the thesis.

Throughout the project I became increasingly aware of my way of making sense of the world. Significant in this was the priority I give to cognitive meaning making. Through the triangulation process, I noticed that my supervisor was connecting with levels of embodied meaning making within the participants' stories. This reflected an aspect of the body-mind relationship, which had been coming into my awareness and highlighted my ongoing aim to connect with my experience at a more embodied level. I am now wondering how my understanding of doctoral study as a mainly cognitive activity connected with my process and how together they informed this early way of relating to the material. This is still work in progress and may be my life's work, but the project led me towards Gendlin's process model (1981) and towards becoming more connected with my felt-sense. I wish I had engaged with Gendlin's model earlier because it would have

had an impact on my engagement with the project but this was a developmental issue that had its own process. Ironically, this aspect of my process only came into awareness when I began regular yoga and meditation as a way to help me to handle the stress of doing a PhD while working full-time. The process, therefore, ultimately led me towards a more satisfying and fulfilling connection with myself.

11.2 Limitations of the study

Ironically, the major limitation of this study is a potential lack of generalisability because of the relatively small sample size which focused on one Person-Centred course. The themes therefore are relevant to that course. However, my experiences as a Person-Centred counsellor and supervisor who often works with students suggest that the themes that arose are common within this context. This is supported by literature suggesting that these findings can also contribute to the practices of teachers on other Person-Centred courses. My preliminary work with the Psychodynamic sub-sample indicates the study is also of relevance to that approach. This could be developed through further work with the material from that sub-sample.

It is also worth acknowledging that this thesis only addresses one of the Humanistic approaches to counselling and therefore does not address all of the five theoretical key approaches that were discussed earlier in this thesis. However, because the other approaches (e.g. Behavioural, Cognitive and Integrative) frequently employ similar teaching and learning strategies the themes may be relevant to their training. Likewise, some of these areas are also potentially relevant to many teaching and learning contexts and practitioners may be able to consider implications for their practice based on the findings of this study.

Another significant limitation is that this study focused on students' perceptions and therefore the perceptions of tutors are missing. This was considered at the design stage and the decision was made to focus on one aspect of this dyad to allow sufficient depth in the analysis. Similarly, it may have been useful to have included material from students who withdrew from their training but none were available from the sample. It is hoped that future studies will address these limitations.

11.3 The findings

The intentions behind Person-Centred training

This study suggests that there are a range of possible intentions behind Person-Centred counselling training. These include: teaching theories and skillsets, personal development, indoctrinating students into the approach, developing specific student behaviours, and/or employing a protracted method of selecting those that fit the approach. Any course may hold some or all of these intentions and this list is probably not exhaustive. However, because some intentions may contradict others, holding multiple intentions can be problematic, e.g. personal development may contradict the development of specific student behaviours. For example, the development of a student's congruence may contradict the development of their abilities to be confrontational across a group if those abilities are not authentic.

The study also shows that students will bring their own intentions that might align with and/or contradict those of the course. For example, Victoria's sense that the course had not worked for her because its focus on developing students' congruence did not meet her intention to gain a therapeutic skillset. In this small sample, Victoria's intention was to develop her instrumental self, Johnny's intention was to develop his authentic self and Maggie's was to develop her transpersonal self. These intentions were also linked with students' and teachers' educational philosophies. The implications are that it would be valuable to explore the relationships between the course's various intentions and philosophies and those of the students. Open dialogue between teachers and students about the issues raised by these multiple, and potentially conflicting, intentions and philosophies could potentially increase student engagement. Ideally, these issues could be explored and evolved collaboratively. However, this study suggests that students' perceptions of safety within these relationship will have an influence on their engagement with such a dialogue.

Non-directive training

This study highlights the impact on student engagement of the paradox implicit in training students to behave in specific ways within a context that also promotes individuation. Paradoxically, because the course's interpretation of the Person-Centred approach emphasised non-directivity students were directed towards being non-directive. Some felt constrained by this approach because it contradicted the course's focus on developing their congruence. All the participants felt they had to adhere to non-directivity because it was a requirement of their skills assessments. However, because the teachers took a non-directive stance to skills feedback several participants were confused about how to be appropriately non-directive. The implication here is that some students needed direction in their skills feedback.

This also highlights the influence of the course's conceptualisation of the approach and suggests that a course's teaching practice may offer a limited conceptualisation. For example, there are ways of conceptualising the Person-Centred approach that do not focus specifically on non-directivity. This is illustrated by Ellingham and Haugh (2016) who suggest that:

Originally Rogers had titled his therapeutic approach 'non-directive therapy', but this had resulted in it being misunderstood and reductively equated with the employment of 'reflection of feelings' as a robotic technique. To counter this emphasis on technique and the overshadowing of the importance of the living presence and personal characteristics of the therapist, Rogers: (a) introduced the title 'client-centred' to stress that the therapist's focus of attention was not upon a particular technique but upon the inner world of the client; and (b) defined in specific terms those personal characteristics and attitudinal attributes he considered a requisite of therapists in order to facilitate 'therapeutic personality change': namely, empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence (2016:59)

Likewise, the course's focus on a limited conceptualisation of congruence (as challenge/confrontation) created a paradox because the course was directing students to be challenging/confrontational even when this was incongruent for an individual. The implication is that teachers could benefit from developing their reflexivity around the paradoxes inherent in directing students to be non-directive and in teaching them how to be congruent.

Interestingly, some participants developed individual ways of working that did not reflect the course's conceptualisation of the approach and this suggests that there is the potential for students to derive broader learning even if a course focuses on a limited conceptualisation and, therefore, individuation can occur within a limited training model.

This study also illustrates that training occurs within a context in which there will be implicit and/or explicit pressure to conform to professional standards and theoretical ideals. These externally imposed conditions will inevitably introduce directivity to the training and may restrict the development of students' congruence.

Difference and conditionality

Students' perceptions of being different arose as a significant theme which suggests some aspects of diversity among student groups are not fully recognised by teachers and/or peers. These were often the less visible aspects of difference such as shyness and students' educational histories. Some participants found that their individual ways of being were judged by their peers and teachers as being inappropriate and therefore, perceived themselves as being accepted conditionally. The impact of a lack of unconditional empathic acknowledgement of difference was found to be profound and potentially shaming and/or painful and could negatively affect a student's sense of self.

This was found to be a complicated issue because an individual's perception of not being fully acknowledged will arise in the interactions between their phenomenological realities and those of their teachers and peers. Two examples that illustrate the range of these processes are Victoria's accurate perception that she, and some of her peers, were being judged and offered conditional acceptance, and Johnny's sense that early in the course he was denying the ways that the tutors genuinely cared about him. While Victoria was blocked by external judgement, Johnny was blocked by his own judgements and both of these processes impacted on their learning.

A further expression of difference was in the way participants spoke of the course. Their individual perceptions and the unique ways that the course responded to each student left me feeling that I was listening to accounts of different but parallel courses. This was

also reflected in the ways that individual students responded to their tutors such that, again, I was hearing stories of different but parallel tutors. For example, one student might perceive a tutor to be offering a democratic relationship while another student might see the same offer as autocratic while others might find it abdicatory. Likewise, for some students in certain contexts abdication might be a useful method to devolve power to the group while for others it might show an unwelcome lack of responsibility on the part of the tutors.

The literature (e.g. Mearns, 1997) suggests that aspects of homogeneity *and* heterogeneity may be desirable in a training group and that this may leave students struggling to conform while also acutely aware of their individuality. The implication is that issues of difference need sensitive attention within training. Attention to issues of difference, individuation and conformity needs to include sensitivity to and active acceptance of a broad range of potential differences. It also needs an awareness of course cultures that may judge students as being insufficiently 'Person-Centred'. This is especially relevant given that individual students and courses will have their own relationships to 'being Person-Centred'.

Congruence: students' processes and course intentions

Johnny's story suggests that there is the potential for collusion between students' processes and the course's intentions in that the course can potentially reify students' existing processes rather than facilitate their developing congruence. Reification was facilitated when teachers' and students' conditional behaviour towards individual students colluded with that individual's internalised conditionality. For example, this resulted in Johnny instrumentally 'doing congruence' as a way to be acceptable rather than being congruent. Through this process students could gain cultural capital by behaving appropriately and by challenging their peers for not complying with the cultural conditions. This process seems especially potent within an educational context that inevitably involves assessment and possibly involves competition for positive regard.

An ironic outcome of this in the current study was that while the course may have intended students to develop their congruence, the focus on assessing congruence via a

particular type of student behaviour (confrontation/challenge in the group) actually facilitated the development of incongruence in some students. This formative assessment process in the group effectively acted as a set of Person-Centred conditions of worth that led some students to develop a Person-Centred self-concept. This process was a result of the course privileging congruence-as-confrontation over congruence-as-awareness-of-self-in-process. Therefore, while some students may have been behaving in 'appropriately Person-Centred' ways in the group, these were incongruent; they were doing congruence instrumentally rather than being congruent. This potential impact of this is illustrated by the way Maggie valued those of her peers who she perceived to be congruently Person-Centred rather than instrumentally and, therefore, inconsistently behaving in Person-Centred ways. As discussed previously, this study, therefore, raises a significant question for Person-Centred counselling training: is it possible to teach someone to be more themselves within an approach that promotes individuation?

This process is further complicated by the potential for students to use teachers as models of how to be appropriately Person-Centred. If students observe a teacher being confrontational across the group they might internalise this as a desirable way of being. This way of internalising teacher behaviours may be inevitable during training and the literature suggests that this can represent a developmental stage on the path towards professional individuation. However, this again highlights the issue of relying on a limited conceptualisation of congruence-as-confrontation/challenge and raises questions about how teachers might model congruence-as-awareness-of-self-in-process; how do you model an internal process? The implication is that staff teams need to comprise a wide range of individual teacher qualities so that, for example, students can experience teachers being congruently confrontational and congruently quiet.

Students' relationships with the approach

This study highlights the significance of students' relationships with the Person-Centred approach. For some, training offered an opportunity to immerse themselves in the approach as a way of being, others sought to develop an instrumental relationship with the approach as a way of working and others signed up for a counselling qualification

which happened to be Person-Centred. This again highlights the ways that students will make use of training to suit their intentions. Significantly however, several participants felt they were being indoctrinated into the approach and this finding is supported by similar arguments within the literature (e.g. Skovolt and Ronnestad, 1995; Mearns, 1997; Rowan, 2005). This raises the issue of the way a course presents its training: is it reflecting a postmodern understanding of the relationship between approaches and practice or is it presenting the approach as the truth? Because participants frequently conflated 'counselling' with 'Person-Centred counselling' this distinction seems to have been unclear on this course. The relationship between students' relationships with the approach and the relationship(s) the course had with the approach was found to have an impact on students' engagement with the training. Again, open dialogue about these issues and acceptance of a range of student relationships with the approach could facilitate learning.

This finding highlights the significance of developing the reflexive abilities of counsellors-in-training in order to raise their awareness of their evolving relationships with the role and with theory and therefore to allow them to develop a congruent relationship with their chosen approach.

This implies that students might be better served by exposure to a broad range of approaches in their early training and by developing their reflexivity within an environment which fosters individuation rather than indoctrination. Courses that focus on specific approaches may be of value later in a counsellor's development when they could make more informed decisions about an appropriate approach based on clinical experience.

The unique aspects of counselling training

Students responded idiosyncratically to some of the 'unique' aspects (Harding Davies et al., 2004b) of counselling training. Within the overall sample, participants often expressed anxiety, surprise and/or confusion about activities such as the process group because they had no reference experiences from their previous encounters with education. Combining these unique aspects with students' personal histories in education could

leave them struggling with learning how to learn in this territory that might trigger powerful memories while also being full of novel features. Again, this process will be idiosyncratic and training could be likened to a map on which students plot their own routes. The implication is that successful training involves students changing the ways that they learn in order to suit these unique aspects. Anxiety and confusion could be acknowledged more actively and some students would benefit from direct input on learning how to learn in this particular context.

