

The Reciprocal Influence of Person Centred Counselling Students and Trainers

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This research has explored the reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers in the UK, through the researcher's lens of being a Person Centred trainer.

The methodology evolved into relational heuristic research, an adaptation of heuristic research which is itself a contribution to knowledge. It is a qualitative approach that holds the researcher/trainer's heuristic experience as its core whilst including and valuing the experience of others. Six pairs of former counselling students and trainers were interviewed together, followed by eight interviews between the researcher and her former students. The interviews provided the opportunity for the co-creation of a coherent story of their reciprocal influence and enabled clarification, corroboration, disagreement, memory jogging, and the emergence of surprises. Participants in the six interviews were gained through the researcher's professional networks and so were convenience sampling. The eight former students were from the 22 invited whom the researcher had worked with two years previously. As is typical of heuristic research the analysis was a long, iterative and creative process of incubation and illumination.

The main finding, available only because of the former students and trainers being interviewed together, is the uniqueness, complexity and richness of counselling student-trainer relationships. The three other substantial findings are: the huge impact of the transferential/countertransferential relationship between students and trainers; the nuances of liking and favouritism between students and trainers; and an invaluable insight into challenges and difficulties within the student-trainer relationship and their impact.

In addition to the findings and discussion the researcher also offers a creative synthesis and a summary of learning, not to be turned into general principles and procedures but for each reader to resonate with their own experiences and see what does and doesn't fit. This is in keeping with the complexity and uniqueness of experience found in the research. Specific contributions of this research for past, present and future counselling students and trainers as well as for course development are also discussed.

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I could not have done this work without my experiences with students and colleagues over the years of this PhD and previously, they have inspired me to explore our relationships and I hope that in turn it will be useful to them and to those who come after them over the years.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers – context and relevance

'I am impacted by the students I work with, it is the work with them that inspires me, interests me, drives me, tires me, grieves me, annoys me, wears me out and energises me. At either end of ecstasy and despair there has always been the work with students.' (reflective diary 8/12/2007).

It is my experience of working with student counsellors that has driven this research whilst it also has a context and relevance beyond this: in counselling and psychotherapy¹ and, particularly, in the training of counsellors. Counselling is an increasingly accepted part of our society and accessible through such routes as general practice, school, mental health services and private practice. Alongside this, counselling training has been developing in quantity, length, and academic level since its beginnings in the UK (Jacobs, 2007).

Counselling research, its publication, and its use by practising counsellors to influence their practice, has been a slower journey that still continues (McDonnell, Stratton, Butler, & Cape, 2012; McLeod, 2001). Research into counselling training has been even slower to develop.

An important area of counselling research has been in identifying the factors that are most linked to positive therapeutic change and it has been consistently shown that the primary factor, across theoretical orientations, is the quality of the counsellor-client relationship (Andrews, 2000; Beutler et al., 2004; Clarkson, 1990, 1994, 1995; Lambert, 1992; Paul & Haugh, 2008a, 2008b). A logical consequence of this is that training needs to support students' ability to build and sustain high quality ethical relationships with their clients. Taking logic another step forward, the relationship that counselling trainers build and sustain with their students must be relevant in the students' ability to then build and sustain these relationships with their clients. The counselling student-trainer relationship must therefore be important (Bor & Watts, 2010; Smith, 2011) and so we need to understand this relationship, through the experience of both students and trainers.

¹ For ease counselling and psychotherapy will now be summarised as counselling. This is for readability and does not imply a particular position in the ongoing debate on their sameness or distinct differences.

Counselling training is perhaps unusual compared with many other professional trainings in that the students work intensively with a small number of trainers and therefore each is likely to know the other well and to reciprocally influence each other. The course that many of the research participants, including myself, were involved in, and is reflective of many counselling training courses, is the Diploma (H.E.) in Person Centred Counselling. Students attend sessions for a full day per week through two academic years, having at least 400 hours contact time. Much of this time is with one or both of the core trainers, with some modules being run by others. The core trainers take on the role of tutor, large group facilitator, small group facilitator – in ‘home group’ three hours per week, theory lecturer, and generally support the students and course group through the life of the course and its requirements.

While counselling training has existed in UK universities since the 1960's (Connor, 1994; Johns, 1998b), its increasing move there, with its strong academic focus, has caused concern about this negatively impacting the training of counsellors in effective counselling (Parker, 2002). Alongside this, comments within counselling training texts show a recognition that the role of trainers is increasingly important, complex, challenging, and probably, to carry it out well, perhaps time-limited (for example: Alfred, 1999; Bor & Watts, 2010; Johns, 1998b).

Little research has included the relationship between counselling students and trainers, though it is gratifying to see that there has been more interest in researching counselling training recently, including a focus on counselling students (Smith, 2011) and counselling trainers (Ballinger, 2012).

While there are many directions of focus that this research could have taken, for example: the role of the student-trainer relationship in developing the effectiveness of the student; or the role of the student-trainer relationship on trainer professional development and motivation; I have chosen an apparently simple focus because of the huge research gap in this area. My focus is therefore ‘just’ the reciprocal influence of former students and trainers. This focus enables, and necessitates, me to explore the relationship from the perspective of both students and trainers rather than focusing on one or the other.

‘Relationship is the first condition of being human. It circumscribes two or more individuals and creates a bond in the space between them which is more than the sum of the parts. It is so obvious that it is frequently taken for granted, and so mysterious that many of the world’s greatest psychologists, novelists and philosophers have made it a lifetime’s preoccupying passion.’ (Clarkson, 1990, p. 148).

Relationships involve both students and trainers as people and, I believe, leave us all open to change, with the quality of our relationships impacting the degree to which we each feel safe enough in the learning environment to be vulnerable to ourselves and others, to be

open to new learning that sometimes runs contrary to all we have learned before, and to manage the highs and lows of working together in groups.

As a trainer of Person Centred Counsellors since 1997 I am aware of some of the ways that particular students influence me; I am also increasingly aware of the similar and different ways that I influence individual students. However, I also know that our reciprocal influence is only sometimes openly communicated and I wonder what we miss, and misunderstand. To explore this I turn to talking with former students and trainers together, remembering, experiencing and witnessing our reciprocal influence.

Some of the questions on my mind from the beginning included: How aware are we of others' influence on us and ours on them? Are the influences similar? How different might they be? What is the impact? How much is one's influence on another recognised by the 'influencer'? How much had been previously talked about and how much was unspoken until the interview? How much might emerge in the interviews that was not previously known?

This research explores the intricacies of the counselling student-trainer relationship, helping to fill a large gap in the counselling training research literature and give previous, current and future students and trainers more awareness of the relevance of the relationship in their counselling training. In doing this I hope that the importance of the relationship will be recognised more fully and, as a result, worked with more effectively.

1.2 Relational heuristics and Person Centred

To explore the intricacies of reciprocal relationships only qualitative methodology and methods would be effective. While there were several options for how I could carry out this research, it evolved, through a challenging and well-grounded route that is described in detail in the methodology section, into being relationally heuristic, an adaptation of Moustakas' (1990) heuristic research, though the lens of my Person Centred perspective.

The heuristic element began very early in the process in an exploration of the meaning of the research theme for me both personally and as a trainer. Moustakas (1990) considered the theme for heuristic research as beginning in the researcher with:

'the internal search to discover, with an encompassing puzzlement, a passionate desire to know, a devotion and commitment to pursue a question that is strongly connected to one's own identity and selfhood' (p. 40).

His most well known heuristic research is his work on loneliness (Moustakas, 1961/1989). This theme arose from the '*searing pain*' of a '*family crisis*' (p. xi). In a similar vein, Sela-Smith's (2001) theme emerged from her internal '*call of distress*' (p. 13), her fear she would die from her obesity problem.

While pain can be a powerful driver that would help a researcher through the stages of their research and personal exploration, it is not mine. Instead, I chose a theme that fascinated me, that had for some time left me with questions, something I knew would absorb me and carry me through any difficult times in the stages of the research. I connect with Jamison's (2005) exploration of the passion of life – 'exuberance'. It is exuberance that '*carries us to places we would not otherwise go – across the savannah, to the moon, into the imagination*' (p. 4) and, for me, into my research.

'By its pleasures, exuberance lures us from our common places and quieter moods; and – after the victory, the harvest, the discovery of a new idea or an unfamiliar place – it gives ascendant reason to venture forth all over again. Delight is its own reward, adventure its own pleasure' (Jamison, 2005, p. 4).

She describes exuberance as '*a more restless, billowing state*' (Jamison, 2005, p. 4) than happiness, full of energy and action – without or within - and carrying fragility and vulnerability. This has led me to be particularly mindful throughout this research of taking care of myself and of the research participants,

Moustakas' (1990) way of connecting is similar, even though when exploring loneliness there is also great pain. He describes how the researcher:

'learns to love the question. It becomes a kind of song into which the researcher breathes life not only because the question leads to an answer, but also because the question itself is infused in the researcher's being. It creates a thirst to discover, to clarify, and to understand crucial dimensions of knowledge and experience' (p. 43).

As my interest in this area has grown, so has my sensitivity to noticing more in relation to both myself, and my peers, with our students. Along with this increased awareness are: varying degrees of ease and unease, a desire to understand more, and an enthusiasm for bringing these issues out into the public arena for mutual consideration, debate and learning.

The exploration of reciprocal influence required the engagement of former students and trainers, sufficiently robust to participate and actively interested in the process. Interviewing them while they were current student and trainer would have been likely to impact their ongoing relationship and potentially shift relationships in their training group and so would not have been appropriate or ethical. In all cases, the former students and trainers are trained counsellors with the resources to have a good understanding of what they were actively agreeing to participate in and get support afterwards if that were to be needed.

I considered that they needed to be interviewed together: '*this will help me explore not only what matches one person's experience with another but also the edges, the differences, the new*' (reflective diary 20/12/2007). I undertook six 2:1 interviews, which were interviews with pairs of former counselling students and trainers; and subsequently undertook discussion interviews with eight of my former students in which I was participant/researcher.

It is still unusual to interview two people together (Arksey, 1996; Greenbaum, 1998; Racher, Kaufert, & Havens, 2000; Song, 1998) and I have not been able to find either being used in counselling related research up to now.

Great care was taken that communication between pairs was transparent and equal, that each actively wanted to participate and understood, as far as anyone can, what they were agreeing to. Interviews were carried out with a primary consideration of care of each participant.

The title of my thesis includes 'Person Centred' (Rogers, 1951, 1959) not only because many of those involved in the research were Person Centred but particularly due to this being my own approach; my Person Centred counselling training was in 1988-1992 and I have been training Person Centred counsellors since 1997. While Baldwin (2000) refers to counselling, I also relate her quote to me as a counselling trainer: *'the self of the therapist is the funnel through which theories and techniques become manifest'* (pp. xix-xx) and after so many years, Person Centred has become the lens through which I make sense of so much in my life, including this research.

As a Person Centred counselling trainer my expectations about the training relationship concur with what Ballinger (2012) found in the Person Centred counselling trainers who participated in her study (which included me), rather than the psychodynamic, integrative, or cognitive behavioural ones: *'they viewed their person as the key resource; it was about a 'way of being' (Rogers, 1980)'* (p. 227). As one of the Person Centred students in Smith's (2011) focus group said *'Well work here is about relationships... It's the beginning, middle and end of it for me'* (p. 239). The underlying assumption is that the student-trainer relationship will support counselling students to develop their ability to manifest the core conditions of empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence (Bor & Watts, 2010) which are fundamental to being a Person Centred counsellor. As Rogers (1961) stated: *'If I can provide a certain type of relationship, the other person will discover within himself the capacity to use that relationship for growth and change and personal development will occur'* (p. 33).

Having a Person Centred lens has also been a part of why I was drawn to a heuristic approach. The layer by layer deepening awareness of self is common to both, and they have come together in my personal journal which has been an ongoing container of many reflections. My choice of theme for this research has not been a focus of research until now. I offer an adaptation to Moustakas' (1990) heuristic research while using research methods of paired interviews that do not appear to have been utilised in counselling research before. Alongside this academic relevance of my research is my personal fascination with this theme, something that has gradually emerged more and more deeply. On 14/10/2007, in my reflective diary, I acknowledged more fully that the theme of my research, and indeed my choice of methodology, are essentially:

'about me - my desire to keep staying in contact and getting better at it; my desire to understand more fully our mutual impact on each other; my wanting to explore identity issues and how they impact our learning and teaching relationships; my wanting to explore the experience of students and of tutors.'

Will pairs be interested in being interviewed? Will they dare to be interviewed together? What will the impact of the method be on them? How will the discussion change their perceptions of each other and the learning and teaching environment? How will my findings offer something of use to others? I have so many questions and am intrigued by what is ahead.' (reflective diary 14/10/2007).

Reflecting even more personally on 8/12/2007:

'As someone who can find it difficult to stay in good contact with people this is a perfect job for insisting I keep making contact and giving me so many opportunities... I know that particular students have different impacts on me, to a greater or lesser extent. I watch and support and challenge them to grow and develop. I also continue to grow and develop and wonder if they have much inkling or interest in that. I know that I have an impact on many students, for example so many have told me of their taking my 'voice' into sessions to support them to remember something. I get feedback from students and have some general idea of how I come across - rather cerebral and academic, highly committed and organised, safe though challenging - sometimes jokingly referred to as 'savage', very clear and precise, patient, not as warm, contactful and open as some others. I like a lot of that, I agree with it all to different extents, I continue to wish I was more contactful but, although I have changed over the years, I don't think the contactfulness I admire in some of my colleagues is my natural style. I look at some of my colleagues with envy and respect and I know that they sometimes look at me in those ways - though each for different reasons.' (reflective diary 18/10/2007).

Moving out again to the team I worked with, and the learning communities that we supported to develop, I explore 'reciprocal influence' from another direction on 16/12/2007:

'In working at enabling the development of a learning community of students and staff we promote real relationships which attempt to acknowledge our different roles and the impact and influence of these. We support learning to be positive, heal some old hurts, and see many students flourish in ways they never believed possible.' (reflective diary 16/12/2007).

This paints rather a rosy image of the training experience and the challenges have not been ignored in my reflections. On the same date (16/12/2007) I also considered how: *'For some, the discomfort of sitting next to 'the teacher', or worse - between two! - remains for a long time or may never dissolve.'* I also include more personal and painful experiences of my own:

'I am aware of feeling an affinity to particular students and while this is sometimes reciprocated in their spoken enjoyment of working with me, sometimes the reverse happens - I may be avoided and not understand why. Some students avoid particular tutors and at some point become brave enough to acknowledge this and work on it with the tutor; I am always so admiring of their honesty and desire to

make changes. Sometimes, (surprisingly occasionally to me), I dislike a student. This is often very needy students as people being very needy are something I struggle with. I am bemused when one of these students searches me out and seems positive about working with me. I am not always very honest about my experience of these students and I don't particularly like that.' (reflective diary 16/12/2007).

In my darker days of work, when nothing seems to be going right and my energy is low, my connection with this theme is deeper and more poignant: *'maybe I am looking for the soul of this work for me'* (reflective diary 11/3/2008).

My underpinning desire in exploring this theme is primarily that what I learn will enable me, and others, to be better counselling trainers:

'I wonder what is the best thing to do for each situation, how to be a better tutor, how to support learning more effectively, how to help reduce the pain and distress that so many experience at some stage in their training journey (Rowland, 1993). I know I need to be the tutor I am and to recognise my strengths and weaknesses, supporting people to turn to others when they can offer something different. Maybe exploring this theme will somehow support me to understand something more about who I am as a trainer and be at peace with this. It may also help others on their own journeys.' (reflective diary 16/12/2007).

While there were 19 participants, besides myself, I as researcher, was the person who decided what areas to cover in interviews, what to include in the thesis, and what meaning to make of it. Data analysis took place in the traditional way for heuristic research, through a *'timeless immersion inside the data, with intervals of rest and return to the data until intimate knowledge is obtained'* (Moustakas, 1990, p. 49) and then a creative synthesis was developed. As the next section describes, choices then had to be made about how and what to present in this thesis.

1.3 Style and Structure

There is a personal style to my writing of this thesis and at times I relate directly to you, the reader. I invite you to engage with me through this thesis and to have your own process of exploring student-trainer relationships, provoked by this work. At the same time it is an academic piece and gathers what is known and takes it forward, offering it to the academic and training communities.

By way of brief introduction, I am 49, white, female, lesbian – and in a civil partnership, Catholic, able bodied. I originally trained as an Occupational Therapist and trained as a counsellor in 1988-1992 and have been training Person Centred counsellors since 1997.

Since 2010 I have managed a couples counselling service, with my research feeding my growing interest in the couple relationship. As Fischer (2009) says:

'The qualitative researcher's sharing of his or her own interests, goals and background often is referred to as "disclosure," an exposing to view.... The disclosure is a sharing of background that helps readers to see "where the author is coming from," the perspectives from which the study was designed and the data analysed.' (p. 586).

While those facts might be helpful in giving you an extremely basic picture of me it is the sharing from my reflective journal and the sharing I do in other ways that will give you more sense of who I am, that will give you that essential mix of *'I don't know a thing about you, and yet, I have never known anyone so well.'* (Carl Rogers quoted in Baldwin, 1987, p. 46).

I have actively chosen not to give individual pen portraits of the research participants for two main reasons: the first is that in a small world of counselling training those facts may identify individuals; and the second is that they say so little of meaning about the people as individual words are so reductionist. Their words in the interviews express who they are so much more deeply and meaningfully.

As you have already experienced, a process of discovering deeper layers of meaning is constant throughout the various chapters of this thesis. This is both at the level of reflection on findings and literature but also on my personal process, which is itself part of the findings. In heuristic research there is a demand for the full engagement of the researcher and in relational heuristic research the researcher's process stays a part of the work throughout. This is both theoretically consistent and morally right. It feels unjust of me not to expose myself in this way to you – the reader - when I have asked, and received, so much from the other research participants.

While some aspects of this research aren't traditional, the main structure of this thesis is more so, in a bid to make it more readable. The chapters are the usual: introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, discussion and concluding chapter, with the addition of brief creative synthesis and transformation and summary of learning chapters. (Moustakas, 1990).

In exploring the counselling training literature I have found no research that is explicitly concerned with the reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers and so in the literature review I have taken a wider perspective. The literature review considers relationships in education, helping professions, counselling and then counselling training.

My journey to relational heuristic research, a modification of Moustakas' (1990) heuristic research, and the methods of paired 2:1 and discussion interviews, and their connection with the theme are explored at length in the methodology section. This chapter is particularly significant as the critique of Moustakas' (1990) heuristic research and the resultant adaptation, along with the paired interviews, are themselves part of the development of new knowledge required in a PhD.

Key findings concerning reciprocal influence are presented, along with some consideration of findings in relation to the methods and methodology. At times lengthy verbatim is included, this is purposeful and enables the reader to get a clear sense of the quality of the interaction and how themes emerged and developed between the participants. As the research participants were interviewed in pairs together another important purpose of the lengthy quotes is for the reader to assure themselves of the ethics of the interviews, in that no one was coerced to say more than they wanted to at that time, and they do in fact reveal how open and frank participants sought to be with each other.

As with much qualitative literature, there is a painful frustration in what has not been able to be included. To ease reading I have omitted a lot of 'mmm's from the transcripts sections, the loss is that they show the engagement of the other. I have given pseudonyms to the conversation participants: for the 2:1 interviews former trainers have been given names starting with T, and the former students names starting with S; in the discussion interviews my former students have been given names starting with P. 'Tessa' was interviewed with both 'Sean' and 'Sara'. I have used my own name - Sandra. Where the interviews are being referenced, they read as (name of participant, interview type, order of interview) for example (Sue 2:1 01). Where the reference is for the post interview email this is stated. Names of others mentioned in the interviews have all been changed to protect confidentiality.

The 'creative synthesis' forms a brief chapter and expresses in a poetic form my response to the whole process. The discussion draws on the findings and compares them to the literature, showing that while some of the findings affirm previous research there is also much here that was not previously known with such complexity and richness. Also included is a summary of learning, offered in prose and different, though similar, to the creative synthesis. They are both offered to the reader to see what might or might not resonate for you. Finally, the conclusion explores the value of this research and its potential implications for counsellor training, along with its limitations, and recommendations of where further research might explore.

1.4 Concluding

The primary aim of the research is to explore the intricacies of the reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers. The secondary aim became that of validating the benefits of relational heuristic research and the use of 2:1 and discussion interviews.

As a result, this research has a two-fold offering in regard to contribution to knowledge, in terms of the theme and the methodology and methods. There is still a relatively small amount of counselling training research and none has considered the reciprocal influence of Person Centred counselling students and trainers. This research is also unusual in counselling training research in that it incorporates the perspectives of both former students and trainers.

The methodology and methods that developed to effectively address this theme appear to be new to the area of counselling research with the methodology being a new revision of Moustakas' (1990) heuristic research.

Undertaking the research in an ethical way that took good care of all the interview participants, including myself, was paramount throughout and ethical issues are addressed at relevant points within this thesis. This is of particular relevance because of interviews being with pairs of former counselling students and trainers together discussing their relationship. An added dimension is that I am participant/researcher in eight of the interviews.

The following chapters detail the process and findings of the research and lead to a creative synthesis, summary of learning, and implications for counselling training.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore literature related to the research theme – the reciprocal influence of Person Centred counselling students and trainers. The methodology literature is considered within the next chapter. In keeping with the theme, methodology, and methods of this research, it is my *'inner subjective experience that will provide the focus for this literature review'* (Richards, 2006, p. 73).

Studying the literature; reflecting within, and on, interviews; and my own evolving process; has been an interdependent, interweaving, iterative process. With any non-linear process such as this, writing a linear thesis is essential to the reader but is unnatural; for example, the literature review is in its traditional position within this thesis though many of the sources had not been published until after the interviews had taken place. Their place here is therefore influenced by the interviews themselves.

Counsellor training is perhaps unusual in that it is often viewed as *'central to a therapist's ability to practice effectively'* (Folkes-Skinner, Elliott, & Wheeler, 2012, p. 83) while there is little evidence that there is a direct link between specific training and skill or effectiveness as a counsellor (Beutler et al., 2004; Folkes-Skinner et al., 2012), perhaps because it would be so difficult to investigate the range of influences there are on each student (Lowndes & Hanley, 2010). It is important to note that while about 60,000 academic counselling and psychotherapy research papers have been published over the last thirty years, there has been surprisingly little research carried out related to counselling training (McLeod, 1998; Timulak, 2008). This is part of an overall trend which is of great concern to me. There seems to have been little appetite in the UK for researching counselling training. The BACP dropped their 'accredited trainer' status in February 2010, and there are no longer any conferences specifically for counselling trainers in the UK.

As a result of there being so little counselling training research, and even less linked to the relationship between student and trainer, I have explored relevant research in three related areas: education, helping professions, and the client-counsellor relationship, before considering the literature that does exist on the counselling student-trainer relationship. Each section builds on those that came before and they are then pulled together in a concluding section.

I have 'found' the literature in a variety of ways, Google scholar has been particularly helpful and my use of key words has become increasingly skilled, though I have spent many hours, across a broad range of journals, following fascinating journal article through to fascinating article via their bibliographies. Spending time with the literature in this way, in some areas that have not been my areas of expertise, have enabled me to work out which authors are more renowned and published than others, though I have not always restricted myself to these people.

My small library of books on counselling and on teaching have also been a fundamental source to keep returning to and move out from.

I have also fortuitously had access to some grey literature; unpublished theses have added a valuable contribution (Ballinger, 2012; Richards, 2006; Sela-Smith, 2001; Wilcock, 2000) . Other fortuitous experiences have been meeting Nick Ladany (Ladany, 1996; Ladany et al, 2008) at Manchester University and Kim Etherington (2000, 2001, 2004, 2007) at Keele University; each led me to their work and on to others.

Much of the literature is from the USA. A little is from other countries such as Israel. There are some from the UK and I have used them where I could as they are likely to be more closely relevant to the UK context of my research. As there is so little research related to the reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers, it won't be possible to say at this stage whether there are significant cultural differences, though of course at least some would be expected.

In terms of this research, a crucial belief of mine is that any relationship we have:

'may change us, move us, help us to see ourselves in new ways, lead to new self-awareness, and give us new resources and stances for dealing with the world'
(Rosenblatt, 2009, p. 172).

Here though we explore a particular type of relationship - a professional one. Gillies (2012) helpfully puts forward six issues and elements distinctive of professional relationships – from plumbers to doctors to counsellors:

- the client seeks expert help;
- the professional gets paid for their help, it is their job; (though I would not agree that this is essential as volunteers can also provide professional services);
- there is usually some form of contract about how the work will be carried out (whether verbal or written);
- being a helper is within a context of potential litigation, best practice models, competition and demand for satisfaction;
- professionals usually belong to organisations that uphold professional practice and public protection and require ethical practice;
- within these relationships there are guidelines to ensure professionalism and safety in the relationship.

While the relationship itself is not usually figural in professional relationships, my assumption of the existence of there being reciprocal influence is in keeping with Capra's (1975) fundamental assertion, related to quantum physics, that:

'We cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units. As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated basic building blocks, but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of a unified whole.' (p. 68).

The Chambers 21st Century Dictionary (Davidson, 2007) gives rich definitions of both reciprocal and influence (see table 1). These definitions elucidate the meaning of 'reciprocal influence' for this research: the mutuality of a counselling student and trainer's influence on each other, whether symmetrical or asymmetrical, known or unknown; and the actual affect one has on the other and why.

<p>Reciprocal adj 1 a giving and receiving, or given and received; mutual; b complementary. 2 <i>grammar</i> said of a pronoun: expressing a relationship between two people or things, or mutual action, e.g. <i>one another</i> in <i>John and Mary love one another</i>. Noun 1 something that is reciprocal. 2 <i>math</i> the value obtained when 1 is divided by the number concerned, eg the reciprocal of 4 is $\frac{1}{4}$.</p>
<p>Influence noun 1 (<i>especially influence on or over someone or something</i>) the power that one person or thing has to affect another. 2 a person or thing that has such a power • <i>be a good influence on him</i>. 3 power resulting from political or social position, wealth, ability, standards of behaviour, etc • <i>a man of some influence</i> • <i>Couldn't you use your influence to get me a ticket?</i> Verb (influenced, influencing) 1 to have an effect, especially an indirect or unnoticed one, on (a person or their work, or events, etc) • <i>Rock and roll influenced his music greatly</i>. 2 to exert influence on someone or something; to persuade • <i>Her encouraging letter influenced me to stay</i></p>
<p>Table 1: definitions of reciprocal and influence (Davidson, 2007)</p>

2.2 Education Literature

2.2.1 Approaches to studying relationships between students and teachers

Two general paradigms can be noted in relation to teaching research. The rhetorical paradigm is teacher-centred and linear, what many think of as traditional education, with teachers as instructors and students as receivers, what Nussbaum calls a 'process-product' model (1992, p. 176); and the relational paradigm which 'positions teachers and students as co-owners of shared meaning within the context of an interpersonal relationship' (Schrodt et al., 2009, p. 352), here: 'Learning is the process of growth of the mind, in which the learner takes an active part.' (Tiberius, 1993-4, p. 2)

My research comes from this latter paradigm, one where 'it is a taken-for-granted truth that relationships are at the heart of teaching' (Nieto, 2006, p. 466). This is perhaps at least in part not only because I am a Person Centred counsellor and counsellor trainer but also because all

of the people I have taught have been adult learners, often in their forties and fifties. Adult learning literature emphasises these students' intrinsic motivation, responsibility for their own learning, goal orientation, and the need to build on prior learning (Brookfield, 2006; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011).

Unsurprisingly, the main driver of the literature on the student-teacher relationship is on improving student learning. After all, this is usually the primary purpose of education. However, Davis (2003) has very helpfully synthesised previous research on student –teacher relationships and describes three dominant perspectives, each with its own conception of what makes a positive student-teacher relationship and who is the driver of the quality of the relationship. These perspectives are: attachment, motivation, and socio-cultural.

From attachment perspectives, the student-teacher relationship is viewed as an extension of the parent-child relationship with pupils bringing their internal working models (Bowlby, 1988) of self, other and self-other relationships and responding in keeping with these in the classroom. The teacher's nurturing and responsiveness to the needs of pupils are seen as just as important as what the pupil brings, and are core to them providing a secure foundation for pupils to explore from. From this perspective, 'good' relationships are ones where there are high levels of closeness and support, and low levels of conflict.

From motivation perspectives, 'good' relationships are those that support the pupil's motivation and learning in the classroom, and meet pupils intellectual and social needs. The educational context is seen as the primary definer of the student-teacher relationship. Therefore, the role of the teacher is emphasised and includes more than relational qualities. For example, their beliefs, quality of teaching, balancing of structure and autonomy, establishing of routines and academic culture are all part of the teacher's role.

Socio-cultural perspectives are inclusive of the previous two perspectives and move beyond them in examining the reciprocal effects of student and teacher. This includes the contexts that they bring with them, and are part of in the learning environment.

Robertson's (1999a) research comes from another direction. He studied professors' views on their teaching. From this, he developed a model of three approaches: egocentrism – teacher-centred, allocentrism – learner-centred, and systemocentrism – teacher-learner centred. He regards the most effective facilitators of student learning as being the systemocentric ones. This approach '*emphasizes both the learners' experience and the teacher's experience in interaction*' (Robertson, 1999b, p. 152). It is this approach that best matches Davis' (2003) socio-cultural perspective and it is these that encompass what Robertson (1996) considers the '*most influential images of exemplary adult educators, 24ulfil24[ing] the following: (a) Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule's **midwife** (1986), (b) Brookfield's **24ulfil24 teacher** (1990), (c) Daloz's **mentor** (1986), (d) Freire's **partner** (1993), I Knowles's **andragogue** (1975, 1989; Knowles & Associates, 1984), and (f) Mezirow's **emancipatory educator** (1991).*' (p. 44) [my bold].

I am very aware that as I write this, I strongly ally myself with the relational paradigm, socio-cultural perspective and systemocentric approach, and it is from here that I truly connect with my passion for training counsellors. How much my training 'in use' actually fits with my 'espoused' theory (Argyris & Schon, 1974) is, however, unclear, and how much my perspective matters to my students, and to other counsellor trainers and students, is yet to be seen. If my connection had been more strongly with either of the other perspectives or approaches I doubt that my research interest would have been 'just' with the reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers. As Davis (2003) noted, research on student-teacher relationships has tended to focus on one of their perspectives and to use methodologies in keeping with its principles.

It is no surprise that as I explore the literature on Person Centred education, I strongly connect with it. Cornelius-White (2007) considers classical Person-Centred education as having been most present in the 1950's to 1970's and being an approach that emphasised teacher empathy, unconditional positive regard, genuineness, nondirectivity and encouraging critical thinking – key elements also of person centred counselling. Whitlock (1984) unpicks this more fully in his description of twelve assumptions of a person centred teacher (see appendix 1) elements of which include:

- *'learning is both a personal and interpersonal experience'*,
- *'the forming of healthy interpersonal relationships is conducive to learning'*,
- *'in a true learning situation the teacher and student are mutually involved in the learning process'*, (pp. 70-72).

This helps me see why, with twenty five years of being a Person Centred counsellor, and fifteen years of training counsellors, the reciprocal influence of counselling student and trainer is such an interest of mine.

The above have looked overall at the relationship between student and teacher and another dimension is to consider the stages that this relationship goes through. DeVito (1986), considers the student-teacher relationship as one that goes through stages similar to any relationship people develop and in each stage different skills and competencies are required of the teacher. He drew on various models of relationship development and proposed his own seven-stage educational process model through from pre-contact, awareness, contact, involvement, intimacy, deterioration, to dissolution.

It is interesting, and gratifying to me, that the skills he regards as important acknowledge the uniqueness of each teacher and student, and the relationship they would develop. These skills are reminiscent of fundamental counselling skills and, indeed, of the skills needed to develop, sustain and end any meaningful relationship. The skills include the ability to: listen actively and use this to create meaningful dialogue that can go from surface to deeper levels; control degrees of openness and self-disclosure; compliment, reinforce and reward; establish, maintain, and relinquish control; deal effectively with conflict; be sensitive to verbal and nonverbal cues; and be able to repair ruptures in relationships when this is needed. (DeVito, 1986).

DeVito's (1986) work on linear stage changes in the student-teacher relationship is complemented by Docan-Morgan and Manusov's (2009) study of one-off relational turning points from the perspectives of both students and teachers in universities in northern USA. Docan-Morgan (2011) found that a shift was needed for the relationship to move from one stage to another and this would often be a specific relational turning point event, for example: consulting a teacher for advice, a teacher approaching a student to address a problem they have identified, when student or teacher have transgressed spoken or unspoken rules, personal exchanges involving disclosing more of oneself by student and/or teacher.

In reviewing the different ways that the relationship between student and teacher has been considered, I have been given concepts and language in which to express my assumptions and beliefs and thereby illuminate to myself, as well as others, their roots in my Person Centred perspective.

2.2.2 Students wants, perceptions and actions

Many researchers (for example, Brookfield, 2006; Myers, 2001; Schrodt et al., 2009; Teven, 2001) have studied how adult learners want to be treated by teachers and how this positively impacts on their relationship with their teacher and on their learning. These include them appreciating: being treated as adults, having teachers be authoritative but not authoritarian, being treated with respect, teacher clarity, nonverbal immediacy, the teacher caring about them and being interested in their concerns and difficulties, and, knowing the teacher has a personal life but them not making inappropriate self-disclosures. There is a fine balance to be managed with the latter as it has also been found that self-disclosure has led to more positive evaluations as a reflection of the lecturer's integrity and depth (Lannutti & Strauman, 2006), and that reciprocal self-disclosure can be good for teaching and for student-teacher relationships (Harper, 2005).

Brookfield (2006) has distilled these characteristics into two general clusters of what students prefer in teachers – credibility and authenticity:

'Students define credibility as the perception that the teacher has something important to offer and that whatever this "something" is (skills, knowledge, insight, wisdom, information) learning it will benefit the student considerably.... Authenticity, on the other hand, is defined as the perception that the teacher is being open and honest in her attempts to help students learn.' (p. 56).

It is important to note that Brookfield (2006) defines credibility as a 'perception' (p. 56). In a similar vein, Kougl (1997) says that: '*Credibility involves belief, not facts, so accuracy or even agreement with reality is irrelevant*' (p. 312). Credibility, being a perception, fits well with the phenomenological underpinnings of the Person Centred Approach; one of Carl Rogers nineteen propositions of personality development is that each of us reacts to our continually changing

world of experience, our reality, as we perceive and experience it (Rogers, 1951). Authenticity is also very prominent within Person Centred theory, being one of the three core conditions (Rogers, 1959).

Russ, Simonds & Hunt (2002) note that research studies have shown that teachers who are known to be in a minority group, for example: gay, female, non-white; are likely to be perceived as less credible than those in majority groups. Their own research with 154 first year undergraduate students in a North American university gave the same disturbing results of the intimate link between authenticity and credibility. However, Jennings' (2010) study of 407 evaluations of a lesbian, bisexual and transgender member of faculty in a South California university found no link between lecturers 'coming out' as LGBT and negative evaluations. Authenticity in the teacher can be something that is experienced positively and acts as a support to students, as Macgillivray's (2008) USA survey of eight of his former pupils found:

'lesbian, gay or bisexual students experienced a sense of relief that they could finally feel comfortable about themselves, as well as feeling happy that others in the school were talking about sexual orientation issues and were becoming more accepting of gay people. His heterosexual students learned that gay people are people too and that sexual orientation is only a small part of one's identity.' (p. 72).

Changing perspectives to that of the teacher, Canary and MacGregor (2007) explored college teachers' descriptions of what the ideal student does and what the less than ideal student does. They found that the primary things that the ideal student did was related to their communication, they were *'Intellectually Motivated and Participative'* (p. 57). On the other hand, the primary elements of what the less than ideal students were, still related to communication but included *'Absent, Confrontational, and Silent'* (p. 57). It would be surprising if this didn't also work the other way around, with teachers responding in various ways to their students.

It would seem then that adult students value credibility and authenticity, but these are also potential minefields for the teacher, and subsequently for student learning.

2.2.3 Teachers giving, and getting?

Teaching in the manner described earlier: relationally, socio-culturally and systemocentric; demands a lot of the person of the teacher, particularly their caring. Robertson (1996) talks of adult educators being urged by exemplars in the field to *'give their professional hearts and souls over to helping those learners to experience empowering paradigm shifts'*(p. 43). Thus, Freire (1998, p. 65) holds a *'loving and caring attitude'* towards each student, and hooks (1994, 2003) sees teaching as a *'commitment to service'* (2003, p. 83) and teaches in a way that *'respects and cares for the souls of our students'* (1994, p. 13). From this perspective effective teaching demands, and assumes, that the teacher, as well as the student, must remain open to learning (Rodegast and Stanton 1985);*'the teacher begins different and ends different'* (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 2).

Vascoconcelos (2011), deeply influenced by such authors as Freire, hooks, and Nieto, has developed a diagram to represent their conception of the student-teacher relationship (see figure 1). This diagram emphasizes the role of dialogue and relationship in the service of the student while also engaging and developing the teacher.

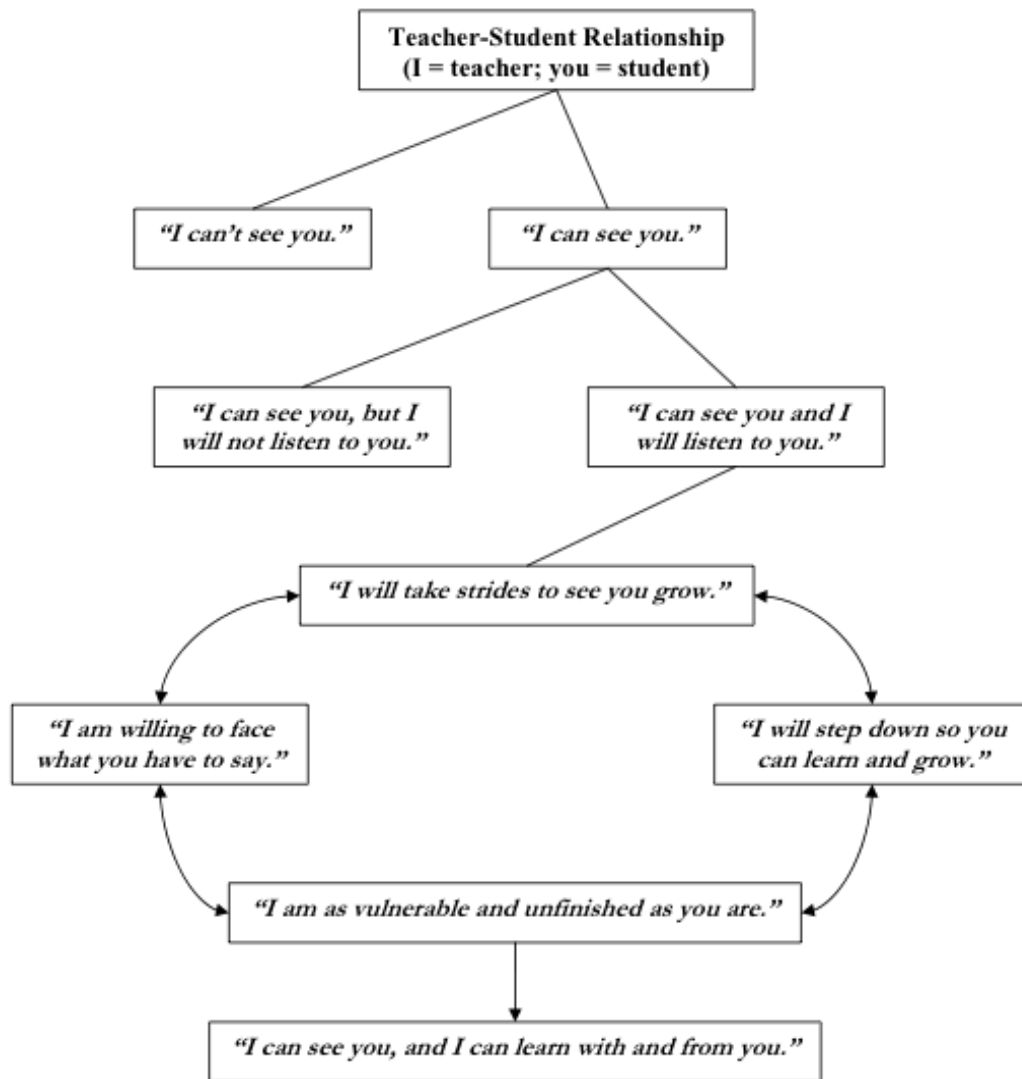


Figure 1: Student-teacher relationship (Vasconcelos, 2011, p. 433)

We all have aspects of ourselves, for example gender or race, that are obvious and other aspects where we have some degree of choice about how authentic we are, what we explicitly share, for example sexual orientation or religion. Hosek & Thompson (2009) analysed forty one college instructors' own criteria for developing rules about privacy and the conditions under which they become permeable. They found that teachers shared personal information when: it was relevant to the course material and so might help students connect with it more, and to encourage reciprocity and a closer relationship.

However, this was tempered with the risks involved in sharing personal information, for example, the risk of: being sanctioned by their college, causing discomfort to themselves or to others, or being stigmatised. One of the factors that particularly led to more personal sharing with individual students, rather than the whole class, was when students came and shared something with the teacher that was similar to the teacher's experience.

Teachers' decisions to 'come out' as gay or lesbian is one that has attracted research interest, both in terms of its meaning for the teacher and the response of the students. For Duncan, one of the participants in Jackson's (2008) study of gay and lesbian teachers in the USA, coming out enriched his teaching as it included all of him:

'Because good teaching, effective teaching, comes from the teacher's self.... Good teaching is having a full passion for the material, put yourself into what it is you're teaching. It's about embodying information and you need to fulfil the information with your own self, otherwise you could do it from a book. It's like running on all your spark plugs. I have eight spark plugs in me, eight plugs in me but only seven are firing because the gay one is shut down then you know, you're not getting my full power... (Duncan).' (p. 50).

The focus of the student-teacher relationship has, understandably, been on the teacher giving to the student; giving in terms of the self of the teacher as well as in terms of skills and knowledge. However, if the teacher were not also receiving what would sustain them? Cameron (1997) has dealt with burnout several times, recognising that *'I view teaching as the giving of myself, as the giving of love, so personal renewal is an inevitable issue.'* (p. 174). Being in the service of another, even with the resulting delight when seeing others grow and develop, cannot be the only sustenance required for the teacher. There must be something more that they receive from the role, including their own learning and development. This is, unfortunately, much harder to find in the literature: *'though there exists a wealth of data concerning the ways teachers can work to meet students' interpersonal needs, there have been few studies done to examine teachers' attempts to meet their own interpersonal needs within the classroom'* (Davis, 2003, p. 225). While this may well be due to this being less likely to gain research funding, I also wonder if it might be related to my own sense of discomfort with this theme; with the idea of meeting some of my own needs through my role as trainer. Yet as I write that, it also seems ludicrous that I wouldn't be, why else do it? Is this discomfort something I share with others in my field, is it something that students reflect on at all – whether positively or negatively? Palmer's (1993) comment that: *'while knowing teaching and learning require intimacy in certain forms, education would be distorted if intimacy became its ultimate norm'* (p. xiii) acts. Perhaps, as a warning that intimacy is not the be all and end all of teaching and learning, but also it being important that teachers aren't meeting their intimacy needs through their students.

There is only so much sustenance that can be gained from seeing students develop, but little else seems to have been researched in terms of what teachers receive from teaching. Also, the warning signs are up on this little charted territory lest more be gained than is deemed okay – and that seems to be so little.

2.2.4 Reciprocity, Transference and Power

Reciprocity in the student-teacher relationship is not always acknowledged in the literature. When it is, it is usually in terms of emphasising separate, but complementary, roles for teacher and student as Hambrick (1997) does: *‘Teaching and learning are two sides of a reciprocal relationship.’* (p. 249). Hunt (1976), however, looks deeper than this, acknowledging more than the respective roles by considering the people in those roles and what they create together:

‘Any adequate account of the interaction between teacher and student(s) must ultimately be reciprocal, acknowledging that the unit is persons-in-relation, and cannot be understood in unidirectional terms’ (p. 269).

Freire (1990) acknowledges differences in the role of teacher and student but takes even further their potential reciprocity: *‘through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers’* (p. 53).