Empowering the student

This study suggests that issues of student empowerment need sensitive handling that acknowledges potential differences in students' sense of personal agency in this context. While some authors (e.g. Aponte, 1994) seem to assume that students are sufficiently empowered to ask for what they need in situations in which they may feel vulnerable and/or overwhelmed, this study demonstrates that this is not always the case and that some students can struggle to find their voices.

Empowerment was discussed from the perspective of students' responses to 'throwtness' which reflected participants' reactions to finding themselves immediately immersed in an existing culture over which they had little power. However, traditional understandings of throwtness were complicated by students' choices to enter training and by their motivations for doing so.

From an analytic perspective power could be understood as a process (e.g. Speedy, 1998) linked to student empowerment. However, power was often perceived as a force exerted by the teachers and by the group through their conditionality. This could oppress aspects of students' personalities and behaviours and/or it could direct them towards specific behaviours and attitudes. Students' responses to the culture's conditions were influenced by a broad range of factors including their sense of self, their history in education, their motivation for training, their relationship with the model and their prior experiences in groups including their families of origin. Therefore, one student might perceive the course as autocratic, another might perceive it as democratic and others might feel it is

abdicator and, the same student could perceive the course in different ways in different contexts.

The implication is that while teachers might intend student empowerment, students and teachers are operating within a web of power and individual students will respond to this web and to teachers' intentions in diverse ways. This suggests that teachers may also be disempowered because while they might intend an empowering culture they cannot be responsible for individual students' relationship to that intending. This highlights the paradox inherent in the assumption that we can empower others and suggests that this is an expression of our own power.

Assessment

Assessment was a prominent theme, linked with anxiety and power, which had a negative influence on some students' engagement with learning. This was influenced by the relevance that individual students placed on various assessment strategies that included formal assessment of skills practice and written work, and implicit assessment of students' behaviour in the group. This was particularly relevant to the current study because of the Person-Centred approach's relationship with external evaluation. The implication is that the topic of assessment within Person-Centred training would benefit from open dialogue between students and teachers to help students engage more effectively with these assessment tasks. This study also highlights the significance of a consistent fit between the relationship that the theoretical approach has to assessment and the teachers' relationships with assessment.

This issue extends beyond the course because it was also linked to external forces such as professional bodies, awarding bodies and university administration. This was highlighted by the different natures of students' individual relationships with the various assessment contexts. For example, during skills assessments students were relating immediately with the individual teachers whereas with written assessments students could often seem to be relating to the course structure. The implication therefore is that the levels of coherence and consistency in all of these concentric rings of relationships will have an impact on students' experiences. However, while open dialogue within a course may

open this issue up for processing this will be located within a larger context which may not be available for dialogue and so the limitations of such a process would need to be acknowledged and worked with.

The group as a learning environment

Unsurprisingly the Person-Centred participants valued and sought out experiences of receiving therapeutic conditions within the groupwork aspects of the course. This is supported by the literature from within and outside of the approach which typically suggests that students' perceptions of their teachers' non-judgemental acceptance, empathy and respect were facilitative to learning. However, in this study, students' ongoing perceptions of the group as a learning environment were revealed to be complicated processes involving the intertwining relationships between each individual student's evolving perceptions of the group and their individual 'group imago'. These involved students' past experiences in education, in therapy, in other groups and in their families along with the implied members that each student brought with them, their individual motivations for being in the group, and the course's intentions for the group. Within these subjective processes students shared a sense of the group's culture, even if this perception was unique to each student. The implication is that working with a group in this context calls for high levels of teacher self-awareness about the potential elements of the intertwining relational processes.

This also highlights the significance of the ways teachers position themselves within the group and within the course. Are they teachers who facilitate academic learning and skills training but place a boundary between training and personal development work, or are they intrinsic parts of the group in all contexts? In this study the participants frequently spoke of the tutors as being intrinsic parts of the group who were central to the academic work and skills practice and who also facilitated the process group. However, if teachers position themselves as intrinsic members of the group in all contexts, how do they negotiate their roles in situations in which they are both teachers (and therefore, assessors) and facilitators? This study showed that blurring this boundary could lead students to feel they had to adopt appropriate behaviours within the process group

rather than being fully themselves. It is also significant that none of the participants spoke of challenging the teachers within the process group in which they felt they were required to be 'congruent'. This raises the question of whether students can ever be congruent with their teachers and also suggests that the presence of teachers in these groups may shut down a potentially valuable topic for processing: students' relationships with their teachers.

One conclusion is that if teachers include themselves in the process group, that group might then be usefully facilitated by external facilitators who have no assessment role and who could potentially open up the relationships between teachers and students for exploration. This would require high levels of availability from all the group participants including the teachers as well as clear contracting between staff and students about the roles of the external facilitators. In this setting the assessment dynamic would inevitably still be present but may be more available for processing.

Do we need groupwork?

This study raises questions about the necessity of using groups for personal development. Discussions on this theme within the literature are contradictory and inconclusive. However, Cornelius-White and Carver (2012) suggest that groups may be effective in facilitating the development of the core conditions. It is worth acknowledging that personal development may be different from developing the core conditions and it is not the intention to explore these differences here. However, the development of the core conditions would be an appropriate task within Person-Centred counselling training and the development of one of these conditions, congruence, was the principle focus of the process group in the current study. Significantly, the groups that Cornelius-White and Carver studied offered therapeutic conditions with an external facilitator while the group within the current study was perceived as conditional and directive and was facilitated by course teachers who had significant powers of assessment. The implication is unsurprising: that conditional positive regard may limit students' abilities to be fully themselves in a group. Therefore, the presence of assessors may limit students' abilities

to be fully themselves within these groups even if they are assuming a facilitative role in this context.

However, one interpretation of the contradictory findings in the literature suggests a further implication: that groupwork is valuable to some students but not to all and therefore, the suitability of mandatory groupwork can be questioned. While groups can undoubtedly offer a setting to develop congruence within a social space, the potentially painful struggle that students can experience with groups suggests that it might be beneficial to offer a range of personal development opportunities within courses (such as individual reflective spaces, meditation, and others as generated by the group) as well as groupwork.

Roles-within-roles: 'the hyphen'

This study employed the concept of 'the hyphen' (Humphrey, 2007) to explore the many elements that comprise the roles of students and teachers. This suggests that students and teachers may benefit from holding an awareness of the many elements within their roles so that, for example rather than getting lost between being a teacher or a counsellor, they might 'activate the hyphen' and embrace the complexity of being a teacher-counsellor. Raising students' and teachers' awareness of the complexity of their roles and of the dynamic interactions between these roles on an intra- and interpersonal level may be valuable in helping them to process their experiences and to hold all the various and often conflicting aspects of being a student and being a teacher.

The relationships between courses and placements

In this transitional phase from being novices to competent practitioners there is an overlap between placements and training. This study highlights the potential for tension here because students are working relatively autonomously while also being assessed. This offers another perspective on participants' suggestions that they could not wait to complete their courses so they could practise how they wanted to: could their experiences in placement be pulling them away from their training approach? This implies

that it would be beneficial if there was consistency in therapeutic approach across courses and placements. Inconsistency may lead to confusion or splitting within student processes where they might decide which approach to follow and therefore, may practise incongruently in one context. Consequently, they might dilute a learning opportunity by reducing one context to an inauthentic performance in order to comply with external evaluation.

Achieving consistency across these aspects of training is problematic within the current UK training context in which placements are separate to training courses and may therefore work with, and offer supervision from, a range of approaches. Another complicating layer of this will be that, even if they work with same theoretical approach, placements' and supervisors' conceptualisations of the approach may differ significantly from those of the course and of the students. This links back to the previous question about the usefulness of single-approach course at this stage of training.

11.4 Summary of implications for Person-Centred counselling training

Suggestions for extending teachers' reflexivity around:

- Their intentions for the training
- Their responses to individual student's learning needs, e.g. some students needed more directive skills coaching than others
- The paradoxes inherent in teaching non-directivity and congruence
- Working with aspects of difference that are hidden by the course culture
- Their understanding of the relationship between the Person-Centred approach and assessment/responsibility within an academic context
- The complexity of group processes that involve teachers as facilitators

Provide opportunities for open dialogue between teachers and students about:

- The relationships between course intentions for the teaching and students' intentions for their learning
- The layers of relationships-with-the-approach held by the course and the students
- The power dynamics inherent in training
- The assessment/responsibility dynamic within Person-Centred training
- The 'hyphens' within their roles of students and teachers

Suggestions for extending teaching and learning strategies

- Learning how to learn in a unique educational context
- Staff teams to include a diverse range of teacher personalities.

Questions about Person-Centred counselling training:

- Is single-approach training valid in the early stages of training?
- Can course tutors effectively facilitate process groups?
- Is groupwork necessary for personal development?

Areas for consideration in counselling training in the UK

- The relationship between courses' and placements' theoretical approaches and the impact these have on practitioner development.

11.5 Ideas for further research

Because of the significant impact of difference on students' perceptions of their training this area in particular would benefit from further study. This might address issues around tutors' awareness of difference and the ways that difference is acknowledged and accepted within complex group processes.

The potentially harmful impact of groupwork was also felt within this study, which suggests that research into alternative ways of facilitating personal development might be valuable. This might take the form of an action research project involving students and teachers to evolve more inclusive ways of facilitating this development.

Finally, I have a wealth of material that was generated by this study but which had to be excluded from this thesis. It would be useful to work with that material to further expand on the ideas that this thesis has generated and to present those untold stories.

11.6 What I'm taking away from this

My lasting conclusion is about the influence that our relationships with individuals and cultures have on our processes of becoming fully ourselves. I began with an unexplored understanding of counselling training as potentially existing on either end of a continuum with 'being' at one end and 'doing' at the other. To me, 'being' implied authenticity while 'doing' represented inauthenticity or, at best, an instrumental approach to practice and training. Training was either about learning how to *be* a counsellor or learning to *do* counselling. However, counselling and training have emerged as processes that inevitably involve 'being' **and** 'doing' and therefore fuller functioning as a counsellor and as a student might involve activating the hyphen and acknowledging that we are engaged in being-doing. Our being-doing occurs in relationship with others and is influenced by the conditions those relationships place on us and, reciprocally, by the conditions we place on others.

Holding Rogers' theory of personality (1959), Gendlin's (1981) concept of 'interaction first' and an understanding of congruence and autonomy as relational processes alongside Bourdieu's (1990) concepts of *illusio*, games and practices, offers me an empowering perspective on our relationships with social structures. The implication is that we seek positive regard from others and, through our interactions with our environment, can unconsciously reify the games inherent within social structures and therefore fix those structures and ourselves. However, this limits the realisation of our fullest potential and therefore limits the potential of the social structures in which we have invested. In the case of professional training some aspects of these limitations are inevitable and arguably necessary to ensure safe practice.