As we consider the importance of the student-teacher relationship we cannot ignore that the quality of this differs for each dyad. As Perry (1988) noted, each person has a different experience in the same classroom. The reciprocity of student and teacher is often not clear and obvious as: the relationship is created for the purpose of the student’s learning, the time they spend together is focused on the learning curriculum and, there is often little time for talking with each other one-to-one. This can frequently lead to situations where: *‘students and colleagues read meanings into our actions that are very different from, and sometimes directly antithetical to those we intend’* (Brookfield, 2006, pp. 49-50). The lack of time to develop an unambiguous relationship must result in the relatively greater potential influence of all that the student and teacher bring to their relationship, including transference from previous relationships (for example: Robertson, 1999b; Whitehead, 2010).

Robertson (1999b) considers transference to often be present in the student-teacher relationship and his analysis of more than 350 items in the college teaching and transference literature resulted in him producing a list of fifteen indicators of when transference may be present including: a student acting as if they know you much more than they do, you have a good relationship which suddenly has problems, and, the student is very sensitive to your actions. When Robertson (1999b) does mention the teacher’s response to the student it tends to be in terms of countertransference, defined as the teacher’s reaction to a student’s transference; unfortunately this implies that teachers have a high degree of self-insight and don’t have their own transference responses to students.

When considering the importance of the student-teacher relationship we must include the indisputable reality that this is not a relationship with equality of power. As Brookfield (2006) says:

'I know that as the teacher I always have power in the classroom and that I can never be a fly on the wall withering away to the point that students don't notice I'm in the room' (p. 36).

The most obvious way in which the teacher has power is in evaluation and assessment of students' work. Even very confident students, or those who seem to not care about their results, can find a negative comment from a teacher devastating and a positive comment a real boost (Brookfield, 2006); and can feel as if they are being assessed not just for their learning but also as people (Light, Light, Calkins, & Cox, 2009). Unsurprisingly students often filter what feedback they give to teachers for fear of it impacting the teacher's evaluation of them (Brookfield, 2006).

Power, however, is also held by the different ways that a teacher may behave towards each student and the impact of that on each student. Babad (1993) found that, while teachers tended to give lower achievers more support in their learning than high achievers, nuances of their behaviour were picked up by the students and observers that were more negative towards lower achievers and indicated lower expectations of them from the teacher. Tal and Babad's (1989, 1990) studies of the 'teacher's pet' phenomenon with Israeli students showed how familiar they are with it and how it causes jealousy and anger. While teachers thought they could conceal their preferences from the students, the research showed that this wasn't so.

As we have seen, reciprocal student-teacher relationships are perceived along a continuum from being separate but complementary to the blurring of student-teacher / teacher-student. With little time together to check our perceptions and minimise the distortions created by what we bring with us, these relationships will often be built on, at least some, inaccuracies. An unavoidable element of the reciprocal relationship is the power differential with the teacher never being invisible and their behaviour towards individuals being noticed by others, however discreet.

2.2.5 Concluding

The focus of my research is embedded in a relational paradigm, socio-cultural perspective and systemocentric approach of education that fits with Person Centred principles and holds the relationship as being in the service of 'the student' but also acknowledges it as being much richer and far more complex. It is in keeping with authors who have called out against the '*cult of efficiency*' (1955) in education described by Jersild as far back as 1955 and fits with Frymier and Houser's (2000) conclusion that:

'When teachers and students move beyond the formal teacher/student roles and begin to see each other as individuals, interpersonal relationships form. When communication becomes interpersonal... individuals treat one another with greater respect and trust develops. When trust develops it is much easier to ask "stupid questions," or ask for feedback and clarification. All teachers know that such questions can make the difference between confusion and enlightenment in students ... When a trusting and caring relationship develops between teachers and students, a safe learning environment is created.' (p. 217).

The creation of this safe learning environment is dependent, as has been discussed, on the perception of the student, perspective of the trainer, and what they each bring in terms of relationship histories, beliefs about education, and personalities.

2.3 The Helping Professions² Literature

2.3.1 A valuable relationship

The existence and relevance of the service user-practitioner relationship has been recognised for centuries: *'relationship or the interconnectedness between two people has been significant in all healing since the time of Hippocrates and Galen'* (Clarkson, 1994, p. 29). The logical corollary of this is that poor communication is associated with poor health outcomes, dissatisfaction and even the propensity to sue for medical malpractice (Beckman et al, 1994).

The term 'relationship', however, is so broad and vague that I must clarify what is meant in this professional context. At a basic level it is about caring, and indeed another term that is sometimes used for the helping professions is the 'caring' professions.

Halldorsdottir (2008) has developed, from empirical evidence, a synthesised theory of the dynamics of the nurse-patient relationship from the patient's perspective; see table 2. Links can clearly be seen between this and Brookfield's (2006) authenticity and credibility and DeVito's (1986) stages of relationship. The table shows the relationship as being something that evolves over time and requires participation by both service user and nurse to create and maintain it; while it is in the service of the service user it involves the person of each nurse and service user.

² The 'helping professions' are those such as nurse, social worker, doctor, occupational therapist. In this section I focus primarily on nursing and social worker where more has been written on the theme of relationship.

<i>The major tenets of the theory</i>
1. The nurse–patient relationship is a fundamental aspect of professional nursing care from the patient perspective
2. There are certain prerequisites for a nurse–patient relationship to develop. The nurse must be perceived by the patient as:
a. Genuinely caring for the patient as a person and as a patient
b. Having professional wisdom, i.e. the combination of knowledge and experience
c. Competent, i.e. having the necessary skills required in the relevant area of nursing.
These three essential aspects of professional nursing care create a sense of trust in the patient which is an essential building block for the bridge
3. The nurse–patient relationship involves two inter-related processes – development of connection while maintaining a comfortable distance of respect and compassion
4. The metaphor of a bridge is used to symbolize the openness in communication and the connectedness experienced by the patient in an encounter perceived as caring. The metaphor of a wall is used to symbolize the negative or no communication, detachment and lack of a caring connection, in an encounter perceived as uncaring
5. Five phases can be identified in the development of a nurse–patient connection – from the patient perspective: (a) reaching out – initiating connection; (b) removing the masks of anonymity; (c) acknowledgement of connection; (d) reaching a level of truthfulness and a sense of solidarity and true negotiation of care
6. In order for the nurse–patient relationship to be life-giving the nurse must be a life-giving person
7. The positive consequences of a nurse–patient connection can be summarized as empowerment and the negative consequences of the wall can be summarized as discouragement or even disempowerment
Table 2: major tenets of the nurse-patient relationship (Halldorsdottir, 2008, p. 646)

Along with nursing, social work is a profession where there has often been a strong emphasis on the relationship, although even within this profession there are very different positions towards the service user-practitioner relationship. Howe (1998) puts forward three broad positions:

- *the relationship is just a function of the social worker role;*
- *there is a social work role and relationship skills are helpful in performing it well;*
- *'it is within the relationship that most of the important things happen' and this 'can be considered independently of the agency role' (p. 45).*

Where a practitioner positions themselves would make a fundamental difference to how they carry out their client work, but also the positioning of the researcher in relation to the relationship has a profound effect on what they study, and how they undertake, and write about, it. Paley (2002), for example, considers caring as emblematic of a slave morality, while Finfgeld-Connett's (2008) meta-synthesis of qualitative reports and concept analyses of caring found that:

'nurses who enact caring are portrayed as creative, daring, assertive and able to empower patients to care for themselves. Moreover, they are professionally mature enough to strike a healthy balance between caring for others and caring for themselves.' (p. 202).

Despite centuries of recognition of the importance of the relationship for healing the importance given to it by practitioners greatly varies (Howe, 1998). The dynamics of caring relationships are complex and, along with the practitioner's skills, knowledge and competence, the engagement of the person of the practitioner is also essential (Halldorsdottir, 2008).

2.3.2 Developing as caring professionals

How the helping professional views the client-practitioner relationship is likely to have been influenced by how it was viewed in their training. Mishna and Rasmussen (2001) found that while social work training research has noted the importance of the student-trainer relationship, and has made parallels between it and the client-social worker relationship, the literature has tended to focus on specific principles and guidelines to be put into practice to create a positive classroom environment. Sawatzky et al (2009), however view nursing as being one profession that claims uniqueness due to the degree to which *'it is grounded in the ethic of caring. Caring transcends every aspect of nursing, including nursing education'* (p. 260). However, others say how caring is increasingly being squeezed out of the curricular, with Redmond & Sorrell's (1996) quote from a student nurse being familiar:

"I don't think caring was really stressed in the curriculum. It's not brought up during class. It's not brought up on the clinical floor. We're so into all the physiological things that are going on and knowing your meds and side effects and how to perform a certain procedure, but I don't know if we've really hit on caring so much.'
(p. 21).

Being able to develop appropriate caring relationships is not just an issue of priority and time in the curriculum. Brown (2011) found that while the literature extensively cited caring as a core value, this was not matched with effective curricular designs for nurse educators to support students to internalise behaviours that are caring. Where curricular are available the query is whether caring can actually be taught; just teaching communication skills, for example, makes communication a technique that can be disconnected from emotion and so not actually be caring (Freshwater, 2003).

Seeing others engage in using relationship skills with patients is another method that doesn't seem to help students develop these skills either, as Egnaw and Wilson (2011) found out in their qualitative research involving faculty and medical students in a New Zealand medical school. In this case what made the difference was when the faculty made the implicit explicit by reflecting on and articulating the complexity of what they were doing in their interactions with patients.

Along with others (for example: Sawatzky et al., 2009; Sorrell & Redmond, 1997) Freshwater and Stickley (2004) state that caring and love cannot be taught but must be modelled: *'if the teacher can communicate love to his / her students, then the students are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward their patients'* (p. 94).

When considering caring, the focus is on practitioners developing their capacity to offer caring relationships for the benefit of their service users' health. There is much less attention paid to the benefits for the practitioner as well, and even less on any reciprocity between student and teacher.

In Relationship Centred Care (RCC), we see a model of care that draws a direct link between the relationship of student and faculty and that of practitioner and service user:

'Effective relationship-centered care and effective educational programs and processes must parallel one another.... The caring relationship between practitioner and patient is modelled by the nurturing environment that students, faculty, and practitioners themselves create through the quality of their relationships.' (Tresolini & the Pew-Fetzer Task Force, 1994, pp. 39-40).

Tresolini and her colleagues (1994), forming the Pew-Fetzer Task Force, reported in a *'landmark monograph'* (Suchman, 2006 p. S40) on how to advance psychosocial health education by having RCC at its core. Beach & Inui (2006) defined RCC as *'care in which all participants appreciate the importance of their relationships with one another'* (p. S3) and presented four principles on which it is founded:

- '(1) that relationships in health care ought to include the personhood of the participants,*
- (2) that affect and emotion are important components of these relationships,*
- (3) that all health care relationships occur in the context of reciprocal influence, and*
- (4) that the formation and maintenance of genuine relationships in health care is morally valuable.'* (p. S3).

While all of these principles are significant, it is the third one that is particularly relevant in the context of this research as it emphasises reciprocal influence. As they are at pains to say, the service user's goals remain the priority but there is an acknowledgement that *'the clinician also benefits in serving the patient.'* (Beach & Inui, 2006, p. S4).

In RCC (Beach & Inui, 2006), links are made from teacher to student, practitioner to service user, and a learning environment of care and collaboration is viewed as essential. Alongside this we have a lack of research on whether this link is effective and, in other curricula, caring being along a continuum from being core to squeezed out.

2.3.3 Reciprocity

As with all relationships, not only those that come into existence because one is helping the other, the relationship develops intersubjectively. As Aranda & Street (1999) explain in relation to nurse and patient: *'each contribute to interactions; nurse-patient relationships being understood as mutually constructed'* (p. 75). Particular aspects of each other may impact the relationship, for example Street et al's (2007) study of patients and doctors in Texas, found that when patients perceived that their personal beliefs, values and ways of communicating were similar to their doctor's they tended to trust them more, be more satisfied with their care and be more intent on following advice. Interestingly though, they found no relationship between patient outcomes and patient's perceptions of similarity with their doctor in terms of race, ethnicity and community.

Berg et al's (2007) participant observation study on a medical ward looked at interactions between patients and nurses. This led to them identifying three themes of a caring relationship, all of which include elements of reciprocity: *'respect for each other and for themselves, responsibility to reach out to each other and engagement'* (p. 100). This doesn't mean that each person plays the same role though, this caring relationship is *'asymmetrical, tied to time and context'* (p. 100). While each individual was considered unique the researchers also found that the relationships went beyond the individual relationship of nurse and patient with nurses being interdependent and taking over from each other. What was crucial was *'the importance of both patients' and nurses' responsibility in being open in the encounter to understand the situation'* (p. 104).

An unusual piece of research was conducted by Alexander and Charles (2009) who interviewed ten social workers in a Canadian city concerning their experience of being cared for by a client and the impact of this on them. There was an awareness in the participants *'of the subversive nature of engaging in mutual relationships with clients'* (p. 17) and they found it important to note that the social workers didn't expect or need this reciprocity of care from clients and expected it to vary within each relationship over time. They noted that it was subtle gestures such as *'friendliness, personal inquiries or shared laughter'* (p. 12) that made the participants aware of the caring some of their clients had for them. One participant explained this particularly well:

'It wasn't anything tangible. But I knew that she valued me as a person. I felt it. She had respect for me and it was in a non-verbal way, it wasn't anything tangible.' (p.

13).

While reciprocity in the service user-practitioner relationship still seems to have some discomfort around it, it is increasingly being acknowledged. This is less so, however, in the literature on the education of the helping professions. Paterson and Crawford (1994) analysed nurse research and literature to explore the concept of caring in nursing education and found that there was

'little discussion of the reciprocity of caring; i.e. that caring may benefit both the teacher and the student' (p. 166).

It is clear that caring relationships do develop, though not between all service users and practitioners. This seems obvious, and yet also something of a relief for me to confirm, as I am well aware that I have different qualities of relationship with different students.

2.3.4 Self as tool, boundaries and ethics

In keeping with the concept of the uniqueness of each reciprocal relationship is that of 'self as tool'. Combs (1969), stated back in 1969, that for professional helpers *'the primary tool with which they work is themselves'* (p. 10). This concept has been taken up by many others and is now commonly used. 'Self' can, however, be defined in several ways and Arnd-Caddigan and Pozzuto (2008) explore the usual ways in which 'self' is described in social work literature – as something objectively real and constant that is independent of, and disconnected from, the client. From this perspective there is a tendency to view the self of the social worker acting on the self of the client and interventions can be planned before meeting with the client and even manualised. This way of viewing 'self' does not fit with the way that relationship has been discussed so far in this literature review, what fits much more is their alternate perspective of self, as *'process in interaction'* (p. 235):

'self is a function of relationships with others in which the self is continually created, maintained, and re-created' (p. 235).

This concept of self and the resulting relationship that forms between worker and client fits well with Gillies' (2012) point that:

'In recent years, there has been a move in many helping professions away from the traditional expert model with a passive client to a collaborative empowering partnership. This new relationship calls on professionals to view clients as experts in their own right, owning their own strengths and skills, working alongside them to achieve their goals and paying attention to the factors that enhance the relationship.' (p. 181).

Working with an interpersonal concept of self is more complex than an objective separate one and requires a review of professional boundaries. O'Leary et al (2012) have re-conceptualised the concept of professional boundaries which they regard as having been rudimentary up to now (see figures 2 & 3).

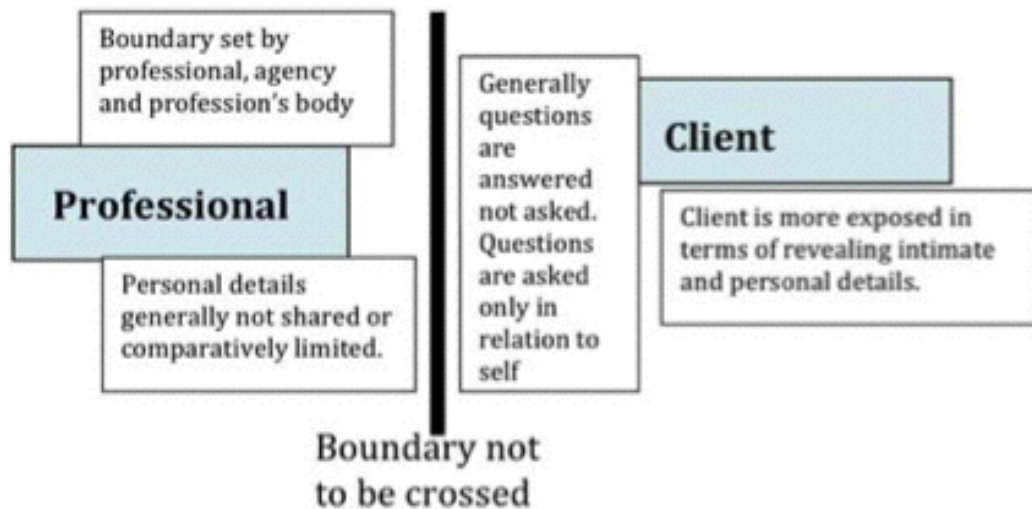
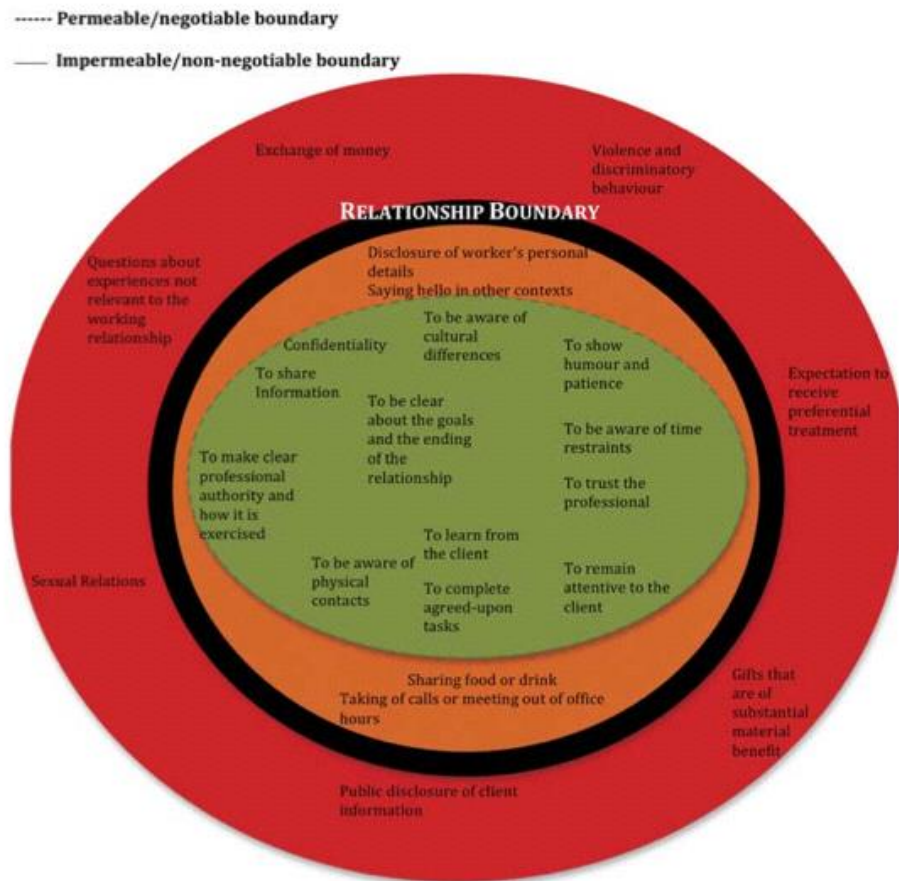


Figure 2: Traditional conceptualization of professional boundary (O'Leary, Tsui & Ruch, 2012, p. 4)

While acknowledging the importance of professional boundaries to protect against violations of power, discrimination and exploitation they (O'Leary, Tsui & Ruch, 2012) propose a dynamic model which is more about connection than disconnection, use of self rather than separation; a model that they consider more in keeping with good current social work practice. In figure 3 you can see that:

'it emphasises the dynamic nature of boundary setting that reflects changes within the professional relationship over time and acknowledges the interplay of both visible dimensions of the relationship and the less visible, unconscious dynamics that are recognised through the practitioner's reflective processes' (p. 9).

Accepting the relevance, complexity, and variability of caring relationships in the education and practice of helping professionals doesn't just lead us to review our model of professional boundaries, it also engages us with the competencies and ethics of these professions: *'it would be a mistake to see this as solely a two-way relationship...that relationship is mediated through a third party, the regulatory body for the profession'* (Shardlow & Doel, 2009, p. 5). Both social work and nursing have within their competencies for registration consideration of the relationship between service users and practitioners.



Central circle – crucial ingredients of all relationships but uniquely negotiated in each case;
 Second circle – permeable (dashed line) with the central circle, less pivotal and might not be included in all discussions about boundaries;
 Outer circle – outside the relationship boundary as they are unethical and non-negotiable.

Figure 3: Dynamic model of professional (Social Work) boundary (O'Leary, Tsui & Ruch, 2012, p. 10)

For adult nursing in the UK: *'All nurses must use therapeutic principles to engage, maintain and, where appropriate, disengage from professional caring relationships, and must always respect professional boundaries'* (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2010, p. 16), whilst social workers in England must *'understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships with service users, carers and colleagues as both an autonomous practitioner and collaboratively with others'* (Health & Care Professions Council, 2012, p. 11), basing these relationships on respect and honesty, managing emotional and power dynamics, and establishing and maintaining boundaries (Health & Care Professions Council, 2012).

The concept of self as *'process in interaction'* (Arnd-Caddigan & Pozzuto, 2008, p. 235) with a dynamic model of professional boundaries (O'Leary, Tsui & Ruch, 2012) provides us with an exciting fluid yet bounded and ethical model for effective and professional relationships in the helping professions.

2.3.5 Concluding

The research in this area has strongly linked caring relationships with their potential benefit for the physical and /or mental health of the service user. While my research doesn't emphasise the function of the counselling student and trainer relationship as supporting the development of the counsellor, and the quality of the relationship they offer their clients, it is based on an assumption that there is a link between the two.

The discussion of the literature clearly shows my own assumptions in counsellor training, with the relationship, and particularly 'caring' by the practitioner, being at the heart of the work. One quote that expresses this particularly well is one of the respondents in Halldorsdottir's (2008) research who, when asked what is the difference between caring and uncaring, said:

'I'm not sure how to put it other than 'personal relationship'; the sense is somehow that your and my spirits have met in the experience, and the whole idea that there is somebody in that hospital who is with me, rather than working on me.' (p. 643).

The relationship between teacher and student is paralleled, in some ways, with that of the service user and practitioner with dynamic boundaries between the two developed and held in their mutually constructed relationship where each self is recognized as being in constant process. There is a need to not only acknowledge the importance of caring relationships but also to ensure space in the curricula for it to be lived out, developed, emphasised, and followed through in professional practice.

2.4 Client – Counsellor Relationship

2.4.1 Relationship as central

While there is not quite full agreement as to whether most (Mearns & Schmid, 2006) or all (Clarkson, 1990, 1994, 1995; Paul & Haugh, 2008b) therapy approaches consider the therapeutic relationship as central it is clearly of great importance. This makes it different from education and the helping professions where there is more of a mix in perspectives towards the value of the relationship, including not considering it at all. As I move on to the client-counsellor relationship the amount of literature to consider has risen exponentially and I am taking care to focus on elements that are linked to my theme of reciprocal influence and complement, with minimal overlapping, themes already covered.

One aspect of note is that the literature I have explored has been of the client and counsellor separately rather than both together (Bachelor & Horvath, 1999; Orlinsky, Ronnestad, & Willutzki, 2004).

People from all therapy approaches would probably agree with Orlinsky (2006) that the therapeutic relationship involves:

'(a) an intentionally-formed, culturally-defined social relationship through which a potentially healing intersubjective connection is established (b) between persons who interact with one another in the roles of client and therapist (c) for a delimited time during which their life-course trajectories intersect, (d) with the therapist acting on behalf of the community that certified her / to engage with the patient in ways that aim to influence the patient's life-course in directions that should be beneficial for the patient.' (p. 5).

Counselling requires a relationship between client and counsellor and so *'common sense dictates that the therapist and the patient must inevitably affect each other as human beings'* (Baldwin, 2000, p. 19). The influence that the being of the counsellor might have on the client is a concern of all therapy approaches, whether that be in a bid to reduce it (Patterson, 1989), utilise it (Rogers, 1951, 1959, 1961), or monitor its ethical boundaries. In all cases the relationship must be for the benefit of the client (BACP, 2013).

While there are many different therapy approaches, research shows again and again that there are no significant differences in client outcomes on the basis of the therapy approach of the counsellor (for example: Beutler et al., 2004; Stiles et al, 2006; Wampold, 2001). However, research into the factors that can be linked to outcome has been more successful in identifying differences, with Lambert's (1999; 1992) work on this being most widely recognised. He identified four common factors: extra therapeutic change, hope/expectancy, model or technique, and the therapeutic relationship. He found that the latter accounted for 30% of positive outcome. Other researchers who have looked at common factors have made the percentage quite different with Andrews (2000) making it 80% and Beutler et al (2004) 17% but *'overall, the therapeutic relationship is clearly considered the most important in-therapy factor'* (Paul & Haugh, 2008a, p. 13).

The context of relating, however, is broader than 'merely' of client and counsellor, Rennie's (2000) work on the client's relationships revealed that:

'Clients appear to have three main relationships – their relationship with themselves (including self-in-the-world and self-and-others other than therapist), with the therapist, and with the therapist's techniques.' (p. 153).

Where the client is with each of these relationships at any one time will determine how they relate with the counsellor:

'When allied with the therapist, clients may seize control of the lead because it is more regnant than the one being taken by the therapist. They can effect this seizure without fear because of their comfortable relationship with themselves and with the therapist. Alternatively, when comfortable with the therapist, but not comfortable with their relationship with themselves, they may defend against themselves. And when not comfortable with their relationship with the therapist, they may resist certain initiatives taken by the therapist while attempting to influence the therapist's approach as well as the relationship with the therapist.' (Rennie, 2000, p. 163).

Gelso and Carter's (1985) tripartite model of the therapeutic relationship includes three types of relationship: working alliance, transference/countertransference, and real. While the three have distinct features, and each will now be explored separately, in reality they *'operate simultaneously, with each moving from foreground to background at certain points in the work and with each influencing and being influenced by the other'* (Gelso, 2009a, p. 258).

2.4.2 Working alliance

The working, or therapeutic, alliance is familiar to many therapists across therapeutic approaches. Horvath and Bedi's (2002) lengthy definition is worth quoting here as it pulls together Bordin's theoretical work as well as the developing clinical consensus on this concept:

'The alliance refers to the quality and strength of the collaborative relationship between client and therapist in therapy. This concept is inclusive of: the positive affective bonds between client and therapist, such as mutual trust, liking, respect, and caring. Alliance also encompasses the more cognitive aspects of the therapy relationship; consensus about, and active commitment to, the goals of therapy and to the means by which these goals can be reached. Alliance involves a sense of partnership in therapy between therapist and client, in which each participant is actively committed to their specific and appropriate responsibilities in therapy, and believes that the other is likewise enthusiastically engaged in the process. The alliance is a conscious and purposeful aspect of the relation between therapist and client: It is conscious in the sense that the quality of the alliance is within ready grasp of the participants, and it is purposeful in that it is specific to a context in which there is a therapist or helper who accepts some responsibility for providing psychological assistance to a client or clients.' (p. 41).

The alliance is not a fixed entity, it is dynamic and can change in a moment; in the early stages of counselling, or when there are challenges, it is in the foreground and when it is strong it becomes background (Ladany et al, 2008). This strongly links to Berg, Skott & Danielson's (2007) themes of a caring nurse-patient relationship which can be summarised as mutual respect, responsibility and engagement.

Within the counselling relationship it is easy for misunderstandings to arise and cause disjunctures or even ruptures in the working alliance (Rennie, 2001). Rhodes et al (1994) explored the experiences of therapy for therapists-in-training and therapists, focusing on major misunderstanding events that had happened during therapy and how they had been dealt with. Unsurprisingly these events were pivotal points in the therapy and if worked with effectively had the potential for strengthening the relationship, as Bordin (1979) had found in his classic work, and linking to Docan-Morgan and Manusov's (2009) work on relational turning points in education. Rhodes et al (1994) found that for the misunderstanding to be resolved the clients needed to talk about it and where the clients felt safe in the relationship they were able to express their experience and work through it with the counsellor; however, where they didn't feel safe they rarely brought up the misunderstanding and it had an ongoing negative impact that was hidden from the counsellor.

Rennie (2001) emphasises the importance of client and counsellor taking responsibility to talk about their meta-communication in order to resolve misunderstandings and fine tune the relationship. In keeping with this Hill and Knox (2009) found that a good therapeutic relationship before the event made resolution easier. Clients could aid the process by exploring their feelings about the relationship rather than being hostile or defensive and counsellors could aid it by acknowledging the issue and encouraging the client to explore feelings rather than blame the client. Benefits gained were an improved therapeutic relationship and the client being better able to express their feelings and relate interpersonally.

2.4.3 Transferential / countertransferential relationship

Unlike the working alliance there is a great deal of variety across therapeutic approaches in how the transferential/countertransferential relationship is perceived and worked with in counselling. Carl Rogers (1989), the founder of the Person Centred Approach, considered that clients responses to the counsellor were primarily one of two sorts: those that were understandable in relation to how the counsellor presented, and those that are transferential and *'have little or no relationship to the therapist's behaviour. These are truly "transferred" from their real origin to the therapist. They are projections.'* (p. 130). Either can be positive or negative responses. Traditional psychoanalytic therapy, particularly during the first half of the twentieth century regarded the transferential/countertransferential relationship as the most important and *'the analyst, it was presumed, functioned as a blank screen upon which the client projected his or her beliefs, attitudes, and values.'* It was believed that *'the therapist was neutral; his or her values were not involved'* (Patterson, 1989, p. 165).

This is quite different in the Person Centred Approach where Rogers (1989) describes how the client is worked with in the same way, regardless of the source of their responses:

'If the therapist is sensitively understanding and genuinely acceptant and nonjudgmental, therapy will move forward through these feelings. There is absolutely no need to make a special case of attitudes that are transferred to the therapist' (p. 130).

Here there is a belief that the offering of a working alliance and real relationship will dissolve the transference.

There can be a tendency to focus on the client's transference but the counsellor's countertransference is also important. Countertransference concerns the counsellor's response to the client, only some definitions (for example: Gelso & Hayes, 2007) include the two components of: 1) the counsellor's response to the client, and 2) counsellor's responses that are due to unresolved issues of the counsellor.

It is the latter that are often not included as part of the definition, though it is clear that therapists are also impacted by their personal histories (Bachelor & Horvath, 1999; Ladany et al., 2008; Rosenblatt, 2009). One perspective in managing countertransference is to emphasise the counsellor's need to be as aware of this as possible in order to minimise their influence (Rosenblatt, 2009). Another perspective is to consider the role of this aspect of countertransference as a useful therapeutic tool when the counsellor explores their personal reaction to a client, understands it and makes effective use of it rather than being unconsciously led by it (Ladany et al., 2008). Ladany et al (2008) see Hayes and Gelso (2001) as encapsulating this best: *"The carpenter has a hammer, the surgeon has a scalpel, the therapist has the self"* (p. 37).

While the client-counsellor relationship is not the source of the transference and countertransference responses we can see that it is their interaction with each other that triggers these responses and awareness is needed to work through them effectively.

2.4.4 Real relationship

Gelso (2009a), after consideration of how the real relationship has been previously defined, puts forward a modern definition:

'the personal relationship existing between two or more people as reflected in the degree to which each is genuine with the other and perceives and experiences the other in ways that benefit the other' (pp. 254-255).

For the relationship to be real both client and counsellor must become vulnerable to each other (Baldwin, 2000). In this essential openness and vulnerability lies the possibility of change in not only the client but also the counsellor (Wosket, 1999), just as has been described in the teacher who offers of themselves to students (Shor & Freire, 1987).

While the degree of real relationship a counsellor must be able to offer clients differs according to their therapeutic approach. It is nevertheless challenging to sustain and has the potential to be both damaging: *'most therapists understand that they jeopardize their own emotional well-being when they intimately encounter the pain of others'* (Kottler, 2003, p. 1) and growth enhancing: *'by the powerful privilege of intimately witnessing another human being in their struggle to survive and develop'* (Mahoney & Eiseman, 1989, p. 25). To be able to go to deep places with clients requires that the counsellor is able to move comfortably in their own deep places and it has long been recognised that we can only go with our clients where we have been able to go with ourselves (Luthman & Kirschenbaum, 1974; Miller, 1990; Nouwen, 1994). Rosenblatt (2009) makes a case for what is rarely voiced: *'providing therapy to a client can be therapeutic for the therapist'* (p. 169). He acknowledges that we all develop through life experience but also contends that *'therapists have more opportunity for such experience. Therapists are more likely to have interactions that delve deep into what is hidden in self and relationships'* (p. 177). He is at pains to clarify that it is *'not the deliberate use of clients by therapists but therapist change as an unintended byproduct of the therapeutic relationship'* (pp. 170-171).

Guttman and Daniels (2001) looked more broadly at the psychological benefits that counsellors gain from providing counselling; their study of 74 Israeli high-school counsellors showed that the counsellors *'were not selfless givers'* (p. 203) but gained in many ways, particularly 'narcissistic benefits' including reinforcement of self-worth; 'vocational benefits' including independence, diversity, intellectual stimulation; and 'improved relationships' including enrichment of relationships with partner and friends (p. 214).

One area that can be confusing in connection with the real relationship is the role of self-disclosure, something that has been described as *'one of the most controversial therapist interventions'* (Hill & Knox, 2002). The real relationship is between person and person and in the moments of meeting *'the Self of the therapist becomes the instrument through which the healing evolves'* (Clarkson, 1990, p. 155). This doesn't mean though that each shares all aspects of themselves. Wosket (1999) distinguishes between two types of self disclosure: *'the person of the therapist and the therapist's use of self'* (p. 11). She describes how the person of the therapist *'pervades the therapeutic relationship'*(p. 11) in an inadvertent and unavoidable way while the counsellor 'uses' their self in an intentional way, monitoring what they consider useful to consciously and actively share with a particular client at a particular time in keeping with their therapy approach. Self disclosure isn't an all or nothing way of being. Levine (2007) explains: *'the self I disclose is not a constant, an unvarying monolith. Inevitably, I – and all clinicians – display different selves, aspects of self, or slices of self to each patient and in all of our relationships.'* (p. 90).

Linked with this are the counsellor's values and beliefs. Counsellors, in keeping with the BACP ethical framework *'should not allow their professional relationships with clients to be prejudiced by any personal views that they may hold about lifestyle, age, gender, disability, gender*

reassignment, race, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership.' (BACP, 2013, p. 7). As I noted earlier, it is now acknowledged that the counsellor can't be a blank screen and some of the counsellors' values will emerge explicitly or implicitly. For there to be a 'real relationship' this may be more so. It is therefore important for counsellors to explore their prejudices, outside the counselling room, and by doing so reduce them and become aware of their potential impact on client work and reduce this also.

2.4.5 Person Centred Approach

Person Centred counselling, my approach to counselling, focuses particularly on the real relationship because of its phenomenological perspective and resulting belief that the client is the expert on themselves, *'It is the client who knows what hurts, what directions to go, what problems are crucial, what experiences have been deeply buried'* (Rogers, 1961, pp. 11-12). The relationship is not the precursor to other interventions but rather the relationship is the therapy (Rogers, 1962). This is based in the *'six necessary and sufficient conditions'*:

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, whom 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 for him, and the empathic understanding of the therapist.'* (Rogers, 1959, p. 213).

The way that these conditions lead us to view the therapeutic relationship is in keeping with the literature from the previous sections. It is unique and reciprocal; asymmetrical, with counsellors offering themselves in the service of the client. It also requires the client's openness to the relationship and ability to take in something of the counsellor, but this is not all or nothing. People are all on a continuum of experiencing, Rogers describes this in his 'seven stages of process' (1961). In stage one *'the ways in which he construes experience have been set by his past, and are rigidly unaffected by the actualities of the present'* (p. 133), while in stage seven *'new feelings are experienced with immediacy and richness of detail, both in the therapeutic relationship and outside'* (p. 151). Where the client is along the continuum in any given moment, and indeed where the counsellor is, will determine their capacity to meet and deeply reveal themselves in a real relationship. When they are able to do this they are at 'relational depth':

'A state of profound contact and engagement between two people in which each person is fully real with the Other and able to understand and value the Other's experiences at a high level' (Mearns & Cooper, 2005, p. xii).

Meeting at relational depth is considered to not deny, but rather dissolve, potential transference/countertransference with the clear knowledge that *'there are two people in the relationship both bringing their own histories, current concerns, future aspirations and fears to the encounter'* (Haugh, 2008, p. 40).

While Person Centred counselling has sometimes been seen as passive reflecting to the client it is much more and Mearns and Schmid (2006) express this powerfully when they say:

'Person-centered therapy is not only understanding; it is also not-understanding. Person-centered therapy is not only agreement; it is also disagreement. Person-centered therapy is not only nodding, it is also shaking one's head. Person-centered therapy is not only support and facilitation; it is also demand and challenge. In a word: confrontation is an essential part of person-centered therapy.' (p. 180).

To offer a real relationship the Person Centred counsellor: *'stands both with the client (in terms of seeking to understand and value the client) and counter to the client (in terms of offering a separate and different human response).'*' (Mearns & Schmid, 2006, p. 180).

2.4.6 Concluding

The client – counsellor relationship is much debated and written about because of the crucial role of the therapeutic relationship, however focused on the working alliance, transference/countertransference and/or real relationship. *'Regardless of theoretical orientation, all true psychotherapeutic interventions are interpersonal, delivered by one being to another.'* (Cozolino, 2004, p. xvii).

The therapeutic relationship holds great potential for misunderstandings and even harm as well as for growth – of both client and counsellor. Professional ethics and organisations clarify and monitor the parameters of this complex area where: *'We are required to act constantly in the arena of love, yet renounce all personal gratification; we work in one of the most potent cauldrons of intimacy, yet we are prohibited to drink from it'* (Clarkson, 1995, p. 25).

2.5 Counselling student-trainer relationship

2.5.1 Personal and Technical

I have included the client-counsellor relationship as one of the sections in this literature review as I, amongst others (Neath, 2009; Smith, 2011) consider that there are some elements of that relationship that have relevance to the counselling student-trainer relationship. Mearns (1997)

helpfully describes how a Person Centred training relationship differs from the counselling relationship:

- the counselling relationship has an exclusivity that the training doesn't, as the trainer has responsibility for all members of the training group;
- there is a different level of confidentiality. In training confidentiality is to the training team;
- in training, students and trainers are expected to share responsibility;
- the counsellor is responsible to the client but not for the client but the trainer has some responsibility both to and for the student counsellor.

Differences do not change the importance of the relationship though and I agree with Johns (1998a) who states that: *'the quality of relationships is as central in counselling training as it is in counselling'* (p. 217).

The trainer's role, particularly in approaches where the client-counsellor relationship is emphasised, is to train: *'the person of the therapist to integrate the personal with the technical'* and this must be done: *'in the mutually shared human encounter of the therapeutic moment'* (Aponte, 1992, p. 280). Training courses embed, to differing degrees, a range of opportunities for students to relate to others but how each engages with these and how challenging they find it will vary from person to person (Alfred, 1999).

The training environment has to feel safe and supportive enough for students to explore themselves, their relationships and experiences with others on the course, including the trainers (Connor, 1994; Jones et al, 2008; Mearns, 1997; Mutchler & Anderson, 2010; Smith, 2011). Conversely, inconsistency and unpredictability lead to significant anxiety (Smith, 2011). This is a significant challenge though as few join counselling courses really understanding the potential implications on them personally. Neath (2009) expresses this well:

'As a trainee I came with some expectations and assumptions and much unknowing, parallel again to a novice client. ... like almost any definition of therapy, can you actually know what that is until you get into it? ... Informed as I felt I was, there was an 'Ah ha' moment which was also the equivalent of jumping out of a plane without a parachute. After all, can you describe coffee if you haven't tasted it?' (p. 83).

Becoming a counselling trainer is often a second, or even third, career and the trainer may have little or no formal training in training. Trainers are often recruited from good ex-students in an informal way and on casual contracts (West, 2009). Trainers will work in different ways, consistently, hopefully, with their own, and the course's, theoretical approach and influenced by their individual personalities. Each trainer has:

'to work out if they are primarily 'educators, facilitators, or task-focused leaders; whether they see adult trainees/students/ learners as relatively empty vessels to be filled by traditional jug-pouring-mug didactic teaching or as independent minds bringing valuable experience, with the right to choose, plan and design their own learning, within appropriate other-or-self-defined goals; whether their (the trainers') responsibility is primarily content, process or boundary keeping, and so on.' (Johns, 1996, pp. 75-76).

Trainers may also be drawn into acting out particular archetypes for the group, for example: guru, earth mother, director, jester, bureaucrat, warrior, judge (Proctor, 1993).

While these different elements help determine what qualities of relationship can exist between student and trainer they are not usually either/or; the counselling trainer has multiple roles (see figure 4) (Ballinger, 2012; Inskipp, 1996; Johns, 1998b), they must be able to perform *'in any moment of exchange with a trainee or a group, there is a need for fine judgement, sensitive awareness, knowledge of our own strengths and our shadow, together with our empathy for and valuing for the other person'* (Johns, 1996, p. 64). This is indeed a tall order and a vivid picture comes to Johns' (1998b) mind of *'the brave – or foolhardy – man on a tightrope precariously inching his way across Niagara Falls'* (p. 4).

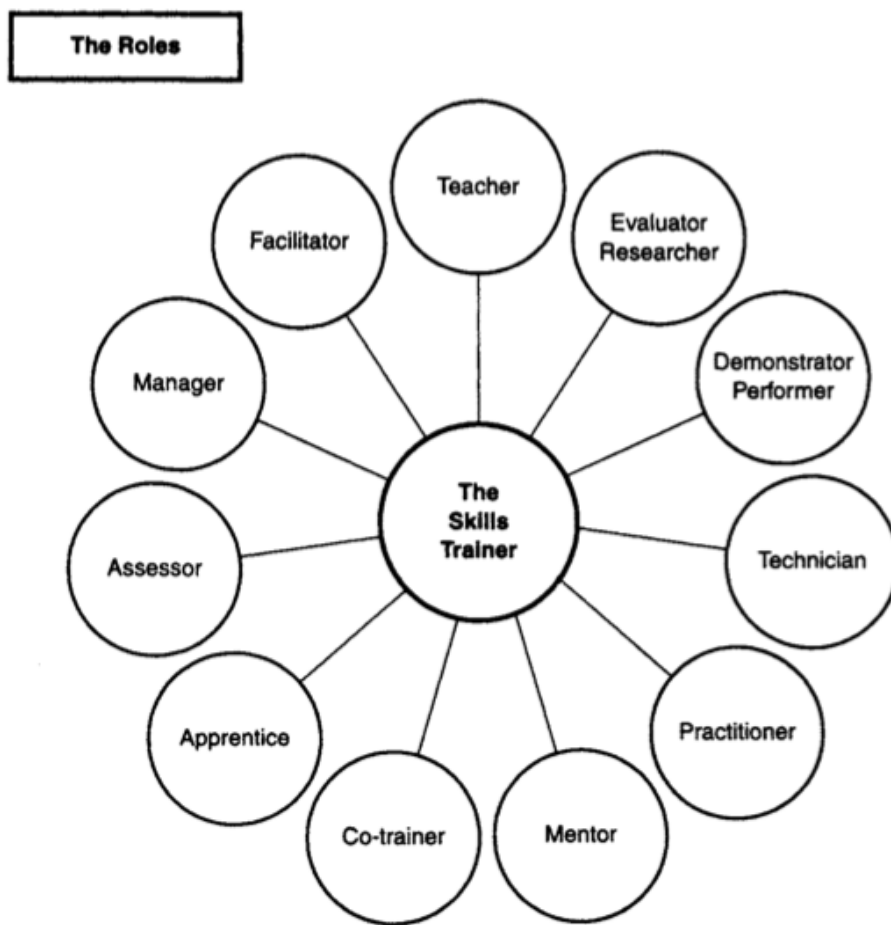


Figure 4: Roles of the skills trainer (Inskipp, 1996, p. 82)

2.5.2 Trainer from student perspective

Smith's (2011) recent UK study explored, via focus groups, what counselling students found most positive in their relationships with trainers. These included:

- acceptance, affirmation, encouragement and support,
- openness, genuineness and self-disclosure,
- empathy,
- sense of equality and shared exploration,
- trainer modelling an effective relationship.