Some of the processes involved became clearer when I was recently teaching a certificate group. I had given the students a task of establishing a new society on a deserted island, the purpose of the task was to offer an opportunity for the students to explore the roles they took within groups. As we unpacked the students' experiences I was suddenly struck by the potential diversity of roles that could exist within any group and therefore of the diversity of cultures that we might develop if we allowed ourselves the freedom to do so. I saw these as expressions of the almost infinite range of potentialities we possess as individuals and, as the group negotiated over the shape of their culture, I also saw how

the expression of those diverse individual potentialities is socially mediated. To me, it made sense that the majority of this group of students on a Humanistic course expressed compassionate and empathic potentialities and wanted to generate a partnership culture (Eisler, 1987) typified by willingness to be with the unknowable potential and uncertain outcomes of shared relational processes. However, within this apparently open and accepting environment, some students reacted against this dialogic uncertainty and sought defined hierarchical structures with rules and punishments. Lyotard's (1984) concept of social violence seemed to loom over the group. Watching this unfold I realised that these more dominating voices were also aspects of our individual potentialities and that their expression, as with all of our potentialities, was influenced by the unfolding context and by the histories and personalities of each of the individuals within it. The cultures we engage with will bring out uniquely constellated aspects of our potentialities that will also influence the creation and re-creation of those cultures. The empowering aspect of this, for me, is that we can change ourselves and we can change our cultures but only if we reflect on our relationships with ourselves and with those cultures. In the case of professional cultures, we need to continually reflect on our place within them from the perspective of individuals-within-a-professional-culture: we can shape ourselves within the culture and we also need to allow ourselves to be shaped by it. In that way our being-doing can be both authentic and professional. Therefore, opening up these relationships for exploration through deepening our reflexivity and opening up channels for communicating about these relationships within these relationships could facilitate our development of unique and congruent ways of being-doing.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Initial recruitment email

Dear [course leader]

We haven't met but I'm a PhD student at the University of XXXXX as well as being a counsellor and supervisor. I am currently working on a research project exploring the experiences of counselling students. My specific focus is on the way they experience their relationships with their peers and teachers and the influence they feel that these relationships have on their transition to becoming qualified counsellors. The research involves students taking part in a series of 3 face-to-face, one-to-one interviews spread over the duration of their training from beginning to end. My intention is that the interview process provides the students with an opportunity for additional self-reflection and personal development.

I have attached some information sheets about the project.

I was wondering if any of your students might be interested in participating. I'd be more than happy to discuss this with you in greater detail and or come in to discuss it with your students.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, I'd be interested to hear what you think,

Regards

David Taylor-Jones

Would you like to take part in some research about counselling training?

I am carrying out a project exploring the ways that student counsellors feel their relationships with their teachers and peers might be influencing their development.

Taking part in this study involves confidential one-to-one interviews with the researcher at a convenient time and place

If you are interested and/or would like more information please contact David via email at:

D.Taylor-Jones@UEA.ac.uk

or by phone on:

07762 100402

Counsellor education: how do students feel their relationships within their courses affect their development as counsellors?

Appendix 3 Participant Information Sheet

Counsellor education: how do students feel their relationships within their courses affect their development as counsellors?

This study is a doctoral research project exploring students' experiences of counselling education. The aim is to describe the way that students have experienced their relationships with their teachers and peers and the impact that they feel these have had on their development as counsellors.

The study will take place over the duration of your training and will involve individual face-to-face research interviews. In these you will be asked to talk about your ongoing experiences of these relationships. Throughout your course you will be asked to take part in three interviews with the researcher; one early on in your course, one in the middle and one near the end. An interview schedule is attached showing typical questions that may be asked. It is expected that each interview will last approximately one and a half hours.

To support these interviews you will also be asked to:

1. Keep a regular journal to reflect on your experiences of these relationships and review this journal before each interview to refresh your memories about your ongoing experiences (if your course asks you to keep a reflective journal this will probably be sufficient). The researcher will not ask for access to these journals.
2. Complete a Strathclyde Inventory before each interview (copy attached, please bring the completed inventory to each interview).

Interviews will be recorded and the researcher will take notes for research purposes. Each interview will later be transcribed by the researcher and the participant will be invited to check the transcription to confirm that they feel it is an accurate representation of the interview. The researcher's thoughts about each interview will be brought back to the following session to discuss. All interviews will take place in private and secure rooms at times that have been agreed with the participants.

As the study involves talking about personal experiences it may bring up uncomfortable memories or feelings that may cause distress to participants. The researcher will respect

this and try to hold any such feelings during the interviews however participants may feel the need to access counselling or other emotional support outside of the study.

All data will be stored securely. Documentation will be kept in a locked cabinet, recordings of interviews will be kept on mini-disc and electronic data will be kept on a removable flash drive. Mini-discs and flash drives will be locked away and all electronic data on flash drives will be password protected. Data will be retained for five years after the end of the research project. Once data is no longer required it will be disposed of sensitively and securely. Mini-discs and flash drives will be destroyed and paperwork will be shredded.

The research findings will be used as part of a doctoral thesis and every effort will be made to anonymise participants in this work. However In some cases it may be possible to identify participants even when anonymised due to the nature of the information given. Therefore each participant will be given the opportunity to read a draft of those elements of the thesis in which they feature and to suggest any amendments that they feel are necessary. Through this process participants will be giving consent for the work to be included in the final thesis and in any research papers in which the findings may be subsequently presented. Participants may want to consider this when deciding to take part in the study.

Participants will be informed of the findings of the study.

Participation is voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without notice and without having to give a reason.

Participants' travel expenses will be reimbursed if these are to be incurred.

This proposal has been reviewed by an ethics committee.

If you are interested in participating in this research study please contact the researcher either by email, telephone or personally.

The researcher is David Taylor-Jones, who can be contacted via email at d.taylor-jones@uea.ac.uk or on 07762 100402.

Appendix 4 Participant Consent Form

Counsellor education: how do students feel their relationships within their courses affect their development as counsellors?

- ◆ I agree to take part in this research which is to explore student counsellors' experiences during their training.
- ◆ The researcher has explained to my satisfaction the purpose, principles and procedures of the study and the possible risks involved.
- ◆ I have read the information sheet and I understand fully the principles, procedures and possible risks involved.
- ◆ I am aware that I will be required to answer questions in a series of three one to one interviews.
- ◆ I understand that any confidential information will be seen only by the researcher and the research supervisor and will not be revealed to anyone else.
- ◆ I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.
- ◆ I agree that should I withdraw from the study, the data collected up to that point may be used by the researcher for the purposes described in the information sheet.

Name (please print)

Signed

Date

Appendix 5 Participant personal details

Participant Personal Details

Participant Number

Name:	
Contact Details	
Phone:	
Mobile:	
Email:	
Address:	
Gender	
Age:	
Course modality:	
Previous experience of professional training:	
Reasons for undertaking training:	
Any other comments or thoughts:	

Appendix 6 Strathclyde Inventory (SI)

STRATHCLYDE INVENTORY

Client ID _____ Male ☐ Female ☐ Age _____ Date ____/____/____ Session _____

Please read each statement below and think how often you sense it has been true for you DURING THE LAST MONTH. Then mark the box that is closest to this. There are no right or wrong answers – it is only important what is true for you individually.

	Never	Only Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	All or Most of the time
1. I have been able to be spontaneous	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
2. I have condemned myself for my attitudes or behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
3. I have tried to be what others think I should be	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
4. I have trusted my own reactions to situations	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
5. I have experienced very satisfying personal relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
6. I have felt afraid of my emotional reactions	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
7. I have looked for others for approval or disapproval	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
8. I have been aware of my own impulses, desires reactions	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
9. I have expressed myself in my own unique way	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
10. I have found myself "on guard" when relating with others	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
11. I have made choices based on my own internal sense of what is right	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
12. I have listened sensitively to myself	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
13. I have felt myself doing things that were out of my control	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
14. I have lived fully in each new moment	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
15. I have been afraid of some of my feelings	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
16. I have felt that I have to do things because they are expected of me	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

	Never	Only Occasion- ally	Some- times	Often	All or Most of the time
17. I have been confident	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
18. I have been aware of my feelings	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
19. I have felt that I am a person of worth	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
20. I have hidden some elements of myself behind a "mask"	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
21. I have taken responsibility for my choices	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
22. I have felt true to myself	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
23. I have been able to hear my own feelings	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
24. I have been able to resolve conflicts within myself	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
25. I have felt threatened by others' words or behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
26. I have felt myself doing things that are out of character for me	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
27. I have accepted my feelings	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
28. I have conformed to what others think or want	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
29. I have lived in a way which truly expresses who I am	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
30. I have been able to understand those with whom I have been in personal contact	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
31. I have felt it is alright to be the kind of person I am	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire

Appendix 7 First contact email

Hi,

It was good to meet up yesterday and thank you for putting yourself forward to take part in the research. I'm just getting in touch to make contact and to check I've got your address right so could you please send me a quick reply to confirm that you got this email. It would also help if could let me know generally when you might be available and where you are based - then we can start thinking about meeting up. As I said, the room I use is at the bottom of Lewes Road in Brighton but I'm happy to come to you if that's more convenient.

I've attached some information about the project for you to have a look at: another copy of the information sheet, a consent form and the Strathclyde Inventory. It would be helpful if you could complete the consent form and the Strathclyde Inventory before our first meeting. If you're not able to we can always do this when we meet up. Let me know if you have any problems opening the attachments and I'll resend them in another format.

Take care

David

07762 100402

Appendix 8 Second interview invitation email

Hi ,

I'm just getting in touch to see if we can get together for our second research interview sometime soon. I wanted to catch you at some point around the end of your first year but I don't want to get in the way of any essays or pressures you might currently be under at the end of the year.

I was wondering if you are free anytime over the next two weeks or so to get together. Don't worry if you'd rather delay it, just let me know and we can plan ahead.

Thanks

David

Appendix 9 Third interview invitation email

Hi ,

I'm just getting in touch to see if we can get together for our last research interview sometime soon. I can appreciate that are probably pretty busy as you get close to the end of term and as usual I don't want to get in the way of any essays or pressures you might currently be under.

Bearing that in mind I was wondering if you are free anytime over the next few weeks so that we can get together. Don't worry if you'd rather delay it, just let me know and we can plan ahead.

Thanks

David

Appendix 10 Interview Schedule

Interview 1: Start with a discussion of the project

Interview 2 & 3: Start with a summary and discussion of the previous interview

Main Topic Questions

How are you experiencing your relationships within the course?

(prompts: define these relationships, explore on the answers)

Do you feel that these relationships are having any influence on your development?

(prompts: in what ways are they, in what ways aren't they, how do you feel about that, how might it be different?)

How do you feel about your relationships with the staff?

How do you feel about your relationships with your peers?

How do you feel about your developing sense of yourself as a counsellor?

General prompts

Would you like to say more about that?

Did anything stand out in your journal about these relationships?

Debriefing space

How has this experience been for you?

What support do you have outside of this session for any issues that have come up here?

Appendix 11 Maggie, third interview extract

Participant Number

11

Interview Number

3

Date of Interview

18/06/12

Emergent themes	Line	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
Significant time period within the course; external events	I1	The Strathclyde Inventory, is there anything about that, you said you'd noticed some changes around there?]	
Experience of time period	M1	]um yeah, I mean the past... um.... I think it's the past six months in particular	Process of change over recent months <i>in the past six months in particular</i>
Quality of new experiencing	I2	Right	<u>significant time periods (what makes them significant?)</u>
Reflections on change process	M2	That there've been particular, that have been good for me[	Experience of change process <i>been good for me</i> <u>experience of change process</u>
Using theoretical concepts to understand experiencing	I3	]yeah?]	
	M3	]yeah, um..... um.... I think everything fell into place really, I mean it's not perfect if you see what I mean, but I feel so much better than I, than I feel, that I've felt last year, I mean the first year, before I started the course I didn't have a bloody clue, I didn't have a bloody clue about my past, about my issues, about my conditions of worth, I didn't have a clue about anything, I was completely in denial about everything, compete, and then um.... then in the first year of the course then all of	Experience of change process everything <i>fell into place... not perfect</i> <u>collection of factors? Quality of change</u>
			Self and self-awareness before the course <i>didn't have a bloody clue</i> <u>reflections of previous self</u>
			Theory <i>conditions of worth</i> <u>using theory to understand own process</u>

Levels of processing due to course Result of level of processing Distortion of experience	I4	this shit hit the fan and it was like oh my god processing so much and making sense of things and things like that, and then I had a period of er feeling really angry, really, really angry, feeling um... sad as well but sad for me comes out as anger so I was like angry all of the time Mm, I remember you saying that last time yeah, yeah [	Experience of first year on the course <i>processing so much</i> <u>appropriate levels of processing, designated appropriate by course culture?</u> <i>Really angry.. sad as well</i> <u>overwhelming feelings?</u> Awareness of previous process <i>sad for me comes out as anger</i> <u>distortion of experience?</u>
Facilitative factors	M4	]yes, um and um... I think it's been a mix of things, I think it's been the right time, the right amount of processing, the right support from my partner and everyone, and slight twitches to my lifestyle actually, um..... I came off the pill	Factors that influenced the positive change <i>a mix of things...</i> <u>factors that have facilitated change process</u>
External factors facilitating change	I5 M5	Oh right And um... I never realised because I was on the pill for twenty years I never realised how much it was creating a unbelievable imbalance in my hormones...	Factors that affected her experiencing <i>I came off the pill</i> <u>extra-educational factors affecting change</u>
	I6 M6	Yeah, and then in your feelings and your[]absolutely[
	I7 M9	]kind of who you are yeah, yeah[]absolutely and since I came off the pill to be honest half of that anger has gone	Change in external context affected her experiencing <i>since I came off the pill</i> <u>direct impact of extra-educational factors</u>
Relationship to previous	I8 M8	Oh wow, that's incredible isn't it? It's unbelievable, unbelievable and, and because that half of that anger, the	Relationship to change from previous process <i>it's unbelievable</i> <u>relationship to change and to experience</u>

experience due to external factors		unnecessary anger, the irrational anger has gone it gave me the time to process the anger that was still there, that it was rational, that it made sense if you see what I mean	
New experiences of self	I9 M9	I do yeah Um and also gave me the opportunity to have those spaces when I'm not angry, when I'm just like allowing myself to feel other things, so it literally has been like a godsend	Availability for new experiences <i>gave me the opportunity to have those spaces</i> <u>new experiences of self</u>
Value of new experiences	I10 M10 I11	Yeah like you're not just full of anger[]no, no[]yeah and I guess also because what you said was how you experienced anger in the past was sadness so I guess also not so much sadness	Value of change in context, her experience of being with herself has changed <i>like a godsend</i> <u>value of new experiences</u>
More accurate symbolisation of experience	M11 I12	Yeah, now it comes out, my feelings are more recognisable[]yeah	Clearer self-awareness <i>my feelings are more recognisable</i> <u>change in quality of perception of experience</u>
Differentiation of experience	M12 I13 M13	It's not just I'm not always fucked off (laughs) it's like there are times when I feel vulnerable, when I feel you know sad, when I feel this and that, you know Yeah, it's incredible isn't it? So the past six months have been like that definitely and the past couple of months I think I've had a lot of er, er.... especially	Differentiating between experiences <i>I'm not always... there are times when</i> <u>awareness of new experiences of self</u> Change process relative to time <i>so the past six months have been like that</i> <u>significance of extra-educational factors to time period</u>

Feedback on self-as-counsellor	I14	because the Strathclyde says the last month doesn't it?	
	M14	Yeah Yeah I've had quite a lot of recognition for my work as a counsellor and as a student and stuff like that, and for me it is difficult to hear half of it, I'm just always telling myself oh I'm going to be found out I'm not good enough, all that self-doubt and stuff like that, but I think all that recognition is actually kind of sinking in, and I think the past month has been particularly revelatory if you can say that to me yeah	Impact of feedback on work <i>it is difficult for me to hear half of it</i> <u>availability for positive feedback on self-as-counsellor</u>
Perception of feedback			
	I15	And do you know what's shifted, why you can suddenly hear that stuff..... 'cos it sounds like it is going in now, that[
Processing new process	M15	]yeah I, um.... I'm looking at it with my counsellor as well, part of me is still fighting that, part of me is still not letting, not hearing it completely, but there is a part of me that is really fighting and saying oh for fuck's sake [Maggie] just let go and listen to that, you know it can't be that everyone is completely wrong when they tell you that you're good and that you're doing things right	Change in process relative to feedback <i>is actually kind of sinking in</i> <u>experience of accurately perceiving positive feedback</u> How she is processing this change <i>looking at it with my counsellor as well... (as?)</i> <u>processing new experiences</u>
Relationship to changing processes			
	I16	Or that they're all lying	Internal struggle to allow positive feedback into awareness <i>part of me is really fighting...</i> <u>internal conflict between old process and new</u>

Self-concept	M16	No exactly! It's not the whole world is conspiring against you or something, so yeah uh... I think, I think interestingly enough the logic part of me is telling me that there is no need to er... to think any of that[
	I17	]yeah[
	M17	]um... I mean I can be very cognitive and very logic and very like, think like a man an awful lot of the time but when, when it comes to self-doubt and when it comes to um..... feeling uncomfortable and um er..... lack of self-esteem and stuff like that I become so irrational, and my rational part it just completely.... (sighs) erases itself, so it's just, it's like I'm completely taken by fear and anxiety and stuff like that and the rational part is not there anymore but somehow at the minute I've managed to get hold of that and go hold on, let me go back to that and.. think about it and how can it be possible	Her was of processing her experience <i>I can be very cognitive....</i> <u>Self-concept</u> Judgement <i>like a man</i>
Aspects of self			Awareness of processes <i>er... lack of self-esteem...</i> <u>self-concept</u>
Change process			Impact of processes <i>rational part... erases itself</i> <u>relationship to aspects of self</u>
			Elements of change <i>somehow at the moment I've managed...</i> <u>awareness of change process</u>
Perception of extent of change process	I18	Yeah, and you can hear the logical part	
	M18	Yeah, yeah	
	I19	It's incredible then isn't it?	
	M19	Yeah, little baby steps you know[	Relationship to change <i>little baby steps</i> <u>conceptualisation of extent change</u>
	I20	]but it sounds like massive steps[
	M20	]how long, oh yeah but how long has it	<i>How long has it been (laughs)</i> <u>relationship to pace of change</u>

Rate of change	I21 M21 I22 M22 I23 M23 I24 M24 I25	been (laughs)[](laughs)[]sometimes I go I should have been fixed already (laughs), perfect and fixed[]yeah but you do seem different[]yeah? You do seem lighter Yeah, yeah..... thank you It's alright[]yeah So what about your relationships with the other guys on the course them how have they been?	Relationship to change process <i>I should be... perfect... and fixed (by now)</i> <u>relationship to pace of change and extent of change</u>
Relationships with peers	M25 I26 M26	Oh um.... it's interesting[](chuckles)[]to remember what I was talking..... I was thinking about it the other day, if I well remember on the..... the first time you interviewed me I was talking about somebody on the course that was a gobshite	Reflecting on first interview and relationship with one peer <i>I was thinking about it the other day...</i> <u>reflections on changing relationships with peers</u>
Stages in change process with peers	I27 M27 I28 M28	Yeah Remember? Yeah[]and then I, and then I changed on the second interview, that was a time when I could see a side of her that wasn't the gobshite side of her, that I could see a	Change in relationship with this peer <i>I changed on the second interview...</i> <u>stage in process of changing relationship with peer</u>

Phases of the course	I29 M29	little bit, yeah she could connect more and[]some kind of similarities[]similarities and I started to actually like her, um that was also a part of the course where somehow, I was processing everything, and sometimes I was over-processing myself and over-doubting myself, and almost over-analysing, that's the right word, basically it was like surely everything I know is wrong and I've got to change everything	Experience of a period of time on the course <i>that was also a part of the course...</i> <u>periods of time on the course, phases or stages?</u>
Conceptualisation of previous process	I30 M30 I31 M31	Right, so everything is up for question[]yeah, everything is up[]to be analysed and processed[]exactly, exactly, and I was questioning and analysing myself sometimes on certain things that actually were just fine, just me, just the way I am, and maybe my gut feelings and my, my instinct is right, is telling me the right thing, so I don't have necessarily to thing that it is a projection of this and that, I was doing that, certainly if I don't like something it's a, somebody, it's a projection, no, sometimes you just don't like somebody, do you know what I mean?	Current perception of relationship to self at that time <i>over-processing, over-doubting, over-analysing</i> <u>perception of own previous process</u>
Self-trust			Understanding of previous level of self-analysis on the course ... <i>that actually were... just fine</i> <u>judgement of previous process of over-analysing self</u> Developing relationship with own valuing process <i>maybe my gut feeling is right...</i> <u>Relationship with organismic valuing process; self-trust?</u>

Selective valuing of aspects of self; self-conditional, - new conditions of worth	I32 M32	It's just the way it is and that's ok[]yeah and I don't think that, I don't think that I was lying to myself when I liked part of her, that I, that I enjoyed sometimes spending time with her and stuff like that, I think it was real and what I was experiencing, um but I was also going through an awful lot of ..erm.... over-analysing and over-processing and er..... and actually the one thing that I realised, especially in the last six months is that actually, my gut feeling is pretty right	Current relationship to her past process with this peer <i>I don't think that I was lying to myself...</i> <u>conceptualisation of past process, selective valuing of aspects of self</u>
Experience as evidence	I33 M33	Ok And my er..... instinct is pretty good most of the time, and actually every time I followed it, it has not um... let me down[	Trusting her reactions/valuing process? <i>My gut feeling is pretty right</i> <u>self-trust</u>
Active engagement in maintaining change	I34 M34	]yeah, yeah[]and I think it's something that I need to remind myself that actually stop over-analysing and over-processing, just listen to your guts because most of the time your guts are bloody right	Experience of her reactions <i>and actually every time I followed it</i> <u>evaluating organismic valuing process against experience</u>
Relationship with self	I35 M35	Mm, so it's about trust, isn't it really?[]it's about trusting myself yeah	Developing relationship to own reactions and valuing process <i>I need to remind myself</i> <u>actively reminding self of new process</u>
Aspects of self	I36 M36	Yeah And um,..... and as I realised that I also realised that yes there was a part of me that liked her and everything and there	Relationship to self <i>it's about trusting myself</i> <u>quality of relationship with self</u>
			Differentiating range of feelings towards this peer <i>there was a part of me.. and....</i> <u>aspects of self</u>

		<p>was also a part of me that realised that actually I was bloody right, she is still a gobshite (laughs) she's still a gobshite and she's still.... Yes it was interesting, I, I think, I think we little by little find out that there was also an awful lot of lying that she brought, there was lying was a lot things that wasn't real and um,.... and again interesting because part of my guts was going like..... this is quite not right, but this part of me, the over-analytical part of me is like oh surely, you're wrong [Maggie] and like that</p> <p>I37 Yeah, this is projection, this is your stuff, she's ok</p> <p>M37 Exactly, exactly, so now, now that I look down over the six months I realise actually no, part of me, it was ok, it could see the human part of her, the vulnerable part of her probably the vulnerable part that made her lie so much and made her you know put all that, you know, but also my guts were right you know, yeah</p> <p>I38 And you're kind of talking about her a bit in the past tense, like it's, 'cos I know last time we met you guys were getting quite close[</p> <p>M38]yeah, yeah[</p>	<p>Previously not trusting her reactions; analysing her way out of them <i>part of my guts were going like. <u>differentiating between aspects of self</u></i></p>
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Changes in group membership	I39]and it sounds like she's much further away and kind of history now	Changing context <i>she left the course</i> <u>change in group structure</u>
	M39	Yes um.... yes, in many ways because she left the course	
	I40	Oh ok	
	M40	And also because erm... something happened towards the end of the course before she left when we, when she distanced herself from pretty much everyone, and we, me, I don't know if she was finding a reason to be... distance herself, and she was bringing up arguments and something like that, it seems like there was that pattern with people, with me it was about um..... you and your anger, you're the angriest person I've ever met and blah-blah-blah, and it was, it was really interesting because it was in reaction to actually a, er.... something I said during the residential where she had shown the, probably what I would perceive as the real part of her, the vulnerable part, the scared part, the part like oh fuck am I good enough or do I have to lie and keep up a façade and stuff like that you know?[]yeah, yeah[
Aspects of others;	I41]yeah, yeah[M's process in relation to this peer's process <i>it's impossible not to get closer</i>
	M41	]and when you see that it's impossible not

conditionality?		to get closer to her, and not go I get you, I understand you[	<i>to her.... <u>Reaction to aspects of peer</u></i>
Self-concept	I42	]yeah, because there's someone vulnerable you can connect with[	Awareness of own relational process around anger <i>I'm so fucking congruent... <u>self-concept</u></i>
	M42	]exactly[
	I43	]yeah, yeah	
	M43	And er, and then, and then obviously there was the part of her that was all about gobshiting and facades and telling lies to big herself up and things like that and taking over and, and so um... and so, you know, one thing that I've got about my anger is when I'm angry I'm so fucking congruent, so there is no trying to er pussy foot around people, it's like kind of, you know[
	I44	]this is it[
	M44	]I've got nothing to lose, so I remember, it wasn't particularly angry about turning around and saying in the process groups saying um... 'cos I think she said something along the line of I er.. oh I'm sorry I've been a bit bad or crying or I've never cried so much or blah-blah-blah, what I said something like thank fuck that you come out with something like that sometimes because I find it really hard to connect with you when you've got all	