Johns (1996) powerfully adds to this with her exaggerated image of what trainees view as their ideal trainer:

'She will be all-knowing, all-seeing, all-understanding; she will appreciate all my difficulties in the course without my needing to say anything about them; she'll have infinite time, patience and resources; she will never show moodiness, favouritism or pettiness, never be unfair, get anything wrong or have any visible needs of her own. She won't expect me to take any responsibility (or will give me unquestioned responsibility!). She will have a sense of humour, look beautiful and always be kind. She'll know every academic reference, be brilliant – always! – at counselling and supervision. And she will never be ill!' (p. 68).

Alongside what student counsellors want from their trainers is the influence trainers actually have and, as Rizq (2009) notes, there has been *'curiously little interest in the impact of interpersonal dynamics on the process of teaching psychotherapy'* (p. 363) and the results from what has been done are mixed. In Howard et al's (2006) study of critical incidents that made a significant impact on the professional growth of nine trainee counsellors none were related to incidents with their trainers. Fitzpatrick et al (2010) (see figure 5) found, from their Canadian study of 17 Master's level counselling students from a variety of ethnicities, that the role of 'professor' in students developing their own sense of theoretical stance supplemented a mostly personal journey.

Also, Furr and Carroll's (2003) study of critical incidents for 84 student counsellors in southeastern USA found that *'perceived support'* (2003, p. 487) from peers and professors was a critical incident supporting their development. This concurs with Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2003) substantial research on counsellor development that found that support and encouragement from senior members of the profession, such as their professors, had a major impact due to the *'dependency and vulnerability'* (p. 12) of the students.

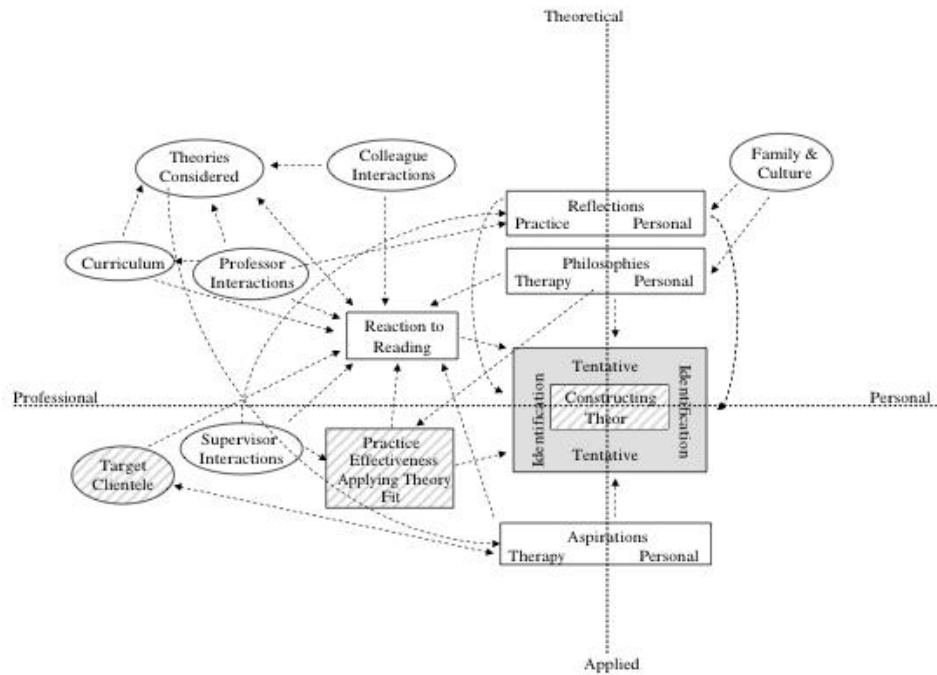


Figure 5: Influences on trainee theory development (Fitzpatrick, Kovalak, & Weaver, 2010, p. 96)

This can be compared with Connor's (1994) perspective (see figure 6) where a briefer set of influences are given and the trainer has a primary role in influencing students.



Figure 6: Significant influences upon the counsellor in training (Connor, 1994, p. 26)

One element within training where I have always experienced the trainer having a strong impact is when observing students practising counselling. As Connor (1994) says: *'For some, trainer presence is good, for others inhibiting, and for others a cause for anger and resentment.'* (p. 97). Research participants have expressed different aspects of this, with one of Bennetts' (2003) participants saying:

“You get hung up on “doing it right” and not allowing yourself the fact that it’s person-centred and therefore you’re working as a person, but that if a tutor’s watching you counsel another student, or on a tape, then you might not be “doing it right”. That’s the hardest thing.” (Anne).’

Conversely, Alfred (1999) quotes a trainee retrospectively seeing the great value in this uncomfortable element of training:

‘I found ‘performing’ in the training groups, whether as a counsellor or client, especially hard to do in front of tutors, although the constructive feedback always proved invaluable, whether or not it was positive – in fact there was often more learning in the negative feedback’ (p. 261).

2.5.3 Person of the trainer

Mearns (1997) regards the most important thing that supports the trainer in performing their multiple roles well is a high level of self-acceptance. This: *‘allows these abilities to emerge fluidly and consistently in a fashion which is perfectly congruent within the trainer’ (p. 59)*. This sounds straightforward, but as counselling trainers we: *‘can often feel we are doing our best and that it is never good enough. There is always something that needs our attention’ and ‘if all goes well we are taken for granted and if things go badly there are complaints to deal with.’* (Thomas, 1998, pp. 18-19).

If we are able to live and work in ways that resonate with our values and beliefs it will stand us in good stead (Johns, 1998a). We must have enough growth, toughness and emotional stability to work with students over two or more years (Inskipp, 1996) for as Connor (1994) says:

‘In counselling training there is nowhere to hide, and therefore those contemplating this work who are not prepared to ‘bring themselves’ into the training equation need to think again about whether they will survive the exposure. For those who have the confidence, courage and ability to be transparently open and real in the training relationship the rewards are great. It is exciting and invigorating to be part of someone’s learning journey and to share the agonies as well as the ecstasies along the way.’ (p. 18).

It may be that being a counsellor trainer is something that carries a limited life expectancy for many, as well as being a role which takes years to get beyond feeling: *‘continually confused, inadequate, ineffective and depleted’* (Thomas, 1998, p. 17). The work is both: *‘uplifting, exciting, inspiring and deeply humanizing as well as difficult and demanding; they go together, like yin and yang’* (Thomas, 1998, p. 17) . This fits with my own experience – years of learning the fundamentals, followed by years of realistic confidence and competence and then moving into a different but related role. Wilcock’s (2000) study of the experiences of four counselling course trainers found that the trainer who perceived being a trainer as just a job had a much

less rewarding, meaningful and satisfying time than the three who experienced being a trainer as *'a significant and integral part of their lives'* (p. 80). I can strongly relate to this and also to the emotional toll of continuing to engage so fully with the work and the students.

2.5.4 Power

Inskipp (1996) talks of the need for trainers to take on the power and responsibility invested in their role and be honest about this while also having humility in accepting that they won't always get things right. This involves engaging with students and

'talking with them about how this power and responsibility can be shared with them, and how much still remains with us; how much trust we place in them, how they respond to this trust. The honesty is also about giving clear, specific positive and negative feedback throughout the course to individuals, and checking that it is heard and understood. It is about owning our own expertise in stating what is good enough, what is excellent and what is not up to standard.' (p. 69)

Speedy (1998) studied the experience and perceptions of power of a group of female Person Centred counselling trainers, including herself. From this she distinguished between power as a possession and power as a process, and constructed a model of three types of power as possession: ascribed, owned and disguised. Ascribed power was recognised as an ongoing occupational hazard that could be very tempting and seductive but could be used well. Owned power was seen as more important, or more comfortable, than ascribed power and was *'social influence owned and initiated by themselves'* (Speedy, 1998, p. 33). Disguised power was concerned with the potential misuse of power through such things as being oppressive or behaving in particular ways without being transparent about their purpose. Power as process was something quite different, as one of the people said: *'like something in the room that is more than the individuals, almost like electricity. It seeps out of the walls... and it's there to be harnessed, and also there to be damaging'* (Speedy, 1998, p. 74).

Initially, trainers are ascribed a lot of power by new students while trainers try to encourage collaboration within clear boundaries (Connor, 1994) and so build positive process power.

A key area where trainers hold power is in their assessment role. There is an innate challenge in supporting students to share, and work with you on, their areas of difficulty when you are also formally assessing them. The blind marking that is viewed as essential in higher education nowadays isn't possible in the small counselling group with assignments that often include audio and/or video. Added to this is the all too common situation that: *'when counselling trainees submit work for assessment they genuinely feel (and rightly) that it is more than the piece of work that is being assessed – it is themselves'* (Connor, 1994, pp. 119-120). As trainers we need to be sensitive to this while also taking the macro perspective and being gatekeepers to the profession. Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) consider that trainers, and supervisors, may be idealised or devalued by students because of this power they hold.

The roles of nurturing students and gatekeeping may: *'appear to be polarized [but] they are not mutually exclusive; however the challenge to be both a nurturer and gatekeeper may demand professional and personal maturity'* (Magnuson & Norem, 2002, p. 170).

2.5.5 Student-trainer relationship

Ideally this relationship is one:

'in which both parties are offering each other high levels of empathy, respect and genuineness. This kind of relationship is conducive to the growth of both trainers and trainees' (Nelson-Jones, 1974, p. 187).

The student-trainer relationship: is a working relationship with expectations on both sides (Connor, 1994) whilst the developmental stage and past and present life experiences of each will influence how they relate with one another (Johns, 1998a).

An important aspect of any relationship is what is not shared. Mehr et al's (2010) follow up research, from Ladany's (1996) earlier work, explores the amount that counselling students don't disclose to their supervisors. Their investigation, into the experience of 204 counselling students on counselling or clinical psychology courses in a U.S. university, revealed that 84.3% withheld information from their supervisor. *'Nondisclosures most often involved trainee's negative perception of supervision, personal life concerns, and negative perceptions of supervisor. Reasons for nondisclosure were most often impression management, deference to supervisor, and perceived negative consequences.'* (p. 110). It follows that it is likely that trainees don't reveal similar things to their trainers, especially as one of the roles they often take on is group supervisor.

Mearns (1997) describes how important it is that both students and trainers are able to challenge each other and offers an example of a trainer offering a challenge to a course member about his own discomfort around her and whether this is coming from him, her or both of them. He is clear that:

'Not making this challenge would have been evidence of a lack of respect on the part of the trainer. If the trainer had little regard for this course member as a person of worth then he might have simply ducked the challenge and avoided the course member.' (p. 55).

To work towards the ideal relationship is an aim and both student and trainer will have issues that get in the way of this with each other that they need to keep working through.

2.5.6 Concluding

Within counselling training the relationship is considered very important, with Dryden and Thorne (1991) claiming that for some students it has a '*strong impact on the effectiveness of the learning experience*' (p. 233) and for some trainers '*the success of counsellor training is intimately connected to the quality of the relationship between trainees and trainers*' (p. 233).

The discussion here has shown that this is a complex area in terms of wants, expectations, and responsibilities. It is an intense subject and it helps me to be reminded that this relationship also has its important lighter elements with much happening '*in inbetween spaces*' such as '*the conversation with a student in a break.*' (Thomas, 1998, p. 19).

2.6 Concluding

Exploring broadly related literature on education, the helping professions, and the client-counsellor relationship, along with the literature on the counselling student-trainer literature has given me, and I hope the reader, a more precise understanding of my perspective and therefore the underpinning assumptions and direction of this heuristic research. Some aspects of this will become even clearer in the next section – Methodology.

Some of the underlying assumptions of my research are that the student-trainer relationship: naturally exists in a reciprocal form which changes over time; it matters, to varying degrees, for each person; has unique qualities for each person and pair; and can enhance or inhibit development of the student and trainer.

Reciprocal influence has not been discussed much explicitly here as there appears to be little research on it, and what there has been has not taken into account the perspectives of the two people together. Rather, I have explored here the broader theme of 'relationship'.

In education and the helping professions the student-teacher and client-practitioner relationships have been given varying levels of importance, from virtually none to being central (for example: Howe, 1998), with many considering it central (Clarkson, 1990, 1994, 1995; Dryden & Thorne, 1991; Johns, 1998b; Mearns & Schmid, 2006; Nieto, 2006; Paul & Haugh, 2008a; Rogers, 1959, 1962; Sawatzky et al., 2009; Tresolini & the Pew-Fetzer Task Force, 1994). On the other hand counselling research has consistently shown that the therapeutic relationship is the most significant aspect of client change (Andrews, 2000; Beutler et al., 2004; Lambert, 1992) and so it holds a great importance in the literature. How much this carries across to counsellor training is less clear as there has been so little said beyond a sentence or two and research in this area is just beginning (for example: Ballinger, 2012; Smith, 2011).

While it is obvious that all of these are professional relationships and as such are '*asymmetrical, tied to time and context*' (Berg et al., 2007, p. 100) it has surprised me, in considering the literature on relationship in education, the helping professions, and counselling, that there are

many parallels that can be drawn. For example, a sense of safety builds trust and openness to learning (Connor, 1994; Frymier & Houser, 2000; Jones et al, 2008; Mearns, 1997; Mutchler & Anderson, 2010; Smith, 2011); appropriate authenticity in the teacher/practitioner/counsellor is often appreciated by the student/service user/client (Brookfield, 2006; Rogers, 1959; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994), along with their skills and knowledge building a positive sense of their credibility (Brookfield, 1986); and, mutual respect, taking on of responsibility and engagement with each other and the task are the basis of an effective working alliance (Berg et al., 2007). In all cases there is awareness that our relationships are impacted by our previous experiences of relationship (Bachelor & Horvath, 1999; Haugh, 2008; Johns, 1998b; Ladany et al., 2008; Robertson, 1999b; Rosenblatt, 2009; Whitehead, 2010) and that some things go unsaid (Ladany, 1996; Mehr et al., 2010) while it would be most beneficial for them to be openly worked through. All the settings have considered what the teacher/practitioner/counsellor gains from carrying out their work (Freire, 1990; Guttmann & Daniels, 2001; Nelson-Jones, 1974; Rosenblatt, 2009) and shown a similar unease but enjoyment in experiencing care from students/service users/clients while not feeling dependent on this (Alexander & Charles, 2009).

It is clear that while I approach the counselling training setting as similar but unique from other situations, and emphasise my Person Centred lens in order to hone this down even more precisely, it may well be that what I find may also have relevance much wider than I had expected.

3. METHODOLOGY – My Journey to Relational Heuristic Research

3.1 Introduction

Unlike a lot of research, my methodology has evolved rather than being set at the start; similarly, the methods have expanded from those originally planned. While this may seem that I wasn't disciplined and just followed whims, the reality was very different. The journey to methods and methodology has been a disciplined following of the heuristic process along with a deepening appreciation of the literature and growing confidence in finding my own way to most effectively explore the reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers. Even from the first year of my research there has been a trust in my regular 'not knowing':

'I cannot easily see the way ahead though I have some ideas and sufficient stability to look forward to surprises, changes of route, fast flowing rivers and impasses.' (reflective diary 19/12/07).

In this chapter, I explore the 2:1 interviews that I knew from the start I wanted to carry out, their rationale and ethics and the practical aspects of setting them up and carrying them out. This leads to my journey from a possible grounded theory methodology to heuristic research as a result of my responses to these interviews. This supports me to make a key addition to my methods, 'discussion interviews' with eight of my former counselling students. With this change came a deeper consideration of heuristic research theory, tracking my shift in focus to Sela-Smith's (2001, 2002) heuristic self search inquiry (HSSI). I utilise a comparison of her HSSI with Moustakas' (1990) heuristic as a springboard to developing my own adaptations of heuristic research – initially 'heuristic directed process research' and then settling with 'relational heuristic research'. Methods of analysis and writing up the research evolved alongside this process and fitted with the methods and methodology. As they all settled they fitted together with the neatness of carefully made jigsaw pieces together creating a picture of the reciprocal influence of Person Centred counselling students and trainers.

3.2 2:1 interviews

3.2.1 Rationale

To explore the reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers I knew that I wanted to have in-depth interviews with pairs of former student and trainer. This seemed the 'obvious' way to proceed, after all *'if one is to know and understand another's experience, one must converse directly with the person'* (Moustakas, 1990, p. 26), or in this case – people. We can tend to assume that particular behaviours show particular things but as Jill, a participant in Spencer's (2006) research into tutors' stories of personal development training, wonders:

'I mean just because someone was participating in a particular way or not participating in a particular way, are they learning? Are they developing? Perhaps there is not a direct correlation?' (p. 112).

Only a qualitative research methodology would gather the complexity of data that I needed to appreciate as fully as possible the experiences of the interviewees (Stiles, 1993). While interviewing has become one of, if not the, commonest form of qualitative research (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Kvale, 1996; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Platt, 2002) it was with careful thought that I decided on conducting interviews. In an interview people are encouraged to *'think and talk – that is, to discourse – their needs, wants, expectations, experiences, and understandings at both the conscious and unconscious levels'* (Nunokoosing, 2005, p. 699).

As I wanted to explore the reciprocal influence of student and trainer it seemed logical to me that I would talk with them together, I didn't want their individualistic perspectives to compare with one another but something that considers each person's embeddedness with the other and the broader context of the training and their lives (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The former student and trainer interview participants were, and are now, in a form of *'asymmetric complementarity'* (Illich, 1983) with each other. They were essential to one another during the training, each taking on interdependent roles that contained fundamental differences.

When two people are interviewed together there is: *'the hope that a more complex, multifaceted picture of the relationship might emerge'* (Lee, 2006, p. 9) than with individual interviews; *'unaided memory always falters'* (Jones, 2004, p. 48). While in a 1:1 interview ambiguities can be resolved (Mishler, 1986) this is even more so with the 2:1 interview. It is not however about getting 'the truth', a single, or univocal, perspective from the participants; I believe in multiple perspectives: *'an event may be viewed, defined or perceived in more than one manner'* (Wicklund, 1999, p. 667). This is in keeping with Kvale's (1996; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) metaphor of the researcher as traveller, a post-modern conception of the researcher as a participant and using a conversational approach in the construction of knowledge; rather than his metaphor of researcher as miner, a positivist, empiricist, conception of the researcher as unearthing nuggets of knowledge. *'Conversational partners'* (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 14) is a very fitting term for participants in this type of interview as it emphasises *'the active role of the interviewee in shaping the discussion and in guiding what paths the research should take'* (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 14).

Just as with Daniluk and Hurtig-Mitchell's research into infertile couples, my choice of 2:1 interviews was due to the focus of my study being on both their shared, and jointly constructed, experience (2003).

Interviewing the two people together had the potential of being *'richer in content and more effective in addressing the research question than... individual interviews'* (Racher et al, 2000, p. 367); there are additional 'stories' that emerge and are expressed (see figure 7).

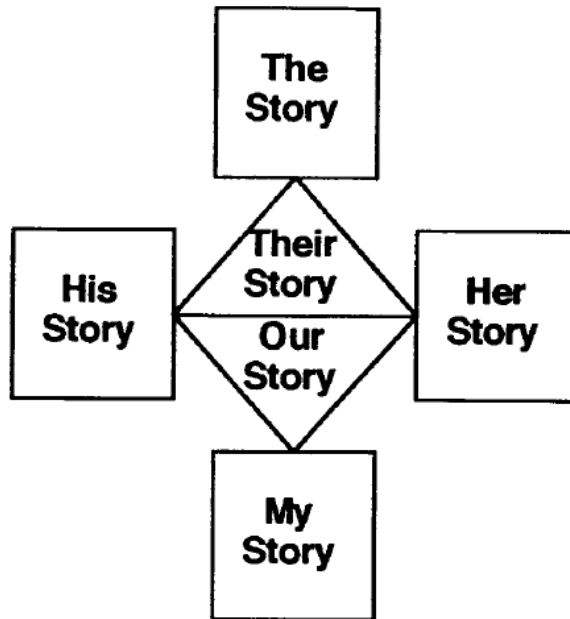


Figure 7: 'stories' (Hertz, 1995, p. 448)

To use a rather overused, but apt, phrase – the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Uphold & Strickland, 1989). By talking together they would each have the opportunity to explore their feelings, thoughts and memories with each other; context-dependent memories could be stimulated; they would be able to corroborate, supplement, modify, contradict, and increase the breadth and depth of the discussion (Allan, 1980) and so co-create 'a' new story of how they reciprocally influenced each other.

With the 2:1 interview the subject of reciprocal influence is explored in a setting where reciprocal influence is active, method matching theme and enriching the data through their here-and-now discussion. There is '*real-time reflexivity*' (Weick, 2002, p. 897) and an '*intersubjective closeness*' is created via this '*continuous, synchronised, reciprocal access to our two [or three] subjectivities*' (Berger & Luckmann, 1991 (1966), p. 52). I would go as far as to agree with Racher et al (2000):

'The trustworthiness of the study is dependent on the use of the conjoint interview. If single-participant interviews were conducted, much of this information may not have been available.' (p. 376).

I hadn't realised how unusual interviewing two people together was in any field (Arksey, 1996; Greenbaum, 1998; Racher et al., 2000; Song, 1998) and how rare within counselling – in fact I have been unable to find any. Where counselling research has involved counsellor and client, it has been acknowledged that '*investigation at this level allows for a more fine-grained understanding of the complex reality of the client-therapist interactional field*' (Bachelor & Horvath, 1999, p. 153). However, this has usually involved each person being interviewed separately rather than together (Bachelor & Horvath, 1999).

Interviewing the pair apart can be an active choice. Hertz (1995) used separate but simultaneous interviews of spouses in order to disrupt the *'couple's collective memory of events and feelings'* (p. 436). In contrast to this I wanted a co-created and agreed story of the pair's reciprocal influence.

Studies that have included 2:1 interviews as a, or the, main research method have focused on such themes as: frail elderly couples (Racher et al., 2000); couples with infertility problems (Daly, 1988; Daniluk & Hurtig-Mitchell, 2003); couples where one has cancer (Seymour-Smith & Wetherell, 2006); care recipient & provider (Linsk et al, 1992); father-son pair (Katz, 2002); adult mentor and adolescent mentee (Spencer, 2006); student teachers & mentoring experienced teachers (Martin, 2002); and intercultural friends (Lee, 2006). While 'dyad' or 'conjoint' interviews are the usual descriptive terms for interviewing two people, because of their more common uses as a term for 1:1 interviews, to avoid ambiguity I have called these interviews 2:1 interviews.

3.2.2 Ethics

Perhaps the rarity of the 2:1 interview is related to potential ethical concerns as any interview can have quite an impact on interviewees. Patton (2002) expresses this well:

'Interviews are interventions. They affect people. A good interview lays open thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and experience not only to the interviewer but also to the interviewee. The process of being taken through a directed, reflective process affects the persons being interviewed and leaves them knowing things about themselves that they didn't know – or at least were not aware of – before the interview.' (p. 405).

On the other hand, Corbin and Morse's (2003) fifty years of undertaking interviews led them to state that:

'although there is evidence that qualitative interviews may cause some emotional distress, there is no indication that this distress is any greater than in everyday life or that it requires follow-up counseling... When research is conducted with sensitivity and guided by ethics, it becomes a process with benefits to both participants and researchers' (p. 335).

I appreciated that interviewing two people together about their reciprocal influence on each other would potentially be much more powerful than individual interviews and that care would need to be taken that the participants had sufficient understanding of the process beforehand as well as robustness for the experience. Another option I could have chosen, like Baxter and West (2003), would have been not to participate in the interview but to ask them to record themselves having a discussion around questions I posed. However, I considered it more ethical to be present as I would be able to manage any difficulties, upset, or imbalances that might arise as

well as being able to gain from following up things hinted at but not fully explored and being able to keep the discussion on track. In addition, to be comfortable in writing about their interview I needed to be part of it.

When West and Clark (2004) interviewed ongoing supervisor-supervisee dyads separately with interpersonal process recall interviews of their recorded sessions, they found that this had an immediate impact on each of the interviewees and their relationship, but because they were mature practitioners, there was seen to be little risk. This would be much more of a concern, to each interviewee and their training group, if I were to conduct 2:1 interviews with an ongoing counselling student and trainer and so I decided to interview pairs who had completed their student-trainer connection. Another benefit of interviewing former student and trainer is that I expected that the conversational partners would be more able to move beyond, at least partially, wanting to be 'good' and giving me answers they think will please me, or each other, rather than honest responses about their experience (Whitehead, 2010). I knew that their complementary asymmetrical roles (Illich, 1983) would resurface to some degree and this in itself would be important to note as part of their ongoing reciprocal influence. All participants would be qualified counsellors and, from this training, would have the robustness and resources to get any support they might need after the interview, as well as have a reasonable appreciation of what they were actively volunteering to participate in.

The 2:1 interview is intimate and a sharp contrast to anonymous types of student feedback that Brookfield (2006) considers essential to getting honest feedback from current students. This research can be regarded as a type of 'sensitive research' (Dickson-Swift et al, 2008; Lee & Renzetti, 1990; McCosker, Barnard, & Gerber, 2001; Sieber & Stanley, 1988), not so much because of the topic itself, but in terms of asking the conversational partners to talk together about their experience of each other. Thus the method is a sensitive one which then makes the topic sensitive in that it is interpersonally challenging and could be shaming, guilt inducing, or embarrassing as well as fascinating, empowering or affirming. While this is sensitive research, I considered interviewing pairs together, rather than separately, as being more ethical as there is transparency between conversational partners about what is shared concerning the other, and there is the opportunity for the other to clarify or disagree.

While I was expecting to gain more from my interviews because of the presence of both former student and trainer, it could of course be inhibiting to them for the other to be present (Racher et al., 2000). While some things may be censored in the 2:1 interview, there are concerns that I consider outweigh this. If I interviewed them separately and brought their stories together that brings up ethical concerns about confidentiality (Forbat & Henderson, 2003). I argue that if things cannot be said within the 2:1 context then ethically they have no place in the public domain of a thesis anyway.

It may also be that, rather than being inhibiting, the conversational partners might say more than they are comfortable with retrospectively:

'When interviewees are open and willing to talk, the power of interviewing poses new risks. People will tell you things they never intended to tell you.' (Patton, 2002, p. 406).

In the 2:1 interview this may be even more likely as the conversational partners engage in talking with each other and to me, asking questions of each other, sharing their thoughts and feelings. While elements of the interviews, and even the whole interview, could potentially be omitted from the research data if conversational partners were to withdraw, they could not be unsaid, and they had not only been said to the researcher but also to their former student or trainer. It was therefore important that I took care in the interview to minimise this risk, the key ways being to work in a collegial and respectful way and not leave themes 'hanging' but to work them through so that they were as resolved as possible.

In the light of all the above it is not surprising that I have always considered getting the two people together for the 2:1 interviews to be a lot to ask. The interview exists for the researcher and is a gift entrusted to them, a *'gift of time, of text and of understanding that the interviewee gives to the interviewer'* (Limerick, Burgess-Limerick, & Grace, 1996, p. 458). My hope, and active intent, was that I would be able to gain answers to the questions I had but that the conversational partners would also gain from the interviews themselves, talking about a subject that must interest them for them to agree to take part might be *'a rare and enriching experience'* (Kvale, 1996, p. 36), and *'while interviews may be intrusive in reopening old wounds, they can also be healing.'* (Patton, 2002, p. 406). Indeed, my assumption is that if they were not intrigued by what they might discuss in the interview they would not have put themselves forward for the experience. It is more comfortable to me, and feels ethically and morally right, that they gain from the interview experience as well as me.

Ethical approval was, of course, crucial before the interviews could take place and, in keeping with University of Manchester policy at that time, was agreed with my supervisor. The procedures developed, and described in my supporting statement to my ethical declaration form, (see appendices 2-5) took account of the above concerns and are described more fully below.

3.2.3 The interviews

I had wondered how many people would volunteer to be interviewed, especially as it would involve one approaching someone else to participate with them. I didn't think that impersonal requests would be successful and I felt uncomfortable with that idea anyway as the research is about relationship. I therefore recruited the participants for the 2:1 interviews through direct contact with one of the pair and this person inviting the other, 'convenience sampling' (Patton, 2002). The places where I recruited these participants included my work place, a BACP accredited courses regional meeting, and the 2008 ESRC researcher development initiative

course held at the University of Leicester in association with BACP. In only one of the pairs did I make initial contact with the former student as my links were primarily with trainers.

When one person, usually the trainer, had volunteered to participate in the research they were given my email address and asked to find a person to be interviewed with that met my criteria. I decided on essential criteria of the two of them having previously worked together for at least one academic year in the roles of student and trainer on a professional level counselling course. This meant that the research would focus on training in counselling rather than counselling skills and the two would have worked together for a substantial length of time with the various courses being one to two years in length.

The initial person would then send me the name and email address of the person that they had chosen and I contacted them both, this ensured transparency and set the boundary of the three of us that we would be working with in the interviews. Through these emails we agreed a time to meet when we were all available; though this is a potential challenge in this type of interview (Racher et al., 2000) it was only problematic with one pair, who subsequently dropped out. We met at a place set up by one of the participants, and agreeable to the other, as well as being sufficiently private for our needs. This setting was usually a room in the higher education establishment where the course had taken place. Once it was in the former student's home.

I interviewed six pairs of former counselling student and trainer; each were between two and five years from the end of their course; one trainer was interviewed with two former students. They came from five different higher education counselling courses in different parts of England. The theoretical models of the courses were person centred, psychodynamic, and integrative and the courses varied in academic level from Diploma (H.E.) to M.A.. The trainer's role varied from a mixture of teaching theory, running a supervision group and being a personal tutor, through to 'only' being a personal development group facilitator. They were in their thirties to sixties, white, British and non-British, lesbian and heterosexual.

From my years of experience, and wondering, as a counselling lecturer, and my reading of the literature, I developed a 'crib sheet' for the interviews of areas I wanted to support the conversational partners to explore (see appendix 4). These included: the contexts in which they knew each other, initial perceptions of each other, how they impacted each other and why, and how it is talking with each other now. The interviews were semi-structured and while it was important that I covered particular issues I also wanted the interview space to be open enough to allow for whatever may emerge with each pair. In practice my role was usually to initiate the discussion, and, as Racher et al (2000) found useful, lightly guide them to talk primarily with each other, then ask about any areas not covered from my list and finish with discussing the experience of the interview itself. The interviews lasted one to two hours and ended naturally rather than to a predetermined time.

While as researcher I took a 'light' approach that doesn't mean the role of the researcher is an easy one. There are added complexities of establishing rapport with both people (Allan, 1980), keeping both involved with sufficient balance between them, and making meaning in their

dialogue and interaction and so asking appropriate questions (Racher et al., 2000). While including brief aspects of my own experience to elucidate my next question I was neutral in the way that Patton (1990) describes:

'the investigator does not set out to prove a particular perspective or manipulate the data to arrive at predisposed truths. The neutral investigator enters the research arena with no axe to grind, no theory to prove, and no predetermined results to support. Rather, the investigator's commitment is to understand the world as it is to be true to complexities and multiple perspectives as they emerge, and to be balanced in reporting both confirming and disconfirming evidence.' (p. 53).

A few days following each interview I emailed the conversational partners with my own response to the interview and the parts that had stood out most for me along with some questions (see appendix 5 for an example of this). They were invited to respond to this. One purpose of this was to give them an opportunity to share any misgivings and discomfort with me for us to discuss further and explore what was needed. As trained counsellors ourselves we all had access to counselling if we felt we needed it. Other purposes were: to know what elements of the interview were most significant to them and how their thoughts had continued since, to encourage continuing contact about the research if they wanted this, and, through all of this, to not just *'hit and run'* (West, 2002, p. 264) the participants.

3.3 Grounded theory to Heuristic Research

3.3.1 Grounded theory and the 2:1 interview

My initial plan was to use an approach influenced by grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1999/1967). What appealed to me was that theory would develop inductively from the data rather than being presupposed. However, the more I read about its elements the less grounded theory fitted, with its emphasis on coding the data so that a theoretical framework could emerge. It is interesting to know retrospectively that my thesis supervisor had similar reservations and himself moved towards a heuristic methodology, one he saw as opposite to grounded theory (see table 3). While we didn't directly discuss this, in the light of this research, I am fascinated as to how much my thesis supervisor's perspective influenced the development of my own.

What had seemed clear initially now became foggy and my inexperience in research theory and methodology soon became apparent:

'I am confused by the theory, by the words of explanation, by their similarities and differences. As I read more I get more confused, while assuming that one day it will make sense. I often read something and think 'so that's what I'm doing' only to say the same with the next theory I read, and the next!' (reflective diary 18/12/2007).

Table 1. Grounded theory and heuristic inquiry: a comparison of core methodological assumptions

	<i>Grounded theory</i>	<i>Heuristics</i>
View of research reality or field	Out there	Co-created but understood within the researcher
Role of researcher	Detached participant observer	Actively engaged including own internal processes
What is the data?	What the researcher sees and is told and collects from written documentation	Ideally all aspects of the research experience, including the researcher's inner processes
Where does the understanding of the phenomenon lie?	With those researched excluding the researcher	Ultimately within the researcher: inner or tacit knowing

Table 3: Grounded theory and heuristic inquiry: a comparison of core methodological assumptions (West, 2001, p. 129).

I was led by my method, the 2:1 interview, and trusted that the methodology would become clear, that it already existed and I just had to find it in a book or article.

The interviews, and emailed reflections on these, left me with a sense of great respect for those who had participated; discomfort in not having asked of myself what I had asked of them; but also a sense of being voyeuristic, and of missing out on something I could see was profound. These 2:1 interviews were rich and fascinating but were at times unsatisfying and frustrating. I had chosen my theme because of its significance to my work as a trainer of counsellors and, as I increasingly discovered, it has great importance to me. In my diary I reflected that:

'I don't see how I can immerse myself fully if I keep myself safely at arms length in terms of the interview and entering into the unknown and surprises between myself and ex-students. It seems morally right and methodologically essential.' (reflective diary 2/3/2009).

This seemed in keeping with Brinkmann's (2011) point that:

'too many interviews today are conducted based on... a spectator's stance – a voyeur's epistemology or an epistemology of the eye' (p. 59).

At the same time I had an experience with a former student whom I was supporting in her work with a voluntary counselling organisation. As we discussed their draft paperwork she shared that it still smarted for her if I referred to spelling and grammar and I became painfully aware that she was carrying something with her about me that had happened during her training course. This cemented more than ever my commitment to exploring my own relationships with former students.

3.3.2 The heuristic process

Changing my methodology to heuristic (Moustakas, 1990) felt essential to the work as it was developing, it was the only methodology that would give my experiential process prominence and thus match and inform what was developing.

Moustakas' (1990) six stages of heuristic research are *initial engagement* with what you want to research; *immersion* in this theme in all areas of your life, including dreams; a time of *incubation* where the intense focus lessens and the tacit emerges; this leads to moments of *illumination*; followed by *explication*, where meaning is teased out from all that emerged; and finally *creative synthesis* where the research is all pulled together. These provided a framework for a natural internal process that has, in a somewhat unruly, jagged and predictably unpredictable way, flowed through these years of study.

While Moustakas (1961/1989) started overtly and consciously with his own experiential process and then moved into looking to other sources, including interviewing people, my experiential process had given me my theme and I had tried to move out from this to interviews but had been called back to a more overt inclusion of my experiential process. Giving my experiential process the role of director became central to my heuristic research. My investigation would result in not only *'knowledge extended but the self of the researcher is illuminated'* (Moustakas, 1990, p. 11). I could now validly include *'whatever presents itself in the consciousness of the investigator as perception, sense, intuition, or knowledge'* (Moustakas, 1990, p. 10).

With the 2:1 interviews supporting my reflexive awareness of self as trainer I was left with an unsettling sense of false nakedness. Immersed in 'living' my research question I became aware of a disquieting knowledge that there were parts of my experience I was not able to access on my own. As Brookfield (1995) stated:

'No matter how much we may think we have an accurate sense of ourselves, we are stymied by the fact that we're using our own interpretive filters to become aware of our own interpretive filters.' (p. 28).

The image that came to my mind was that I was in the reverse situation to the Emperor and his new clothes (Andersen, 1837), while others thought that I was naked, open to myself and others about my process as trainer, I experienced myself wearing layer on layer of clothes as my sense of there being a great deal I was not aware of grew and grew. I was still clothed while wanting to be naked.

Talking with my own former students seemed the 'obvious' way forward but I was aware that this was not straightforward. Our tendency is to make sense of new information through the lens of the old and so *'reducing the new to something old with a slight variation'* (Schmid, 2006, p. 242). I was seeking to go beyond this with people I had already worked with for at least an academic year, where we already had our own perceptions of each other and our relationship, both in awareness and out of awareness.

To truly understand each other and our reciprocal influence we, not only I, would have to *'let go. We need to see the other – be it a thing, be it a person – as a strange one, something or somebody that cannot be grasped, if we want to understand them. We must let go if we want to approach.'* (Schmid, 2006, p. 242).

3.4 'Discussion interviews'

3.4.1 Rationale and Ethics

This type of interview, where I met as conversational partner with former students, I have called 'discussion interviews'. There are so many terms used for different forms of interviews and a new term is needed here that cuts out potential ambiguity. I have therefore called these interviews 'discussion interviews'. This is a form of interactive interview where I collaborate with my former students, *'to act both as researcher and as research participants'* (Ellis & Berger, 2001).

This form of interview demands of the researcher-cum-interview participant a high level of reflexivity to, as Etherington (2007) describes it:

'create transparency and dialogue that is required for forming and sustaining ethical research relationships, especially when prior relationships with participants already exist. ... Reflexivity, although enabling the conduct of ethical relational research, also requires researchers to come from behind the protective barriers of objectivity and invite others to join with us in our learning about being a researcher as well as remaining human in our research relationships.' (p. 599).

Indeed, it is Etherington's (2000) work with two of her former counselling clients that is the nearest I have found to this discussion interview between myself and former students; however, there are still differences. While Etherington talked with her former clients and they each wrote parts of the resulting book the *'conversations'* concerned *'what their experience of our relationship had been like for them, what they had found helpful and unhelpful'* (p. 6) and was not to explore her own process or their reciprocal influence, though some of this did come into the conversations.

To achieve the level of openness and honesty I needed between myself and each participant, I would need to be transparent, actively hiding nothing, while being open to the other bringing whatever they wanted to bring to our discussion. This is in keeping with what Carl Rogers considered the effective therapist needed to bring to the therapeutic relationship (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990). A difference from the therapeutic relationship, however, was the emphasis in heuristic research on disclosing the self of the researcher to support the other to disclose. In the discussion interviews, in particular, I was hoping that *'a response to the tacit dimension within oneself sparks a similar call from others'* (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 50) and on again through reciprocal influence.

To be effective, I would need to '*reflect-in-action*' (Schon, 1987) while also 'managing' the situation. To offer and hold this way of being in discussion interviews has potential challenges in my different, and dual, role as both co-participant/former trainer and researcher in these interviews. As a therapist and trainer who is experienced in connecting with my own thoughts and feelings and utilising them in the service of clients and students while not being overwhelmed by them, I considered that I would be able to offer these elements effectively in the discussion interviews. I also had resources to turn to afterwards should I find the interviews, or what they brought up in me, difficult to manage.

My offering of these elements are of little use without reciprocation from the conversational partner. To really explore together we would, at least some of the time, have to meet at relational depth, and whether therapist or researcher it is not possible to create this on one's own but rather the other must also bring '*readiness, perception of the possibility and willingness to respond*' (O'Leary, 2006, p. 230). My former students actively responded to my invitation to participate in a discussion interview with me but may feel either more open or more guarded without the inclusion of a separate interviewer.

Much of the ethical discussion concerning the 2:1 interviews is also relevant here, but there are also additional points. My former students were from the University of Cumbria and so I needed to get ethical approval from both here and the University of Manchester as well as adjusting the paperwork and procedures (see appendices 6-10). For example, instead of approaching possible participants myself, this was done by a colleague so that they might feel more able to not participate. There was also more emphasis by the research committees on my self-care as I was inviting honest responses from my former students and this might not always be easy. With all the points thought through (see appendix 7), and ethical approvals gained, I moved forward with the interviews.

3.4.2 The interviews

22 of my former students were invited to participate in discussion interviews with me; these were all students from two former Diploma (H.E.) in Counselling groups that I had trained on, who were not still my students on another course, and hadn't moved away in the eighteen months since their course ended. This was 'criterion sampling' (Patton, 2002) where all the people who met the criteria were invited. Of the 22:

- 8 took up the offer and were easily accessible for face-to-face interviews, 6 interviewed where their course had been held, 2 interviewed in their homes;
- 1 took up the offer but was subsequently unable to come for the interview;
- 2 offered to take part but were not easily accessible for face-to-face interview and so were not interviewed;

- 5 said that they didn't want to take part for various reasons such as current busyness;
- 6 Did not respond.

To my surprise and pleasure this meant that 11, half of those invited, actively wanted to be able to take part, although subsequently only 8 out of 22 participated. My anxiety about whether they would be interested in the discussion and/or daring enough to participate was unfounded.

Prior to the interview each participant was emailed an information sheet that included the areas that I wanted to include in the discussion (see appendix 9). I therefore made the process and content as transparent as possible for the participants, and encouraged them to put forward their own areas for exploration. The latter was not only to empower them in this interview process, and in relation to me, but also to give space for themes that I had not even thought of or been aware of, to reduce my blind spots and enrich the research and my own process.

I wrote pre-discussion interview reflections on all of the 22 invited former students in the order of them coming to mind and find it fascinating that those that I did interview were numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 22. Those most memorable to me, for a range of reasons that were not all positive, were also those most likely to participate in the research. Number 22 (Philippa 1:1 06) was also very memorable but we related little to each other directly and I was surprised and pleased at her wish to be involved. This resulted in one of the richest interviews of all in what arose that we had not known before. While the participants didn't get copies of these reflections I used them to gather memories, thoughts and feelings about them and went back to them before each interview to help prepare me.

Each interview lasted one to two hours, ending naturally when we had completed our discussion or ending in keeping with a time constraint of the former student. Interviews were recorded and provided research data along with follow-up emails between us of our reflections on the interview.

3.5 Heuristic to Relational Heuristic

3.5.1 Oxymoron?

These interviews supported myself and my former students to engage in rethinking the familiar (Reinharz, 1997). We were taken beyond the relative simplicity of us as individuals and into the complexity of relational reciprocity (Gardner & Coombs, 2010). Alone we would have been unable to connect so richly with our mutual influence but together we mutually constructed a picture of its past and created a picture of its present (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009).

In these interviews *'I hear myself as I speak; my own subjective meanings are made objectively and continuously available to me and ipso facto become 'more real' to me'* (Berger & Luckmann, 1991 (1966), p. 52). In addition: *'I can spontaneously respond to it without the 'interruption' of deliberate reflection. It can, therefore, be said that language makes 'more real' my subjectivity not only to my conversation partner but also to myself'* and has the capacity *'to crystallize and stabilize for me my own subjectivity'* (Berger & Luckmann, 1991 (1966), p. 53). In this way, reflexivity is not so much practised on the interview, but within it (Riach, 2009).

The combination of the 2:1 and discussion interviews stimulated my internal process. I immersed myself in the recordings and saw links with the theme of reciprocal influence in everyday life, at work, and in the books and articles I explored. For a long time there was the usual heuristic intensity of immersion (Moustakas, 1990) which was also a unique and deeply personal experience of mine that was hard for others to fully appreciate.

As I was moving into more complex relational methods it struck me that my methodological theory was not keeping up. To heuristically explore reciprocal influence seemed an oxymoron as reciprocal influence, by its very definition, necessitates engagement with other and cannot effectively be explored on one's own. This essential interweaving and interdependence of the experiences of myself with others did not have an obvious place in Moustakas' heuristic work (1961/1989, 1990). While he emphasises the experiential process of the researcher and looks to others for their perspectives he tends to move from the one to the other rather than interweaving them. His book on Loneliness (1961/1989), while starting with his own felt experience, goes on to explore a multitude of other perspectives and becomes a statement on what loneliness is, leaving behind the sense of his ongoing experiential process.