Making sense of others	façade of laughing about everything all the time and when I see your vulnerable side is when I connect and I'd love to see more of your vulnerable side and she basically took it as an attack to her defensive mechanism which is basically everything is a laugh and everything is you know, whatever, and, and so .. then I think it was the week after that she, she attacked me, literally it was an attack, the process group saying you've got a lot of anger, you're the angriest person and blah-blah-blah and literally pointing the finger and saying something in the line of you told me that the part of me that laughs is not the real part of me and blah-blah-blah and telling me I've got to change, and I said no, you're putting words in my mouth, I never said that you've got to change what I said is that I connect with you more when I see your vulnerable side and not when you're covering everything with laughter, and I said what I'm saying, and I'm saying that because I care about connecting with you, if I didn't give a shit then I wouldn't have said that, and but, she wasn't open, she couldn't[	Making sense of peer's process within the group <i>she basically took it as...</i> <u>making sense of others</u>
Relationships with others		Relationship to others <i>I care about connecting with you...</i> <u>the significance of being in relationship with others</u>

Relational contexts with peers; outside the course	I45 M45	]couldn't hear that[]it's just like I'm on the attack, and that was pretty much the time that .. mm, yeah, she apologised afterwards and she apologised very much in her way which was text messaging, and I'm not really the kind of text messaging person and I'd like to do it face to face, and I gave her the opportunity to do it face to face, I went there and I said, listen, I never go to bed with an argument, and it's nearly nine o'clock and I want to have this conversation with you before I go, I said I never meant blah-blah-blah-blah-blah, she wasn't really open and receptive to that and I think part of her wanted me to say um.... part of her wanted, wanted people say you're my friend and it's ok, I like you and stuff, and she did not hear that from me	Relationship to contact outside of the face to face <i>not really the kind of text messaging person...</i> <u>value of face to face interaction, different relational contexts?</u>
Making sense of others			Making sense of peer's process <i>and I think that part of her</i> <u>making sense of others</u>
Conceptualisation of relationships	I46 M46 I47 M47 I48	Yes Um... what she heard is like we're two different people and sometimes we're going to crash, and sometimes we're not going to like each other and that's ok And quite.. realistic[]exactly[]and adult to adult[	M's sense of relationships <i>we're not going to like each other and that's ok</i> <u>conceptualisation of relationships; acceptance</u>

	<p>M48 I49]yeah[]we're two different people and that's how it is[</p> <p>M49]and I think, and I think it's probably not what she wanted to hear</p> <p>I50 Yeah ok, she needed to hear you're alright[</p> <p>M50]you're alright, I like you, I'm still your friend and stuff like that[</p> <p>I51]yeah[</p> <p>M51]and I think it was the beginning of the end there, and towards the end there wasn't much communication and then she left[</p> <p>I52]right, right[</p> <p>M52]and she decided to leave in a way that erm... I can see, I can see why she did that perhaps, well part of me does but part of me....</p> <p>I53 It's like you're trying to understand[</p> <p>M53]well yeah she basically decided to leave and said don't contact me anymore, she came off facebook, she came off the emails um telephone numbers, she said I don't want to have any contact with anyone anymore, she disappeared and she didn't come in to say goodbye and she left a letter for [Lead Tutor] to read and</p>	<p>Making sense of peer <i>it's probably not what she wanted to hear</i> <u>making sense of peer's reaction</u></p>
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Aspects of self	I54	stuff Oh wow, right, so how was that for you then?	Reaction to this peer leaving the course .. <i>part of me... didn't give a shit...</i> <u>tuning into aspects of self</u>
	M54	..... I think part of me was, you know what, I didn't like her that much so I didn't give a shit much yeah?]
	I55	]yeah, I was going to say kind of a little bit of relief or something[
	M55	]a little bit of relief[
Impact of individual on group context	I56]yeah?]	Change in environment at college after M left <i>the atmosphere... was a lot better without her</i> One peer's impact on the context <u>significance of individual to group context</u>
	M56	]because I think the process groups and the atmosphere at university was a lot better without her
	I57	Yeah sure ok[
	M57	]a lot better, because she was creating I think a situation where she was getting really close to people and telling people stories but don't tell anyone, keep it for yourself and whatever, and people started to feel uncomfortable and um.. and also starting to question is it real?
	I58	Yeah	
	M58	All she's telling me[
	I59]yeah[
	M59]or is it a lie? And I think what I understood towards the end is that people were giving a lot and not receiving anything back, and that there was all	

Impact of individual peer on group	I60	these loyalty things, I tell you something but don't tell anyone, and, and that feeling that they had themselves going, I think it's bullshit, it's not real um...	
	M60	So she was having huge influence on the group and on your and everyone else's experience together[]yeah because obviously you could see how some people were uncomfortable where she was taking over the process group and talking, and some people didn't have much to do with her where, oh yeah I'm listening to you and I'm believing you and whatever, whatever and there were some people who were looking down and going it's bullshit[	Different experiences within the group <i>some people were uncomfortable.....</i> <u>impact of peer's reactions in the group</u>
Aspects of self	I61	]yeah[
	M61	]whatever, things like that, and I think it, yeah..... yeah... so um yeah, part of me was relieved and part of me also, the part that saw her vulnerable side was thinking, god has she had a shit life... Yeah....	Reaction to peer leaving <i>part of me was relieved and....</i> <u>aspects of self</u>
Ideology?	I62	And, and she strikes me as somebody who's very lonely, and I don't wish that on anybody if you see what I mean, and sometimes I think I wonder how she's doing[	Compassion for people <i>I don't wish that on anybody</i> <u>relationship to humanity?</u>
	M62		

	I63	]absolutely, kind of compassion, sadness or whatever[
	M63	]yeah and in many ways because I know that she hasn't got many people around and you can't just snap out of the shit that you're in just like that, somehow a part of me wishes that she's gone back into completely, er... denial...	
	I64	Oh yeah, yeah[
	M64	]I know it's difficult after you do the work that you do but if that was what she needs	
	I65	Just to go back into that place[
	M65	]yeah[
	I66	]where she's safe again[
	M66	]yes[
	I67	]so you really care, you know for all of it, you really care about how she is and how her life is[
	M67	]yeah, yeah, in many ways I did, and part of me also, when she left, and a couple of um.... process groups afterwards people were talking about her all the whole process group, and I was like oh for fucks sake when she was here she was taking over, now she's not here she's taking over still, so what's ...	
	I68	Yeah, can we just move on, leave her	Residual impact of peer on the group after they left <i>now she's not here and... <u>residual impact on group process</u></i>

Relationship with individual peer	M68	behind, yeah, yeah[<p>Volume of experiences with peers <i>a lot of things happened</i> <u>qualities of relationship with individual peer</u></p> <p>Connection with individual peer <i>I love to bits</i> <u>relationship with individual peer</u></p> <p>Qualities of peer <i>spiritual and chilled out</i> <u>qualities of peer she values</u></p> <p>Influence of peer <i>gives me permission</i> <u>influence of peer, allowing peer to influence her, openness to peer's influence?</u></p> <p>Process around this influence <i>a bit uncomfortable</i> <u>reaction to peer's influence</u></p> <p>Qualities of peer <i>so different and so similar</i> <u>qualities of peer relative to self</u></p>
	I69	]exactly..... and a lot of things happened,
	M69	um... um.... in terms of peers yeah?	
Influence of others; openness to influence from specific others		Mm[
		]I got very close to..... I got very close
		to.... a guy in particular that I love to	
Differences	I70	bits.... He's the chilled out spiritual part of me that I deny, I'm not very chilled out, I'm not very spiritual but.... he's spiritual and chilled out, I like spending time with him but it's kind of, I don't know, gives me permission like, to let that bit coming out, Yeah 'cos it sounds like you have got that bit in, and being around him can give you permission, can give you permission to feel that and be with that	
	M70	Yeah, yeah,	
	I71	But it looks a bit uncomfortable, a bit sort of..	
	M71	Yeah	
	I72	Can I let that happen?	
	M72	Yeah exactly ... it's um..... I mean somebody so difference, so different and so similar in many ways, I mean so different because he ah.... he's looking at spiritual counselling, he runs a church, not a Christian church, like a Unitarian church and stuff like that, that's a lot of work	

Relationships outside the course; home context?	I73	there, um.... and it's so not me and at the same time there is a part of me that would like to be a bit like that	Differences with peer <i>it's so not me...</i> <u>extent of difference</u>
	M73	Yeah, I can see that So it's nice to be around him, it's nice, it's like, sometimes my logic part takes over and it's like fuck off, but...	Experience of being around peer <i>it's nice, it's like...</i> <u>experience of being with peer</u>
	I74	But there's a bit of you that he kind of ignites a bit[
	M74	]yeah I like to listen to all that stuff and to think about it, because also my partner is exactly like me and is oh whatever	Influence of external context, what she previously chose <i>my partner is a bit like me</i> <u>influence of difference and influence of extra-curricular relationships?</u>
	I75	So there's no room for that in...[
Individual relationships and aspects of self	M75	]well sometimes we do have conversations and stuff like that but he isn't, I think he's more set in his own ways to the point that um.... he's less malleable with change and stuff like that	Influence of partner on potential change process <i>less malleable to change</i> <u>influence of extra-curricular relationships/context</u>
	I76	Ok yeah	
	M76	But, but, but being with somebody who is very open to change and very open to a lot of different ideas and stuff like that brings out of me that part that is interested in it but instead is quite oh let me see that and let me see how it feels and...	Influence of peer on M's process <i>being with someone ... brings out of me (latent aspects of self?)</i> <u>influence of peer on availability of latent aspects of self?</u>
	I77	Yeah kind of exploring different ways of feeling and different parts[

<p>Different contexts within the course</p> <p>Relationships between peers</p> <p>Dynamics within sub-groups</p>	M77]yeah[<p>Connection with another peer <i>there is another guy...</i> <u>relationship with individual peer</u></p> <p>Shared contexts within the course <i>we're in the same...</i> <u>different contexts within the course</u></p> <p>Relationships on the course <i>and they are a couple...</i> <u>relationships between peers within the group</u></p> <p>Reaction to exclusive relationships within the course <i>I felt a twonk of jealousy</i> <u>reaction to relationships between peers within the group</u></p>
	I78	] of you and change and things, yeah[
	M78	]yeah, and then there was a.... .there is a..... um there is another guy as well that for a long period of time I felt really safe and comfortable and really close with um... and um, and he felt very similarly to me, we did quite a lot of things together, we're in the same assessment groups and counselling group and things like that, and I still feel very, very close to him although recently what's happened is he actually got together with one other person on the course and they are a couple, ...
	I79	Ok	
	M79	And, and I don't know, I don't know, I felt a twonk of jealousy there for some reason, and I don't know if it's about, I understand and totally accept that he is spending a lot more time with her now	
	I80	Ok	
	M80	Er.... And I think that there was a.... an intimacy that now I don't feel too comfortable continuing to embrace with him knowing that his partners on the course and might have a feeling a bit uncomfortable about... you know certain[
	I81	]yeah, so it's kind of looking after her or