My experiential process had become both the primary guide for exploration and analysis and the thread that interwove all the elements. While Moustakas (1990) wrote of the process having at least elements of this, the way that he then wrote up the creative synthesis seemed to separate out these dimensions in a way that seemed ill-fitting to my emerging research process.

3.5.2 Heuristic Self Search Inquiry

In her PhD thesis, Sela-Smith (2001) develops Heuristic Self Search Inquiry (HSSI), a method for researchers *'to inquire into themselves when the researcher experiences internal confusion that seems to be calling out for clarity'* (p. xvii). It is a methodology that she regards as in keeping with the first two chapters of Moustakas (1990) book 'Heuristic Research' rather than the later chapters, while also taking account of 'resistance'. She (2001) regards self-knowledge, leading to self-transformation, as the natural result of effective heuristic research and, more specifically, HSSI. She considers that Moustakas' (1990) first two chapters describe an internal, non-linear process that cannot be fitted to a particular time line but must be surrendered to by the researcher as she moves naturally through the six stages.

She speculates that *'it is not the thinking-observing self but rather the I-who-feels who is experiencing the feeling that provides access to the aspects of the tacit dimension of nonverbal thought.'* (2002, p. 62). This fits with Moustakas' (1990) perspective that :

'perhaps the most significant concepts in explicating a phenomenon are focusing and indwelling, where concentrated attention is given to creating an inward space and discovering nuances, textures, and constituents of the phenomenon which may then be more fully elucidated through indwelling.' (p. 31).

However, she regards chapters three and four as taking a different tack due to Moustakas' resistance to surrendering to the pain of the process. Instead of staying with the self of the researcher the focus becomes observed experience, steps and methods and so loses the essence of heuristic research – one's subjective experience. Sela-Smith (2002) explains that she considers that:

'due to unacknowledged resistance to experiencing unbearable pain, Moustakas's research focus shifted from the self's experience of the experience to focusing on the idea of the experience. This shift resulted in a model of ambivalence, as reflected in the differences between what he introduced as his theory of heuristics and what he presented as its application.' (p. 53).

This ambivalence then led to researchers following a distorted process and not fulfilling his original method. She describes how she reviewed 28 research documents which were claimed to be heuristic research and found only three of them fulfilled Moustakas' method. There was little evidence of researchers surrendering to the process, reporting personal experience, discovering anything at the tacit dimension, or achieving self-transformation. What the researchers did do was follow procedures and the clock or calendar. (Sela-Smith, 2002).

Her contention is that: *'It is only when an internal focus is maintained that the researcher's own tacit knowledge can be lifted into conscious awareness.'* (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 76). Most importantly:

'It is in this surrender into feeling-the-feelings and experiencing-the-experience that allows the self-as-researcher to enter heuristic self-search inquiry. Long-hidden tacit knowledge, suppressed, repressed, rejected, and feared by the individual, by social systems, and by humankind, may finally emerge. Once known, individuals can be transformed by this self-knowledge' (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 84)

Sela-Smith provided a missing link for me; the continuing centrality of the self of the researcher is core in HSSI, as it was for me as I moved, in a way that was irregular and surrendering to the process, through Moustakas' (1990) six stages of heuristic research.

3.5.3 Finding my way through Moustakas and Sela-Smith

It also became apparent, however, that there were crucial differences between Sela-Smith's methodology and my own developing one, in particular concerning the role of other people and their experiences. I returned to Moustakas' texts (1961/1989, 1974, 1990, 1994) to see them afresh, comparing them with Sela-Smith's critique (2002), in order to more clearly develop my own adaptation of heuristic research. I particularly considered three areas: inconsistency, resistance, and co-participants.

3.5.3.1 Inconsistency

As Sela-Smith (2001, 2002) states, Moustakas (1961/1989, 1990) moves from an initial focus on his internal experience to external sources of knowledge on the phenomenon of interest to him. He describes vividly how he:

'began a formal study of loneliness, combining my own growing self-awareness and discovery of myself as a lonely person with my experiences in the hospital, and conversations and discussions with other persons... I steeped myself in a world of loneliness, letting my life take root and unfold in it, letting its dimensions and meanings and forms evolve in its own timetable and dynamics and ways'
(1961/1989, p. 96).

This inclusion of other sources is an integral part of the immersion stage of heuristic research. However, while he states that *'the self of the researcher is present throughout the process'* (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9) in his loneliness book (1961/1989) there is little sense of the intertwining of the different elements or of the experience of others deepening his own heuristic process. By the end of 'Loneliness' (1961/1989) the sense of this being a piece of work that deepens Moustakas' self-awareness and self-knowledge is lost - but this does not mean that it was not there. My own analysis is that Moustakas utilises the heuristic process as methodology and does not experience a need to express in the book more of his own experiential process, just as a chef provides a meal and doesn't share the recipes or cooking experience with the customers. This results in his writing moving from the *'unwavering and steady inward gaze'* (Moustakas, 1990, p. 13) of the pain of loneliness, to thinking about loneliness, and observing it in others, with the ongoing journey of the researcher and his potential self-transformation being left out. I would argue that was his intention from the start and is there throughout his 1990 book. Even within his first chapter it is clear that he is exploring *'the phenomenon'* (1990, pp. 9, 11, 14), and including other experiences and not only his own. Patton (2002) states this more starkly when he states that *'the power of heuristic inquiry lies in its potential for disclosing truth'* (p. 108) and it is this that evokes a strong sense of antipathy within me. I, along with others such as Racher et al (2000) consider each person's experience, and how it inter-relates with another's, as unique, offering something for the reader to consider but with no expectation or desire for it to encapsulate 'the' phenomenon.

3.5.2.2 Resistance

Sela-Smith (2001, 2002) states that Moustakas (1961/1989, 1990) brings in other people and other sources because he resists the '*pain embedded in the problem*' (p. 13). She regards this resistance as resulting in a flawing of the research method, one that is followed up by many others who attempt heuristic research. While this may well have some truth in it I do not regard it as the direction that Moustakas is coming from. He is purposeful in his inclusion of '*whatever presents itself in the consciousness of the investigator*' and is aware of '*welcoming alternating rhythms of concentrated focus and inventive distraction*' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 10).

Just as Sela-Smith (2001) views the pull towards a particular theme for heuristic research as resulting from the distress it holds for the researcher, and does not consider other possible options, such as exuberance (Jamison, 2005); she regards moving away from the central focus of self as being resistance and doesn't consider other possible options, such as '*inventive distraction*' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 10).

While some of my experience fits with Sela-Smith's (2001) resistance, some of my experience fits more with that of Jamison: '*the pursuit of knowledge is an intoxicant*' (p. 172). As I explore my inner and/or outer experiences there are tempting distractions, I stray along related but seemingly tangential routes away from self. Sometimes I find riches to bring back into my self exploration and other times I find I must stop, take stock, and return fascinated but apparently empty handed. I am aware of my own rhythms and acceptant of them:

'I am more and more aware of how I move between I-who-feels and my thinking observing self in so many ways including in my writing in this journal, just as I move between contact with, and distance from, others. After much angst and difficulty with this I have grown into a place of peace with it, I can manage it more consciously and appreciate the value of each.' (reflective diary 10/3/2009).

3.5.3.3 Conversational Partners

Moustakas (1990) regards interviews as typical in heuristic research, with their role being to enrich and deepen a study by including varied meanings of an experience. Sela-Smith (2001, 2002) however, has concerns about the danger of conversational partners, or co-participants as she calls them, taking the research away from the 'I-who-feels'. She supports her internal search by not turning to other people's experience as she believes this will distract her internal process. This is not a selfish act, she considers that: '*though this method is focused on the particular individual, what is studied holds social significance*' (p.16).

In HSSI it is therefore unusual to include co-participants, though not unknown (see Humphrey, 1989). Where co-participants are used in HSSI, the aim is that this is in the service of the researcher's self-search:

'as reflectors of possible areas of resistance that may be out of conscious awareness in the form of denial, projection, or incomplete search. This sends the researcher back into the self to continue the self-search into deeper or more distant tacit dimensions, thus allowing the transformation to be more expansive.' (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 78)

This seemed very much in keeping with my own perspective, but did not include the value of the co-creation of this expansion of awareness or give the experience of the co-participants a place in its own right. As for Sela-Smith (2001, 2002) I include conversational partners to support me to resist my own fears on my inner journey. They also:

'give me something to resonate my felt sense with, to know my similarities and differences but also to make meaning of them and have them potentially alter my own experience and actions, which can then be resonated again' (reflective diary 7/3/09).

By getting close to the experience of others I might get closer to my own experience, be provoked to see what I might otherwise not see or avoid seeing (reflective diary 10/3/09):

'Sometimes we use our minds not to discover facts but to hide them. We use parts of the mind as a screen to prevent another part of it from sensing what goes on elsewhere. The screening is not necessarily intentional – we are not deliberate obfuscators all of the time – but deliberate or not, the screen does hide.' (Damasio, 1999, p.298)

I regard movement between the 'I-who-feels' and my observing self as appropriate and enriching as long as the 'I-who-feels' takes overall priority. As with Moustakas I include other to offer varied meanings but this is in the context of them being intertwined with my 'I-who-feels' and them deepening and broadening my self-search.

Moustakas (1990) talks of how in heuristics: *'an unshakeable connection exists between what is out there, in its appearance and reality and what is within me in reflective thought, feeling, and awareness.'* (p. 12). Sela-Smith believes in *'the interdependence of internal and external arenas of knowledge'* (p. 23) and quotes Muir who *'spoke of a more inward journey: "I only went out for a walk," he wrote, "and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.'*" (p.21). While she uses this to emphasise the importance of appreciating the internal world of experience which has often been ignored by researchers I use it to emphasise the value of research which takes into account the internal world of researcher and conversational partners as well as external theory and personal thinking.

I embrace the different elements that Moustakas (1961/1989, 1990) described but while he separates these out I maintain their uniqueness, interdependence, mutual enrichment and intertwinedness throughout my research stages and on to the pages of this thesis.

I also move between the three languages that Sela-Smith (2001) describes: the 'I who feels', reporting about myself, and externally observing. I consider each to have their role but the most crucial for heuristic research is the 'I who feels' which is my own internal evolving process.

3.6 And on to Relational Heuristic Research

It took many more months to reach greater methodological clarity. With neither heuristic (Moustakas, 1990) nor HSSI (Sela-Smith, 2001, 2002) fitting fully with my emerging methodology, I used their work as spring boards to my own adaptation of heuristic research. While this felt somewhat audacious to me as a relatively new researcher, it felt essential and was in keeping with Lennie and West's (2010) perspective that *'it is important... that the phenomenon under investigation drives the method that we cho[ose]'* (p. 83).

My moves away from the researcher as only participant, my embracing of moving away and returning to the core focus rather than seeing this as resistance to pain, and my theme emerging from exuberance rather than embedded pain, clearly show that my research is not HSSI. However, the move towards, and now away from, HSSI greatly enriched my thinking and the lack of resonance of HSSI with my own experiential process led me forward.

My research motivation is twofold, deepening my own self understanding and extending my knowledge of others experience as it is remembered and unfolds with me in interviews. Each feeds the other and results in deeper self and mutual understanding for us all, whilst also extending the body of knowledge in this area. I do not hold the same fears as Sela-Smith about the inclusion of co-participants or more general sources related to my research question. My research question is quite different from her inner quest to discover the cause of her life threatening obesity. It is my experience that:

'just as things take me away from myself they also have the same potential to bring me further into my self. Just as they complicate and appear to fragment they also reach through to clear moments of knowing deeply and solidly' (reflective diary 26/7/09).

I consider that each of us conversational partners have our own unique experiences that will have similarities and differences from each other. Unlike Moustakas' (1990) I consider each of us represents only ourselves and do not offer validity for each other or for any themes that may be drawn from our experiences but do offer something that others can resonate with their own experience and thoughts to see what fits for them.

I initially developed the term Heuristically Directed Process Research to describe this methodology. The name emphasised the researcher's heuristic process as the director of the research with the inclusion of the experience of others deepening this process, opening up what may previously have been unknown and also standing in its own right.

However, it did not fully capture the methodology that was emerging from my heuristic process and consideration of the current theory; it did not sufficiently express the experience of the conversational partners. My evolving imagery of the research method I was undertaking was of my heuristic process as the core with the experience of others flowing in and around this. It was one of Palmer's (1993) works that provided the much needed additional element:

'In the popular imagination, knowing is seen as the act of a solitary individual... But scholars now understand that knowing is a profoundly communal act. Nothing could possibly be known by the solitary self, since the self is inherently communal in nature... The communal nature of knowing goes beyond the relations of knowers; it includes a community of interaction between knowers and the known... We now see that to know something is to have a living relationship with it – influencing and being influenced by the object known.' (p. xv).

This produced within me what is known in focusing as a 'felt shift' (Gendlin, 1978). At an organismic level it fitted with my own sense of what I had been wanting to find a way of expressing concerning my evolving methodology. While retaining key elements of Moustakas' (1990) heuristic research, I needed a methodology that more clearly expressed the relational influence aspect of the research process. I needed something that was based on the whole being more than the sum of its parts (Wertheimer, 1924) and so appreciated fully all those involved and recognised that what emerged was beyond any individual. This is very different from Sela-Smith's (2001, 2002) perspective where inclusion of other is a potential distraction and its role is only in the service of the heuristic process of the researcher. It is also different from Moustakas' (1990) work which shifts the focus from the heuristic process of the researcher to that of interviewees, rather than intertwining them.

In this way I moved away from a seeming oxymoron of heuristic research on reciprocal influence, and into a methodology that appreciated the relational interplay between the researcher's heuristic process and the experience of others, each influencing and enriching the other. The term which expresses this methodology most clearly is Relational Heuristic Research.

Relational Heuristic Research has at its core the heuristic process of the researcher who moves through Moustakas' (1990) six stages. The heuristic process is influenced by a range of experiences, both direct and indirect, and one of these influences is interviews with others. The interviews are semi-structured and are based on the subject of study; the questions asked may well evolve as further interviews are undertaken and the heuristic process of the researcher moves on. Each conversational partner is influenced by the researcher and any others being interviewed with him/her and also influences the researcher. Reflexivity is not so much practised on the interview but within it (Riach, 2009); things emerge in the 'between' or the '*inter view*' (Kvale, 1996, p. 2) of the conversational partners because of the relational nature of the interview. The heuristic process of the researcher is thus dependent on the experience with co-researchers in this methodology and the shared experience of all is valued.

Interviews are listened back to when the researcher is in a state of internal openness and congruence, in tune with his/her experiential process. Responses to the interview emerge cognitively and emotionally with connections being made with other interviews, personal process and theory while still maintaining connection to the researcher's experiential process - the primary driving force of the research and its methodology. Writing up the research centres on the researcher's process while incorporating the experience of all conversational partners and reflects their relational interplay.

Table 4 is an adaptation of one that Sela-Smith includes in her thesis (2001) and now includes an additional column for relational heuristic research. After a long journey, both practically and theoretically, relational heuristic research emerged as my methodology. The term, and what it stands for, matches what evolved as essential for this piece of research. There is a peace and sense of rightness within me with this final arrival at 'relational heuristic research'.

Heuristic Research	Heuristic Self-Search Inquiry	Relational Heuristic Research
Begins as a subjective experience, becomes an objective study.	Begins as subjective experience, remains a study of the subjective.	Begins as a subjective experience, becomes a study that intertwines subjective, interpersonal and objective.
Seeks to objectively understand a phenomenon.	Seeks self-understanding in relationship to the phenomenon.	Sees self-understanding and other-understanding in relationship to the phenomenon.
Focuses on thinking, includes feeling.	Focuses on feeling, includes thinking.	Focus moves organically between feeling and thinking.
Self-discovery through searching a phenomenon.	Self-discovery in searching the self in relationship to the phenomenon.	Self-discovery in searching the self and others in relationship to a phenomenon.
Wakes the slumbering self while seeking to know something.	Wakes the slumbering self to dialogue and get to know who it is.	Wakes the slumbering self to dialogue and get to know who it is while seeking to know something.
Study of unity in hidden likenesses.	Study of unity in the self.	Study of uniqueness of each self and unity through reciprocal influence.
Understands the phenomenon from the eyes and voices of others.	Understands the self from self's relationship to the phenomenon.	Understands the self and others from our relationship with self, each other, and the phenomenon.
Encourages self-disclosure as a way to encourage co-participants to disclose.	Opens to self-disclosure as an internal act to experience and become aware of self.	Opens to self-disclosure as an internal and external act to experience and become aware of self as well as the experience of others.
Self-discloses thoughts about feelings.	Self-discloses feelings about thoughts and thoughts about feelings.	Self-discloses feelings about thoughts and thoughts about feelings.
Table 4 – Comparison of methodologies.		

3.7 'Data analysis'

As the reader now knows, the journey to a clear methodology has been a long and winding one. It can be helpful to plan the method of analysis at a very early stage, where *'it can be built into the interview situation itself'* (Kvale, 1996, p. 178). I went through several stages of wanting to change the title of the research (see table 5) and a significant part of this was my thinking through of how to analyse the material that was emerging. I finally returned to the original title as a fresh new place, realising that the analysis had been happening from the very first interview.

The process of deciding how to define, work with, express the findings has been incubating (Moustakas, 1990) throughout the research and some nuances of it are illuminating and falling into place as I write this chapter.

2007	The Reciprocal Influence of Person Centred Counselling Students and Trainers
7/3/09	Heuristic Journeying into a Person Centred Therapy Trainers Reciprocal Relationships with Students
4/7/09	A Personal Exploration of the Reciprocal Influence of Counselling Students and Trainers
4/7/09	A Personal Journey into the Reciprocal Influence of My Students and Myself During and After Counselling Training, Enriched By the Experiences of Other Students and Trainers
13/8/09	'Becoming Visible'
16/8/09	Journeying To, and Into, My Heuristic Question
16/8/09	Exploring the Personal Meaning of Training For Me Through The Exploration of the Reciprocal Influence of Counselling Students and Trainers
16/8/09	Exploring My Heuristic Process Beneath, Within and Beyond a Study of the Reciprocal Influence of Counselling Students and Trainers
22/8/09	Exploring Multiple Co-constructions of the Reciprocal Influence of Counselling Students and Trainers
18/10/09	The Reciprocal Influence of Counselling Students and Trainers
	And back to: The Reciprocal Influence of Person Centred Counselling Students and Trainers

Table 5: Changing thesis titles

Alongside the interviews, I also immersed myself in books and articles linked to my theme and to methodologies. In my usual way, I obsessively revelled in the exploration and then, weary of it, left it to incubate and enjoyed moments of illumination that revitalised another round of immersion.

Of course, this research journey did not happen in a vacuum but was deeply influenced by those closest to me and the ebbs and flows in those relationships. During these years I experienced life-changing events that opened me more to my research journey in ways that are

not easy to define: my parents-in-law were both diagnosed with cancer and died; I joined Marriage Care as a volunteer and trained to be a relationship counsellor; and I moved to London with my partner and changed job to manage Marriage Care's volunteer relationship counselling service. I subsequently left Marriage Care on a point of principle and adjusted to focusing on completing this thesis and looking towards self-employment with, at last, more time in my life to relax. I experienced the agony of helplessness, the joyful and stressful challenge of embracing change, the powerful feeling of standing up for my own values, and most important of all - that relationships are the most meaningful thing in life.

For the first five years, restricted by work and personal commitments, I was 'forced' to find a way to work directly on my research in pockets of time, flowing between other commitments and this PhD, and also flowing between different parts of the developing draft thesis (reflective diary 6/8/08). This was invaluable not just in progressing with the work but also in embedding it in my life and incubating it when not directly working on it. Late in 2009 I started putting all of my transcripts, emails, reflective diary, and notes on reading, into Atlas ti and creating codes to help me reflect on how themes went across materials. This was challenging as there was a danger of moving into a mechanical analysis which was the antithesis of the research. Over time, I moved away from Atlas ti and then back to it, when I was able to use it to support analysis led by my 'felt sense' (Gendlin, 1978).

The interviews, literature, my ongoing training of counsellors and so many life experiences, seemingly at a distance from my research, created an effervescent cocktail of tastes, textures, colours, shapes, and movements with which I 'mulled':

'I am cautious of what words to use to express my way of being with the thesis and all it brings up. 'Thinking' is too simplistic and open to misunderstanding as I am meaning something much more than my head. My responses include the triggering of: new thoughts – from the apparently mundane to the a-ha, memories from reading articles and books, memories of other situations, memories of previous thoughts and wonderings, wonderings, specific feelings e.g. excitement, sadness, hopelessness, overwhelmed, confident, peaceful; sensations / felt senses. Of course these do overlap and inter-relate, running together and sparking each other off.

At the moment the term 'mulling over' seems to fit well with what I do. I 'mull gently' rather than forcing things and often my mulling is subconscious and I am not aware I have been mulling until something new seems to just jump out at me, offering me something new and exciting me. Excitement is an important emotion in all this work for me and it is this that I relate to much more than Sela-Smith's resistance. My experience is that my excitement comes as much from my internal journey as from my mental connections and the external, each enriched by the other and requiring the other for its full expression.' (reflective diary 16/8/09).

A longer period of incubation was forced on me by the change of job, and relocation for it, in September 2010, yet there was also a relief and readiness for reducing the intensity of focus on my research and letting it mull within me. Moments of illumination occurred on the bus, in meetings, walking with the dog, and while drifting off to sleep. They were thrilling. Links emerged and deepened my self-understanding sending charges of energy and joy through me, the only disappointment being having no one to share it with who could really appreciate it. I moved towards explication and creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990) with uncertainty. How would I be able to fully appreciate and then express clearly and effectively this process and what had emerged? Limits of time, now being in an intense full-time job in London, supported me to experiment and feel my way forward. Meaning depended on the stance I approached all the richness that I had gathered and for this thesis I needed a stance that really fitted with the process of the research thus far. I kept a reflective diary, I explored the listening guide method (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003) (see appendix 11), wrote poetry and started a book of fiction, perhaps to be completed at a later date, and so gave space to all the creativity being triggered within me.