Change in sub-group dynamics		something or.... Because you don't feel comfortable about being that intimate knowing she's around and she might feel uncomfortable....	Process around these intertwining relationships <i>analysing it</i> <u>making sense of others</u>
	M81	Yeah, er yeah.....um...	
	I82	'cos it also sounds like you're analysing it [Maggie]	
	M82	Am I? am I analysing it? yes	
	I83	You are aren't you?	
	M83	Yeah	
	I84	Because actually what you're aware of, I heard, was I'm feeling a bit jealous and I'm not quite sure why so I'm trying to work it out	
	M84	Jealous ;'cos I think we used to er..... this guy I just talked about, the spiritual guy and him, we used to be kind of the three for a while	
	I85	Right	
	M85	And we always used to sit together because it was a safe space[
Value of sub-group	I86]yeah, yeah[Being in a sub-group .. <i>we used to be...</i> <u>loss of valuable sub-group</u>
	M86	]and uh... we used to hug each other and I was in the middle and it was the sandwich of love, and we used to laugh and say oh come on, sandwich of love, every time that there was something that was a little bit like oh god, you know, a bit harsh[
			Experience in sub-group, illustrating other experiences in whole group <i>it was a safe space</i> <u>value of sub-group</u>
			Qualities of sub-group .. <i>the sandwich of love...</i> <u>qualities of sub-group</u>
			Experiences on the course <i>something that was a little bit...</i> <u>harsh potential experiences within course/group</u>

Potential experiences within course	I87 M87	]you'd have the sandwich of love, yeah[]sandwich of love, and the jealousy somehow of, the fact that part of me doesn't feel comfortable anymore doing the sandwich of love knowing the girlfriend is there[	Reaction to change in sub-group <i>and the jealousy...</i> <u>change within sub-group</u>
Aspects of others and relationships with others	I88 M88	]yeah[]kind of hold on a minute...um..... so it feels like a little bit of him has been taken away from me, and that[	Loss of aspect of peer from sub-group <i>a little bit of him has been taken away from me</i> <u>loss of aspect of peer from sub-group affecting experience in sub-group</u>
Relationship with sub-group	I89 M89 I90 M90	]like you've lost something[]eh?[]you've lost something[]yeah, yeah..... and it's interesting because I think the other guy on the course, the spiritual guy, 'cos I'm not using names isn't?[	Shared experience with other member of sub-group <i>and it's interesting because I think... feels like that as well</i> <u>relationship within sub-group</u>
Quality of sub-group	I91 M91 I92 M92 I93 M93 I94 M94 I95 M95	]yeah[]um so he feels like that as well Does he? He feels like that as well, like oh Yeah so you've both lost[]yeah, it feels like, like an open sandwich now (laughs)[]yeah (laughs)[]not a closed one anymore It's not quite so containing then is it? Yeah, yes	Need for a containing sub-group within the whole group ... <i>like an open sandwich now</i> <u>loss of containing quality of sub-group</u>

Own process in relationships	I96 M96 I97 M97	It can spill out Yeah, but, yeah.... Um..... So those relationships have still been really important haven't they? Yes, it's interesting because, I'm not, I'm not one easy to connect to people, ok let's rephrase that, I'm one easy to connect on the surface straight away, like I'm not uncomfortable, I'm not the one aloof in the corner that doesn't talk much or whatever, I'm like kind of like I can be, I can be turning like the soul of the group straight away, I'm comfortable with people around people but when it comes to er.... being intimate and connecting closely	Self-concept, understanding of self in relationships? <i>I'm not one easy to connect people... straight away</i> <u>sense of own process in relationships</u> Process of accurately describing self
Qualities of valuable relationships, conditionality?	I98 M98	Mm And bonding, I'm not, not easy, it's not easy for me, ...er so relationship, relationships for me are ... a risk, because you've got to trust people, and there is for me part of me that doesn't trust, and that says I'm going to safer, I'm going to be better by myself	Qualities of deeper relationships <i>intimate and connecting closely... and bonding</i> <u>qualities of valuable relationships</u>
Self in relationships			Experiences of entering relationships <i>is not easy for me.. a risk for me</i> <u>experiences of entering relationships</u>
Amounts of self	I99 M99 I100	Sure yeah And so I give up to a certain point but I don't... yeah? Yeah, I, I really get how you can feel the	Sense of self as alone <i>I'm going to be better by myself</i> <u>self in the world, self-concept?</u> Limits in relationships <i>I give up to a certain point</i> <u>extent of self given in relationships</u>

Significance of valued relationships within course context	M100 I101 M101	loss of someone you've had that closeness and intimacy with then because it isn't easy is it? it's something that you have to feel really safe about and it's []yeah[]it's a big thing isn't it? Yeah, definitely,.... Definitely, um..... I still think that at the end of the course he's one of the guys that I'm going to keep in contact with anyway, yeah, and I do like her as well, it's never been someone that I thought I would necessarily keep in contact with and I'd still see, but I do, I do like her[]this is ... the girlfriend[]his girlfriend yes, I do like her yeah so.... You'll probably keep in touch[]yeah absolutely, and um... the group! Mm That's still something that mmm, it's something that kind of ooh, I feel like a bit, flipping, every time I hear like my relationship with the group, I don't know I just find it a bit wanky (laughs)[]yeah (laughs)[]oh god is that? []it's right, don't worry[]yeah it's that I'm not comfortable with	Value and impact of these specific relationships <i>the loss of them</i> Connections beyond the end of the course <i>at the end of the course he's one of the guys....</i> <u>Significance of valued relationships on the course</u>
Relationship to group	I102 M102 I103 M103 I104 M104		<i>... the group! Emphasis</i> <u>relationship to the group</u>
Other's relationship to group			Relationship with the group <i>I feel a bit like flipping every time I hear...</i> <u>relationship to the concept of 'group'</u> Conceptualisation of the relationship with the group <i>find it a bit wanky...</i> <u>reaction to others expression of the concept of 'group'</u>
Relationship to group as a concept	I105 M105 I106 M106		Relationship with groups <i>I'm not comfortable with like group units...</i>

in life		units, like family units, group units	<u>relationships with groups in life</u>
Elements of others' conceptualisation of group	I107	Yeah[Experiences of shared experiences? <i>We're all the same...</i> <u>reaction to group ideology</u>
	M107	]ahm... you know where kind of, that kind of feeling of we're all together for one reason, we're all the same or you know that kind of..... oh please...um[
	I108	]so does that mean that you tend to see the group as the people in it rather than as a group, that you have a relationship with the individuals[
Her conceptualisation of group Definition of group	M108]yeah[Conceptualisation of the group <i>relationships with individuals</i> <u>own conceptualisation of 'group'</u> Experience of the group <i>the group for me is a question of atmosphere...</i> <u>definition of 'group'</u> Impact of individuals together <i>individual people, individuality creating an atmosphere</i> <u>definition of relationships with collections of individuals</u>
	I109	]in different ways[
	M109	]yeah
	I110	But not with the thing	
	M110	No, yeah, the group for me is a question of atmosphere, but atmosphere is about individual people with their individuality putting in their energy and creating an atmosphere	
	I111	Yeah, mm	
	M111	Yeah?	
	I112	Yeah	
	M112	That for me is the group, the fact that for some people there is some sort of connections or some transcendental thing or even worse feeling like a family unit or whatever, it makes me feel a little bit sick[
	I113	]yeah, yeah, it actually doesn't fit, well it's
			Reaction to peer's conceptualisation of the group <i>some people... some sort of... transcendental thing</i> <u>other's conceptualisation of group</u>

Group as a myth	M117 I118	](laughs)[]it's that kind of sense of how the group, the family, it's like it's a fabrication, a kind of it isn't real, it's something we make, a bit of a façade, it's a bit..	Group as a myth? <i>A fabrication, everyone else has been fooled by this?</i> <u>Own conceptualisation of 'group' as a myth</u>
	M118 I119	Yeah[]it's not, actually the real thing is the people, the individuals[
	M119 I120	]yeah[]this wonderful family thing is all a bit of a scam, yeah?	
Relationship to others who 'do' groups	M120	Yeah, I think like that, I think very much like that, and that's where for example with my partner we had the massive arguments, I mean part of me needs to learn to, that certain things are better kept for yourself[	Process of learning how to be in a couple (a type of group?) <i>having to learn how to be with people who do families and groups</i> <u>relationship to people who 'do groups'</u>
Relationship to groups	I121 M121	]right (laughs)[]especially when you don't like part of his family and you openly say that it's better kept for yourself, but I think again he's like, it's my family, it's my family, I said my family to take then piss, but he said oh it's my family and I said yeah but your family's made of individuals and some of the individuals are twats and arh![	Relating to other people's groups <i>seeing the parts rather than the whole</i> <u>relationship to 'group'</u>
Relationship to individuals within a 'group'	I122	]and, and what I'm, what I'm getting is you've got two different um... views on	Seeing individuals rather than a group <i>some of the individuals are twats and need to be seen as such?</i> <u>Relationships to individuals within a 'group'</u>

Influence of concept of group on individuals		the family and how, how differently that can be heard because I guess if you say I don't like a member of your family and if someone sees the family as a unit then it's like you're saying I don't like the family, but actually what you're saying is no, I just don't like that one person	How others connect individuals into a group, an expression against one is an expression against the group <i>individuals concealed by the group?</i> <u>Influence of 'group' on responsibility/visibility of individuals</u>
	M122	Mm	
	I123	I'm not saying I don't like the family because I don't really know what the family is	
	M123	Yeah	
	I124	The family is just a group of people[
	M124	]yeah, yeah[
	I125	]I don't like that person
	M125	Yeah	
	I126	And you can say that and mean it without meaning anything else[
	M126	]yeah[
	I127	]but how hard to hear that when actually the other person experiences the group as a group[
	M127	]exactly[
	I128	]it's like you're not attacking that one person, you're saying I don't like the group[
	M128]yeah[
	I129]something like that?	

Aspects of concept of group	M129	Something like that, also I think for me the concept of family is a concept of repression	Conceptualisation of family <i>a concept of repression</i> <u>aspect of group; power over individuals</u>
	I130	Right, yeah	
	M130	Sometimes it feels like when you say family there is something to do with duty, there is something to do with sticking with people that if you met outside of the family you would not want to spend two fucking seconds with because they are awful, you know	Elements of family as a force <i>duty, sticking with people that... would not want to spend two fucking seconds with them</i> <u>aspect of group; responsibility</u>
	I131	Like you said, they're a bit of a twat[
	M131	]exactly[
	I132	]and I've got to stick with them because of some sense of family[
	M132	]exactly[
	I133	]or duty[
	M133	]exactly, and I mean when you love somebody to bits and you understand that they want to be with somebody, like for example you, you love your mum to bits and your mum really wished you get on with your brother but you don't get on with your brother, you kind of make an effort if you see what I mean, you try because somebody else's sense of family is that they hold people together[	Relationships with individuals within a group <i>understanding individuals</i> <u>significance of relationship with individuals rather than a group</u>
Significance of relationships with individuals			
Aspects of group culture	I134	]yes, because it matters to the person you	Groups as holding and therefore repressive forces <i>somebody else's sense is that they hold people together</i> <u>different perspectives on group influence; holding vs constraining?</u>

Group as a con	M134	care about	
	I135	Yes	
	M135	Yeah	
Significance of individuals		..... but I think sometimes people are fooling themselves by thinking oh it's family so I need to stick and love everyone whatever, because at the end of the day I think it's all about individual people[	Family or group as a con? <i>People are fooling themselves</i> <u>relationship with stereotypical conceptualisation of 'group'</u>
	I136	]yeah[	Groups as a way of excusing or denying individuality <i>at the end of the day it's all about individual people</i> <u>significance of individuals</u>
	M136	]it's all about how you connect and how you relate to individual people	Significant relationships <i>about how you connect with individual people</i> <u>significant aspects of relating with individuals</u>
Individual responsibility and visibility	I137	Ok	
	M137	And that's what you make out of it, do you know[	Individual responsibility and visibility? <i>What you make of it</i> <u>individual responsibility with other individuals</u>
	I138	]yeah, so um.... you know if you just, 'cos I think the family bit is interesting and adds another layer, and what I'm thinking about then is the group, so if you think about the group, then it's like, well I will connect with this group if I like the people in it and if they mean something to me and if I care about them, then I will connect with the group as a group of people who I care about[
	M138	]yeah[
	I139	]but don't expect me to connect with it because it's the group, like[
	M139	]exactly[	The group as a group of individuals not as a thing in itself

Group as non-existent	I140]some holy thing[A group is not a thing with <i>its own entity</i> <u>the group as non-existent</u>
	M140	]some, yeah[
	I141	]like I should because it's a group[
	M141	]yeah[
	I142	]no it's not[
	M142	]yeah it's like it's got its own entity[
	I143	]yeah, the people will have to mean something, and it's the same with the family, don't expect me to connect with the family because its family, but if there's somebody in there I care about[
	M143	]yeah[
	I144	]and if I care then I'll get into it that way[
	M144	]yes[
Impact of culture around group	I145]but I won't just get into it because it's family[Relationship to concept of the group as an thing
	M145	]yes[
	I146	]or because it's group[
	M146	]yeah[
	I147	]ok[
	M147	]that, that puts it perfectly, and I think what irritates me sometimes is, is this concept, that an awful lot of people have got, especially people with big families, interestingly enough have got that kind of group whatever[
	I148	]yeah[
	M148	]um.... ..
			Reaction to other people's conceptualisation of groups <i>what irritates me sometimes is this concept....</i> <u>reaction to enforcement of the culture of 'the group'</u>

Experiences in 'groups'	I149	So do you not get much of a sense of the group?..... you know, do you, for instance when you're sitting at uni, is it, was it more a case of I have a sense of all the people I'm sitting with rather than I'm sitting with a group..... does that, am I, does that make any sense?..... when I say that	
	M149	I get a sense of people[	Experience of being with a collection of individuals <i>I get a sense of people</i>
	I150	]of people yeah, yeah...	<u>experiences of being with collections of people</u>
Significance of knowledge of others to ways of relating	M150	I get a sense of people because um..... like for example.... I'm somebody that can go on a stage and talk to thousands of strangers in front of me, I've got that, that shitface to do that yeah?	Sense of self <i>I'm somebody that can.. thousands of strangers</i> <u>significance of relationships with others to ways of relating to others</u>
	I151	Yeah	
	M151	And so what it makes it easier is that there is nobody in the thousands of people that stands out that I'm talking to, I'm talking to something and I don't know what	Relationship to large collections of unknown people <i>nobody that stands out that I know</i> <u>significance of knowledge of others</u>
	I152	Something	
	M152	Yeah, when you are talking to the group at university when you do know everyone individually, yeah?	Relationship to a collection of individuals who she knows <i>a group of people that I know individually</i> <u>impact of knowing individuals within a collection</u>
	I153	Yeah	
	M153	Part of me always thinks oh I want to say something, but I say actually I want to say	

Impact of others on M's ability to relate deeply with people she values		something to the people I like, not to all of them, and it irritates that that person is sitting there, I don't want to talk to that, I don't want him to listen or I don't want her, do you see what I mean?	What she talks to when she addresses the group, struggle to address individuals within a group context <i>I want to say something to the people I like</i> <u>who she wants to communicate with, group as chaf?</u>
Perspective on groups	I154	I do yeah	
	M154	It's like kind of, so for me it's still very individual people	Relationship to individuals obscured by 'the group' <i>it's still very individual people</i> <u>her perspective on a collection of people</u>
	I155	Yes, and I guess the reason why it's interesting, the reason why I'm hearing this is because a lot of people I talk to, I get a sense that when they sit with the group they see a group, you know, a group, it's like I'm frightened of the group or the group doesn't feel safe, like they always talk about the group as a thing and I don't get such a sense of the people, but with, with you I'm getting more of a feeling of you sitting in a room with a load of individuals	
	M155	Yeah	
	I156	Who just happen to be doing the same thing, and, and that sense of well don't make it a group, don't impose group on it because it is just a group of individuals and they'll do their thing and have their environment, their atmosphere	
	M156	Yeah	

The ending of what?	I157 M157	Yeah And I think that's why, for me that's maybe why it's easier to approach the ending	Impact of relationship with 'the group' on M's experience of the ending <i>that's why it's easier to approach the ending....</i> <u>Influence of perspective on 'the group'</u>
Peers' experiences of the ending	I158 M158	Ok Because I think those ones that perceive the group as an entity, I think, I think they find it difficult because that group will not exist anymore	If the group does not exist it cannot end <i>those ones that perceive the group...</i> <u>different experiences of the ending</u>
Relationships with individuals	I159 M159	Yes exactly Where for me there is nothing that is ending in, in many ways because it's this question of choice, and if my choice is that I keep in contact with three, four, five people that I like, that is my choice and I will do it so there is no ending	The ending <i>for me there is nothing that is ending</i> <u>impact of the group as non-existent</u>
	I160 M160 I161	Yes, yeah, yeah.... Um[]so is, so does that mean that you don't get a sense of, at some point, I might sit back on the sofa and think actually I miss seeing all those people together?	On-going relationships with individuals <i>my choice that I keep in contact with...</i> <u>consistency of relationships with individuals</u>
Significance of being with people; what they create together as individuals	M161 I162	I think what I will miss is.. erm..... the space that you get to sit down and if you wish to talk about what's going on for you, because I think it's a privilege to have that Yeah	The value is in the space not 'the group' <i>I will miss... the space(?)</i> <u>the environment created by the individuals and the culture</u>

Value of peers	M162	It's a real privilege um.... because not often in life you can sit down and say oh I'll take over and talk about myself, yeah?	Experience of this space <i>it's a real privilege um... because...</i> <u>significance of this environment</u>
	I163	Yeah, and have all these people listening and offering you something	
	M163	And offering something exactly, um.... but I can still have it with individual people	What peers have offered her <i>offering something (valuable)...</i> <u>value of peers</u> The future <i>I can still have it with individual people</i> <u>future with individual</u>
	I164	Yeah	<u>peers</u>
Her own group	M164	Um.... and I can still, if I want, to create my ideal group, which is the five[	Her ideal group, so a group can exist if she chooses it? <i>I can create my ideal group</i> <u>her group can exist?</u>
Constituents of her own group	I165	]the five people[	Those in the group she values <i>four, five people I really like, selection</i> <u>people</u>
	M165	]four, five people that I really like[	<u>she can see as individuals</u>
	I166	]absolutely[
	M166	]do you know what I mean?[
	I167	]yeah[
	M167	]yeah?	
	I168	And that, 'cos I've heard an echo then of what you said about actually if I want to say something I want to say it to those people, and I'm a bit pissed off that there's someone there that I don't want to hear it[	Impact of the presence of those she does not value in the group <i>a bit pissed off</i> <u>the group as chaff</u>
Communication with collections of people; conditionality	M168	]when I talk I don't talk to the group I talk to some individuals	Her communications with the group <i>I talk to some individuals</i> <u>the way she communicates in this context</u>
	I169	Yeah	
	M169	That I care for, and the others might be there, might not be there, and actually interestingly enough, I often notice that	<i>Others might be there, might not be there...</i> <u>relationship with others in the collection of individuals</u>

Openness only to those of value		when ... somebody responds to something that I said during process group, somebody I care for and I really like, I really take that on board, but somebody else is saying something I.....	What she hears in the group and who she hears it from ... <i>somebody I care for</i> <u>who she is open to hearing in the collection</u>
	I170	You don't hear it[
	M170	]no, I don't so..	<i>[from others] I don't hear it</i> <u>closedeness to others in the collection</u>
	I171	Yeah so it's like you really are in relationship with those, the others become almost like wallpaper[	The position of those she doesn't care about in her perception in the group
	M171	](laughs) a little bit[
	I172	]yeah[
Qualities of material she is open to	M172	]yeah, yeah, yeah, and then again sometimes all the people I don't particularly care for come out with something quite strong like that and I feel there is a connection, and.....	What she can hear from 'the others' <i>something quite strong... a connection</i> <u>qualities of material she can hear</u>
	I173	So I can hear something when they say something[
	M173	[yeah, yeah[
	I174	]that touches me I can hear them	
	M174	Yeah.....mm.....	
	I175	So what sort of influence do you think it's been with those individuals, has this had on you over the last two years, how do you think[
	M175	]what like all of them?	
	I176	Everyone?	

Peers' relationships with the model	M176 I177	Yeah Just that sense of all of them around you, or you know, however you understand it, do you feel the ones you like have had more influence?.....	Peers' relationships with the model <i>as having embraced the counselling concept</i> <u>peers' relationships with the model</u>
	M177	.....um..... ..... ..... .....I think..... The one that I like, I mean there are people that I like that are not necessarily like that, but there are those that I feel particularly close to, and those that I experience as being, as having embraced the counselling concept, and the person-centred concept, in life as well as at work	
Being the model or doing the model	I178 M178	Ok So, when I'm sitting in the process group and some of the people that, that I like or I might not like, if you see what I mean, .. respond to me in a person-centred way, I know when they are bullshitting, not bullshitting but I know when they're saying it because it's a process group and they're supposed to be person-centred... or because the tutors are there or whatever and it ... or, or if it's real, it's the	
Influence of model on peers' behaviour			Relationship to the model <i>respond to me in a person-centred way</i> <u>self and the model</u> Quality of relationship to the model <i>I know when they are bullshitting</i> <u>insight onto others process around the model and the course</u> Course culture/requirements <i>process group... they're supposed to be</i> <u>person-centred influence of model on behaviour on the course</u>

Significance of consistency in peers' expression of the model	I179	way they are Yeah almost like if it's genuine or just performance	<i>Peers' consistency but... outside of the process group..... <u>aspects or relationship to model</u></i>
	M179	Yes	
	I180	Yeah	
	M180	And I think there are some people that are, and I don't knock them for that, absolutely not, that's the way they are, um.... but that, that if I talk to them outside of the process group and I said something they'd be like oh whatever,	
Sensitivity to peers' relationship with the model	I181	Yeah	<i>Peers' genuine relationship with the model? <i>Blah, blah, blah, performance peers doing or being the model</i></i>
	M181	Instead of going oh I hear you and blah-blah-blah, and go like oh, performance yeah?	
	I182	Yeah	
	M182	Whereas those I feel more comfortable and safe around and the trust more are those ones that have got a... consistency of where they are outside of university and at university, and[
Different relational contexts within the course	I183]yeah like at coffee break or outside they're going to be the same[<i>M's reaction to peer's relationship with the model <i>more comfortable, safe, trust <u>sensitivity to peers' relationships with the model</u></i></i>
	M183	]yeah they're going to be the same and I know I'm going to have the same answer
	I184	Yeah	
	M184	And I'm going to have the same reaction[
Consistency from peers	I185]yeah	<i>Different contexts <i>outside of university, at university <u>different relational contexts</u></i></i>
			<i>Significance of peer's consistent expression of the model in different contexts <i>they're going to be the same... get the same answer <u>need for consistency from peers</u></i></i>
			<i>Sense of security? <i>I'm going to have the same reaction <u>impact of consistency</u></i></i>

Relationship to model	M185	Those are the people that I, I feel comfortable with, and I think that if I learned anything it's that.... I like that and I want to be like that, I don't want to be putting up a performance for somebody, or being person-centred based on what I think is person-centred or whatever um[Relationship to the model and desirable personal qualities in self and others <i>I like that and I want to be like that <u>aspirational qualities from the model</u></i>
	I186	]yeah but the actual values and expression of them are really important to you and that kind of, that, having that as a philosophy or a way of relating, a way of being consistently
	M186 I187	Yeah That's what matters to you and that's what you've learnt from being in that	
Peers' different relationships with the model	M187	Yeah, and I think some people have and some people don't	Peers' different relationships with the model <i>some people don't... <u>peers' individual relationships with the model</u></i>
	I188	Yeah absolutely...	
	M188	Um.....	
	I189	And I'm not going to judge those who don't but I feel more comfortable[
	M189	]comfortable yes[
	I190	]and that's where I want to be, that's how I want to be, I don't just want to be turning it on for a performance
	M190	Yeah	
	I191	Just for therapy or just for a career	

Relationship of self to model	M191	Yeah and don't get me wrong, I'm first myself I'm a person-centred and there are plenty of times I'm not person-centred, I'm like completely opposite that	Reality of expression of the model? <u>Being and doing the model</u>
	I192	Yeah	Sense of own inconsistency around the model <i>I'm first myself...</i> <u>relationship to self and to model</u>
Transparency, being self not doing the model	M192	Um.... but I think that people have been able to see that as well, I have not hidden that	Significance of transparency <i>people have been able to see that as well...</i> <u>significance of transparency over adherence to model?</u>
	I193	Yes, yes	
	M193	Um... so what I show is what I am, what you get is[
	I194	]yeah[
	M194	]yeah
	I195	So even if it's in the group I'm still being all of me and er.. a developing part of that is my person-centred values and the way I express those, yeah	
	M195	Yeah	

Appendix 12 Maggie, descriptive case study extract

The third interview

Maggie began by reflecting on how the last six months had been particularly good for her. She felt that her self-awareness and understanding of her process had increased dramatically and she was in a much better place than she had been the previous year. This had come about through timing, having the right support from her partner and everyone, and some adjustments to her lifestyle. She had come to realise that there was so much more to her than she had acknowledged before.

Maggie had been getting a lot of recognition for her work as a counsellor and a student and it was 'difficult to hear half of it' although it was slowly sinking in. She was exploring this with her counsellor and was very aware of her process and of how to be with it. While these felt like 'baby steps' they also seemed very significant.

Reflecting on her relationships with her peers and the one who she had described as a 'gobshite' in the first interview, and how she had connected with another side of that woman, by the time we did the second interview when she had seen similarities with this woman. It was a time when Maggie had been really questioning herself and looking at the projections she might be putting on others and also how sometimes 'you just don't like somebody'. Maggie felt she had been doing a lot of over-processing and not trusting herself, but over the previous six months she had come to trust her gut instinct much more. So she felt there was a part of this woman that she genuinely liked and also that she had been right about her being a 'gobshite' because over time the woman's behaviour had borne out Maggie's gut instinct. This woman had been a challenging person to know but Maggie had taken a lot of learning from their relationship. The woman had a big impact on the group and it seemed to change significantly when she left the group, it seemed to feel safer. Maggie was doing a lot of processing her feelings about the impact this person had had on her and on the group. Maggie had got very close with another member of the group who, through his own way of being, had given her permission to be with other aspects of her self. This had been a little uncomfortable as she had been a bit conflicted about this; a part of her could just flow with these other

spiritual aspects of herself while her logical side didn't go for it. This had felt like exploring and checking out different parts within herself.

There was another guy on the course that she had got on very well with and they were in the same groups for a lot of things, although this guy had recently started a relationship with someone else on the course and this had had an impact on their friendship. It had just become a bit uncomfortable. Maggie, this guy (and the aforementioned) previously had a very special connection and this new relationship had changed all of that. Maggie had lost something there. Maggie thought this was interesting because she felt that although she could connect well with a group she found connecting intimately, bonding, not to be so easy, 'relationships for me... are a risk, because you've got to trust people and there is a part of me that doesn't trust'.

Maggie said she found it 'a bit wanky' talking about her relationship with the group because she was not comfortable with units, like family units, group units, 'you know where kind of, that kind of feeling of we're all together for one reason, we're all the same or you know that kind of..... oh please...' For Maggie the group was about atmosphere, 'but atmosphere is about individual people with their individuality putting in their energy and creating an atmosphere... That for me is the group, the fact that for some people there is some sort of connections or some transcendental thing or even worse feeling like a family unit or whatever, it makes me feel a little bit sick'. Maggie related this to her experiences in her family. The reality of a group for her was the individuals within it, any connections were just something we added to the individuals and seemed a bit like a fabrication. Also for Maggie the concept of family was a concept of repression, about duty and sticking with people 'that if you met outside of the family you would not want to spend two fucking seconds with because they are awful'. But you might make an effort because it mattered to someone else in the family that you cared about. For Maggie it was all about how you connect and how you relate to individual people, so don't expect me to connect just because it's 'the group', if there's someone in there I care about I will connect with them. In a group, she connected with people. She could do a presentation to a huge group and it didn't matter to her because she was just talking to a thing, not to people.

Conversely talking in the whole group at uni it could be harder because she had connected with some of the individuals and found that she didn't want to talk to those in the group who she hadn't connected with, so in that way addressing the whole group was hard. Maggie was thinking that this might be why she was finding it easier to approach the ending of the course and of the group. For her there was nothing meaningful that was ending because she was planning to keep in touch with those individuals that she had connected with. She felt she might miss the space just to sit down and talk about whatever was going on for her because that was a privilege. But then she would still be able to get that with those individuals. In a way she could go on to create her ideal group of the four or five people that she had connected with. She also had found that she only really heard those people in the group who she cared about, if others responded to her she tended not to take it on board, although sometimes if one of these others said something particularly strong she might hear it.

Those people in the group who she liked and those who she felt had embraced the counselling concept and the person-centred concept had had an influence on her. Their honesty and genuineness were important she felt safe around them as was their consistency, for example in the group and at break. She had learned that she liked that and she wanted to be like that. She wanted to be real and not just turning it on for a performance.

Maggie was clear that she was herself first and then she was Person-Centred and that this meant there were times when she wasn't Person-Centred but she hadn't hid that from people. Through her work and placements she had met plenty of counsellors who seemed to embody this attitude and she was looking forward to moving more into that world, to be more with people that she felt were the same. She felt that she had moved forward at a faster pace than others had and that she was also trying to be with those who she saw as being ahead of her. This change felt really important and exciting to Maggie.

The end of the course represented a new beginning for Maggie and change and new beginnings were exciting. This was about moving on to the next phase in her development.

She didn't know how other people felt about it but she thought she would be asking the lead tutor if they could keep in touch, although she also didn't know how he would respond. She really saw him as a mentor and wanted to keep that relationship going. She liked all of the tutors, one felt like a mother she had never had, and was a really good friend with someone Maggie knew. She felt that relationship would 'flourish even more'. Maggie really liked and admired another tutor and saw her as an aspirational figure career wise. The lead tutor was like Marmite but she really thought she liked him, although they were so different in many ways she thought they got each other. There was still some transference with the other tutor who had brought up stuff about Maggie's relationship with her mother. They had a tutorial together which had gone really well and Maggie had been really touched when the tutor had said that she felt Maggie was a really good counsellor and that she wouldn't have a problem recommending her to clients. This felt like the 'ultimate recognition'.

She had an end of course presentation to do in which she was going to have play a section of her client work and a part of her was saying it was a 'shitty fifteen minutes.... it's not perfect' but she still had four tutors telling her she was a good counsellor. And what she wanted to remember was that even if it wasn't a good tape she had the self-awareness to know that and to know what had been going on for her, why she had said what she said. This all came back to her childhood experiences of never being able to do anything good in her mother's eyes. She had carried that with her for a long time but she was sure she wasn't going to do that anymore.

She was really enjoying her therapeutic work and had done over her required hundred hours. She had recognised that she was good at working with young people. She had got some good feedback from her placement which had said that they saw her as an asset when it came to working with young people. Maggie felt that her work with one young client in particular had changed her as a counsellor and as a person. They had worked together for 6 months and really connected and enjoyed each other's company. She had really experienced grief at the end, a really raw kind of grief. She felt that what she had learned was that she could really connect and accept his vulnerability which had allowed her to connect and to feel her own vulnerability. She was seeing her heart as an armour and there had been a crack that had allowed her to connect more with her vulnerability

and with clients and other people. This crack was available now and was opening more and more. Maggie felt like it was time she recognised that.

She saw herself as a counsellor who connected with people and created relationships with them, 'the opposite of passive... I'm not a client centred classical kind... more like on the experiential kind of things' and '...I try to be as congruent as possible, sometimes it still feels like a risk... and I'm still learning.'

She saw herself as definitely Person-Centred 'if I have to give myself a name' although she was also integrating other ideas like the miracle question and using them in a Person-Centred way, 'I'm not doing it now because I try to focus on how the tutors and the course wants me to be, because it's easy for me just to get lost in it', it had been about passing the course but there was a part to her that was more process-directive. This was supported by her reading and understanding and she wanted to learn more about this way of being with clients. She felt she needed to take more risks now to find out what was working and what wasn't. She really believed in following the process and in not having an agenda but also in asking the client what they needed from her. If she could congruently deliver that even if it wasn't totally Person-Centred then she would do so. So however she worked it was always set within a client-centred framework. When I asked where this clarity had come from Maggie said she felt this was how she was with herself, 'So I can't be that much different as a therapist, but I also think... I like a therapy that is facilitative but also effective'.

Her first experiences in counselling had been with a mainly psychodynamic counsellor and this had been 'harsh but effective in many ways.... and a part of me likes that kind of prodding'. She had worked with a more classical Person-Centred counsellor who also seemed to stick very closely to that way of working because they knew Maggie was a student of Person-Centred counselling. Maggie asked them give her more but it never felt right. Her most recent counsellor considered herself Person-Centred but was really 'engaged, very transparent, very congruent, and very immediate... and I like that'. She took from that experience that 'you don't necessarily need to be integrative or something different to get the clock ticking'.

So there was a sense of her knowing how she had to be in order to fit the course and also of her knowing it was OK to be more than that in her client work. She felt this learning had come from experience and from observation, she felt that she had developed from the beginning of the course when 'it doesn't feel fluid, it feels like skills' to the end of the course where it seemed to be more about congruence and transparency and about being real. This was being supported in her own client work where she felt her clients were more engaged when she was this way with them.

There seemed to be two potentially conflicting messages coming from the course, one was about you need to do it this way and the other was about it's OK to be you. In the skills Maggie felt she was 'still me... but I would not risk... going for a direct question, when actually as a counsellor I can be quite directive'. And 'It's about reminding myself that I need to be focused on the fact that I'm on a Person-Centred course and I need to be Person-Centred so I can't be turning around and be directive'. So on the course where she was being 'observed and judged' if she slipped and allowed herself to say something directive 'then I'm like fuck!' but with a client, if they reacted to something directive, she could always say 'sorry, can I rephrase that?' This had come on in the last six months because of a 'mix of things'.

She was looking forward to a new beginning and thinking about working with young people. She felt they were 'better than anyone else to work out whether you are bullshitting them'. She was looking forward to this and also thinking of further courses to really clarify her ideas and feelings around this so that 'I can sit down and go you know what, this is really my style, this is really me, this what I am.... Without thinking I need to fit in a certain way in order to pass'. 'Yeah, it's like you've got a lovely dish and it's just nice and you can eat it and really enjoy it but somehow you want to add some extra spice, and you've got to, you try and put maybe too much spice and too much salt in it and you go oh, too much, and you take it, a little bit out and stuff like that and then you find your lovely balance and it's just right.' Maggie felt like she was changing every time she met a new client, 'I change something, I learn something different, and it will be ongoing and it will be forever probably'.