I presented a poster on The 2:1 Interview – rarity, richness, and reflections, in May 2009 at the 15th Annual BACP Research Conference (see appendix 12); and presented papers: Intimate Interviews – Reflections on the process of ‘discussion interviews’ with my former students, March 2011 at the 5th Annual Keele Counselling Conference (see appendix 13); and, Favourites and Favouritism in Counselling Training in May 2011 at the 17th Annual BACP Research Conference Co-hosted by Society for Psychotherapy Research UK (see appendix 14). Also in 2011, I presented a seminar on my research to a small group of Master’s students at the University of Manchester and my thesis supervisor William West. At the conferences I was very aware that I had chosen to focus more on the interviews than on the relational heuristic methodology and the importance of my own heuristic process (reflective diary 6/11/09). I felt vulnerable enough presenting to my professional peers these forms of interview that were new in the counselling field, and I hadn’t worked out how to effectively present the relational heuristic aspects verbally or in writing. I was starting to find my way but still not settled.

The creative process which was data analysis took place over several years. Just as Richardson and St. Pierre (2008) used writing to think, so I used all these different forms, many of which included writing. As with them I found that:

‘Thought happened in the writing. As I wrote, I watched word after word appear on the computer screen – ideas, theories, I had not thought before I wrote them. Sometimes I wrote something so marvellous it startled me. I doubt I could have thought such a thought by thinking alone.’ (p. 488).

Through this long process I trusted that I would find my way. This was a lesson learned from early in my research and the changes in methods and methodology. *‘In facing something unknown we have a choice; either to start from what we know and can or from we do not know and cannot’* (Schmid, 2006, p. 244); I trusted that the new ideas I experimented with were all

part of the process, however unrelated they sometimes seemed. They supported me to avoid what I feared - finding only what seemed commonsense to anyone who thought about the subject and having nothing of interest, passion or newness to offer. I immersed myself for weeks at a time in one idea, rested and let it *incubate*, having illuminations emerge but repeatedly not finding they sufficiently satisfied me as explications of the meaning of the research and so not achieving creative synthesis. Each of my travels through this cycle enriched what was to come, and, as seems so obvious in hindsight, it was refreshingly simple. All I had done was valid and had brought me both closer to, and further from, my own heuristic process and the experiences expressed by, and with, the participants. However, I discovered that I 'just' needed to sit with my 'felt sense' (Gendlin, 1978) of it all - the words on paper, the recordings, the process within me; and let a cohesive story emerge from the 'edge of awareness' (Gendlin, 1978) that honoured all of us and the theme. I needed to let go of, or at least hold to one side, my fear of how this might be received and to trust my knowledge that counting and triangulating weren't concepts that fitted here. Instead the concern has been that participants, the counselling and academic communities would regard my work as *'trustworthy'* in terms of *'validity, credibility, and believability'* (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001, p. 324). Throughout this disciplined process, even with what would traditionally be termed the data analysis and writing up, the heuristic process have been primary, they have been *'a dedicated pursuit, inspired by a hunger for new insight and revelation'* (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 41).

3.8 Conclusion

This methodology evolved in stark contrast to previous research I had undertaken on HIV & AIDS Counselling in Nepal for Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) (Taylor, 2006, 2008). There a range of issues, including: my inexperience, the remit of the research, the constraints of time and lack of equipment, my cultural and language difference from interviewees and subsequent reliance on Nepali research assistants; resulted in research based on structured interviews undertaken by myself with a Nepali research assistant translating or by a Nepali research assistant. Much of the data gained was quantitative and the chain of translation from interviewee to written English meant that I could not confidently use quotes from interviewees. While the research served its function well I was frustrated by many aspects.

As a Person Centred counselling trainer I had long been fascinated by the student-trainer relationship and I have followed my inner knowing to work out my route to explore this in terms of methodology, methods and data analysis. Adapting Moustakas (1990) heuristic research and using interview methods seemingly not used before in the counselling setting is audacious for a relatively new researcher but the route to them has been clear and, as I have shown, makes sound theoretical sense. The following chapters will prove the value, or otherwise, of the methodology and methods in exploring my theme of the reciprocal influence of Person Centred counselling students and trainers.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

With an enormous amount of material, and so much developing in an interrelated and nonlinear way, it would be easy to write this chapter in a way that is incomprehensible to the reader. Limitations of space mean that, frustratingly, the richness and extent of the findings cannot be fully expressed here. When exploring the findings of interviews, there are two basic ways of presenting them, as themes which bring in examples from various interviews or as separate interviews. To attempt to do both at the same time results in incomprehensible reading, and yet both have important things to offer. To express this richness I move from one method of presentation to the other while retaining comprehensibility and inevitably losing some of the richness.

The six 2:1 interviews are particularly reduced though they are in no way lesser than the eight 1:1 discussion interviews that took place later, but there are differences. In the 2:1 interviews my focus was on supporting the former student and trainer to explore their experiences with each other in a safe and supported way. This meant that my own heuristic process during the interviews was minimal. In the discussion interviews, I was a more active participant and we were together reflexively processing our experience, thus the heuristic process was happening, and being co-created, within the interviews themselves. These differences have led to my choices of how to present the findings. Initially I explore one broad theme from the 2:1 interviews: liking and favouritism. While this is a single theme, it is one that encompasses many core elements of relationship and so can be seen as more of an umbrella theme than a narrow one. I then consider how the participants described their experience of the interview and so consider the methodology and methods themselves, important because of their originality. While the 2:1 interviews are thus explored relatively briefly in comparison to the following section on the discussion interviews they received no less attention during my immersion process. New awareness was stimulated by those vital 2:1 interviews and impacted the following discussion interviews. Turning to these eight discussion interviews, I explore elements of each that took our understanding and awareness forward and doing this effectively means lengthier verbatim examples. I then draw together key points across the discussion interviews and then across both the 2:1 and discussion interviews before concluding the chapter.

This structure makes the reader's task as clear and interesting as possible while giving some sense of the richness of the interviews. Inevitably, there is grief and frustration at what cannot be shared here, but cutting out so much rich material enables me to do some justice to what is presented and give some sense of, what I experienced as, its extraordinary subtlety and complexity.

4.2 2:1 interviews - Liking and favouritism

Interview number	Names given (former students start with S and former trainers start with T)
1	Sue & Teresa
2	Samantha & Tara
3	Stuart & Tony
4	Suzanne & Tania
5	Sean & Tessa
6	Sara & Tessa
	<i>Note: same former trainer for interviews 5 & 6</i>
Table 6: 2:1 interview participants.	

4.2.1 Taboo of being favoured, enjoyment of being liked

It is perhaps not surprising that the theme of liking and favouritism was important in the 2:1 interviews, not just because I brought it up after it arose naturally in the first one or two, but also because of how the interviews were set up:

'Usually one person has volunteered to be interviewed and this is often the former trainer. This person then chooses a former student to approach. This choice is highly likely to involve someone they still have some degree of contact with and with whom they feel safe enough about what they will say to be interviewed with them. It is very likely, if not the norm, that they will choose someone they got on well with. The very act of choosing one student, and then the machinations of that choosing, means that the person chosen might, by some at least, be viewed as one of the trainer's favourites. In the interview there is likely to be some discomfort about that and about exploring this relationship.' (reflective diary 25/8/08).

Tara confirmed this when she described practical reasons for inviting Samantha to do the interview with her but also added:

'But there is something about, I thought, well actually there was something I really valued about you Samantha and I had a sense of that you valued about me. So I think partly as well it was somebody I didn't think was going to come in and slag me off.' (2:1 01).

Liking and favouritism emerged as themes from the first interview with favouritism feeling like a taboo to each of us and being voiced best by Teresa: *'I mean I do have those strong connections, I don't want to call them favourites'* (2:1 01).

The sense of taboo indicated the importance of the theme and in subsequent interviews I brought up 'liking' and 'favouritism' if they did not emerge naturally. Thus I started to move around in this discomfiting and fascinating issue. I easily identified with the challenge of connecting with some students more than others and being concerned about the spectre of favouritism being committed and/or accused. There was a relief for me in hearing others tangle with this, getting to grips with it, and it supported me to explore this later with my former students.

Several of the trainers talked of some students standing out more for them from very early on. Tara shared with Samantha: *'there was probably 4 or 5 people who I instantly noticed, like the names you get off first and I guess you were one of them'* (2:1 02). Of course not all noticing is positive, sometimes it is negative and sometimes there can even be a mix of both, Teresa explained how: *'there are students that I really feel a lot of connection to but I know I'm probably going to keep them at a bigger distance 'cos, 'cos they want more of me than I can give.'* (2:1 01).

Samantha and Tara had stood out for each other from early in the course but this had never been put into words between them and Samantha regarded this as important: *'well surely it's a good thing that you didn't directly acknowledge that because then that would have been favouritism'* (2:1 02). While they had never spoken of their liking of each other, each was aware of it and felt supported by it. Other students spoke positively of the subtle clues they received that showed them the trainer liked them. Stuart explained how it was: *'just in small ways like umm, I can just remember agreeing a diary date and umm just the warmth there, I know it's the small fleeting moments'* (2:1 03).

Sara experienced Tessa *'as a rock... you've always been constant, you've always been there...'* (2:1 06) while for Tessa the things that appealed were that Sara *'was very professionally mature... [able] to hold two truths and... [her] commitment to her work and her enthusiasm and motivation and determination'* (2:1 06).

Trainers liked particular aspects of some students, as Tony explains to me about Stuart:

'there would be things I guess there in terms of, if you like similarities, he's articulate, he's a nice looking bloke; he, you know, he dresses clean and smart, casual usually, but you know all the things I like in, I like to do myself. Umm he puzzles about things, umm he wants to get the understanding, he wants to really work it out, sometimes to a kind of excessively irritating way [laughs] yeah, but yeah it's those kind of things that, that kind of, and there were never any kind of thoughts about having a social relationship at that time although we have become more friends [and colleagues] since then umm but just something about his attitude set, and also something about 'this is someone I'm going to enjoy'' (2:1 03).

For Tania the liking was at least partly based on Suzanne's perceived potential as a counsellor: *'now and then there's just somebody who has it, you know like a feel for the work, and I felt you just had it'* (2:1 04).

For others it was a complex mixing of similarities and difference that prompted the liking; Tara expresses this as: *'there's enough similarity to get the attraction going and then you've got the added bonus of difference'* (2:1 02).

While those examples are more about enjoying something in the student themselves others mentioned the way that the student related with the trainer. Teresa explains that *'for me that relationship with Sue also had an element of safety so I could say things about me and my life and my beliefs that some people might find less easy to hold and again I never felt that judgement..., so I didn't feel judged by Sue for being the wacky person that I am'* (2:1 01).

Samantha didn't expect trainers to *'show their humanness'* (2:1 02) but rather keep it to themselves or colleagues however, it was very human elements that connected her with Tara. When Tara shared that she was quite a melancholy person and that she had a working class background Samantha experienced:

'a sense of an unspoken connection, really, for me that, that was more, to a much greater extent than the other two tutors in the team and that gave me a gain, that did give me a sense of anchoring and a sense of strength to be myself although I didn't, I didn't necessarily access you as such' (2:1 02).

4.2.2 Favourites and favouritism

All of the trainers could identify with not wanting their liking of some students more than others to result in favouritism; Tony explains:

'yeah, there was, I was, was talking to somebody the other day and... trying to... differentiate between - I've always worked hard not to have favourites; not to favouritise anybody and I know that there are some people that I like more than others' (2:1 03).

Samantha shared that she didn't relate to the concept of favouritism, something that she linked with being an only child, but had enjoyed her sense of being liked by Tara: *'so I never had that comparison it was almost as though I knew you liked me and I was happy with that'* (2:1 02).

Her trainer Tara, on the other hand, did relate to the concept of favouritism with a sense of real dislike, also based on her personal history:

'I remember with, getting really angry at, at a co-tutor of mine once who had absolutely demonstrated what I felt was crass favouritism in the middle of a meeting and I got really angry, and I suddenly realised why I got so angry with her, you know I was really having a barney with her saying 'what about the effect on the rest of the group?' There's something about coming from a very large family myself, and I was one of the favourites' (2:1 02).

Teresa reflects on how it is concern for the whole group that consciously holds her back from showing greater liking of some students:

'I do have stronger connections than other connections. But I'm also really aware as a tutor that I'm the resource for every single person there so I don't want to play it out, I don't want to act it out much umm because that's not appropriate or fair umm so someone on the other end of that may not get a lot of signals because in a way I'm not gonna do that' (2:1 01).

While there was often discomfort with the idea of students liked more by trainers being actively favoured there was recognition in some trainers that, at some level, they did get something extra from the trainer. This 'extra' was hard to grasp clearly and could not be simplified to something such as gaining extra trainer time. Tara is processing her ideas as she talks:

'it's like counselling those clients I really love yet sometimes I've always felt really guilty about it because it's like well I don't love these other clients but it's a bit like I can't stop loving that one and it doesn't make it, you know there is something about if some people get that bit more it's just how it is... and that's what's really interesting me in your research 'cos I sometimes feel really like bad, not bad, but I think there's some tutees, like your clients, who just get that bit more and I think it's that level of engagement, that level of care, that level of really prizing, that I can't make happen for everyone but sometimes it's a bit like that sense of 'I will go that extra mile' or... and I can feel quite guilty about that but in equalizing out I think that's crazy because you can't' (2:1 02).

Sometimes what the 'liked' student got more of included extra challenge. Tony shares that:

'there's a balance there and I guess what, what will tend to happen is that sometimes the ones that I like more than others get challenged a bit more strongly I think; ... yes, so there's extra investment but there's extra challenge as well' (2:1 03).

Having favourite students, or those that were liked more, carried some discomfort for the trainers but it was also acknowledged as nourishing. Teresa explains that:

'It isn't just that I'm more important to them, it is that sense of they're the nourishing relationships for me, they're the, they're the relationships that I find more textured, umm more rewarding' (2:1 01).

This nourishment was experienced by some of the trainers not only personally but also as nourishing them in their role as trainer and as a result enhancing the whole group's experience. In the absence of nourishing relationships in a group Teresa found training tougher:

'I find those groups much harder to work with, I find them drier and less rewarding umm, I'll do it and I'll do it with as good a heart as I can, umm but in terms of my nourishment I find that, it, it's drier, you know it's err, it's a water biscuit as opposed to ...' (2:1 01).

The former students tended not to use the word 'favourites' when comparing their trainers, just as the trainers tended not to use it when comparing their students. However, the former students did seem much more comfortable than the trainers in making comparisons and expressing preferences. While the trainers were constrained by theirs, and others, perspectives of what their professional role entailed the students appeared to experience their role as giving them greater freedom to compare trainers on the basis of their wanting to make best use of the learning resources available to them. Some students actively worked out how they would benefit from elements of each trainer on their course and ensured that they got this. Sue shares her remembering that:

'there were times when I needed tutorials where I deliberately picked you because I felt, and again it's to do with this cognitive thing, I felt that Chris and I were very cognitive but there was something about you that could kind of reach in under that and tweak at something else in me that I wanted to be tweaked and if I had a conversation with Chris we could ... that didn't happen as much.... But it's, it's very, you were very different I think, very different characters, almost kind of coming from different places and I suppose there's been times when I've sought out what I felt I needed from either you or Chris' (2:1 01).

4.2.3 Interview Process

My brief feedback on my experience of the interview and some explicit questions to each pair resulted in four of the former students and four of the former trainers giving me email feedback on their experience of the interview. Overall they expressed similar words and phrases such as: 'all seemed to flow' (Sue 2:1 01 post-interview email), 'I enjoyed it' (Teresa 2:1 01 post interview email), 'has brought us closer together' (Stuart 2:1 03 post interview email), 'I felt very engaged' (Tania 2:1 04 post interview email).

Tara, however, had found the interview very challenging and her description of her process reveals the complexity of her experience:

'My memory is of a number of reactions to the experience, at the time and subsequently. I had a growing sense of unease within the interview, feeling uncomfortable around boundaries and yet wanting to be a 'good' researchee for you and also honour the student who had put in time and effort to take part. I started to get a sense of moving into unsafe territory or rather into areas of personal experiencing that I might well keep to myself as a tutor, think it inappropriate and unhelpful to share with students. At the same time I was aware of feeling moved and wanting to share with this student some of the responses I had had towards her which were fond and kindly and almost feeling sorry that I had not shared these with her before and hence relieved that she said she had felt my fondness at the time.

I was still aware that I was far from sharing all of my experiences as a tutor around her; that I was still trying to hold boundaries. I didn't have negative responses to her as a student that I remember but I am far from sure that I would have shared them or if I had I would have done so very very very carefully. I was absolutely aware of that dynamic of power and responsibility, at times I really did feel I was tightrope walking. In terms of how we all related to each other, that was something else. I thought you were supportive and permission-giving and I loved the way that Samantha started to flower, to come out of herself and this encouraged me to risk more, to say more - and then panic slightly!... It was a real mixture of closeness and pulling-back, of thinking and feeling deeply moved.... If you had asked me before about my reactions towards Samantha, I wouldn't have thought I would have much to say. But they almost developed like a photo while we talked.' (2:1 02, post-interview email).

Teresa on the other hand had: *'enjoyed it, as I was exploring an 'easy' relationship I felt easy'* (2:1 01, post-interview email), though she did wonder if there were some more sensitive issues that she hadn't touched on. Tony was conscious of ensuring Stuart had space to talk but didn't feel inhibited in what he said *'as immediacy and transparency are so much a part of my way of being, I am used to being like that in all my relationships'* (2:1 03 post-interview email).

Feedback about the interview process itself was positive. Sara explained that she had experienced me as:

'very relaxed and professional allowing me plenty of time to explore my role and feelings as a student. I was not influenced to say anything – in fact I felt it a very therapeutic encounter which has a dual purpose: to allow me to safely discuss my relationship with a tutor; and to in some way make me feel valued and professional.' (2:1 06 post-interview email).

Sean shared how:

'Initially I was concerned that it might stifle what we each had to say and in other tutor/student relationships I think it might have done but with Tessa there is a mutual warmth and respect for each other that meant we could be open. I found that being interviewed together actually enhanced my contributions as it helped to jog my memory and started me on thoughts I might not have remembered to bring up... I was surprised by some of the things Tessa disclosed ... and ...this has further enhanced our relationship and helped me to understand why I have felt so understood by her in the past... I came away from the interview feeling very encouraged and affirmed' (2:1 05 post-interview email).

Sue expressed surprise at:

'How many times we really seemed in tune and almost finished one another's sentences. The fact that we continued for 1.5 hours with ease.'

The fact that our impressions of our first meeting were at different times. That Teresa admitted to being prejudiced around some Christians, because I never felt that.' (2:1 01 post-interview email).

Teresa found the process of reflection in the interview useful:

'I have always known that it is for me in teaching, as it is in my life, important to make contact. To have the time to explore what that contact looks like both to me and to the other was so useful' (2:1 01 post-interview email).

Sue also noted the ongoing wider impact that the interview had had on her:

'Actually, stuff is still coming up for me even months afterwards. I referred to the interview experience at my interview only last week... They offered me the opportunity to ask for feedback on my interview at a later date, and I would like to take up that opportunity for several reasons, but, unusually perhaps, because I am interested to know how I influenced them!!!! The material we discussed I found to be quite profound, and I am certainly far more mindful of reciprocal influence in my relationships in general as well as those with my students and clients....' (2:1 01 post-interview email).

4.2.4 The impact of the 2:1 interviews

As can be seen from the transcripts, only a small sample of which has been able to be included here, the conversational partners shared with each other in ways that they had not done previously and explored areas that had either never been shared with each other before or had been shared only a little. They had managed this openness with the skill of the counsellors they all were, keeping themselves, and each other, sufficiently safe to be able to enjoy the experience. Each asked questions of each other, and disclosed to the other and me, in respectful, warm, intimate and considerate ways.

These 2:1 interviews were exciting and stimulating and supported me in several ways as I turned to the discussion interviews with my former students:

'Some themes are more apparent than they would have been otherwise; in particular this includes the themes of connection, liking and favouritism;

I am much more aware of the amount we forget, only bits of it being prompted by the other sharing a memory; this means that I have felt more comfortable with my own limited memory and am able to offer reassurance to the former student;

I was aware of the way that the interview may flow between us, may move theme, may play back and forward, may touch on difficult issues, etc. and so was overall well prepared and open;

I was aware of how things may arise in the moment between us and take joy in these arising – moments of relational depth;

I was aware of how much may have been unspoken between us and may have been received as intended or very differently.’ (reflective diary 26/3/2010).

The 2:1 interviews also stimulated a deep internal process in me that is best expressed in an example from my reflective diary:

‘I see how much it means to me that some students relate to me, even in brief moments, as a person separate from my trainer role and in an adult-adult way even when seeing me in role. I see how I value some students having warmth for others and care for the group which is at times put before their individual preferences. I enjoy vibrancy and am vitalised by it, etc. etc. This is rich in itself and when the interview data is also considered, well – what richness to uncover, it feels like being an archaeologist or CSI person digging up bodies carefully from their resting place – sometimes using shovels and other times a paint brush; great revelations and small shifts that start to link up with others. Excavating myself, my deeper being in relation to training and what relationships mean for me.’ (reflective diary 1/4/2010).

4.3 Discussion interviews

While I have considered a broad theme of liking and favouritism and feedback on the interview process itself to explore the 2:1 interviews here I will explore aspects of each of the eight discussion interviews, in the order of the interviews. This gives a fuller sense of the complexity of each conversational partner’s experience of the other and the experiences of each pair. The rather cryptic headings for each are an attempt to summarise key elements of the relationship and emphasise their uniqueness.

01	Paula	Favoured marshmallow coated hamper facilitates incomprehensible learning with gentle banter
02	Patrick	Conscious cautiousness with mutual warmth and respect
03	Patricia	Giving something back for being there results in warm feelings
04	Petra	Rule evading lesbians in heteronormative environment
05	Penny	Swan ending ready to start sharing being visible
06	Philippa	Lesbians at a distance grieving forgotten loss
07	Phoebe	Feeling not valued by marking but enjoying straight talking
08	Paul	Beyond shared real differences trainer tentativeness explored
Table 7: discussion interviews – former students		

4.3.1 Paula – Favoured marshmallow coated hammer facilitates incomprehensible learning with gentle banter

I was pleased that Paula wanted to participate though it came as no surprise: *'it is my sense of her, as someone who really engages with things and is positive about helping others'* (pre-interview reflection). We primarily worked together in 'home group' where students presented and discussed client work.

4.3.1.1 Being favoured

Paula remembered me coming into the course part way through her first year: *'it was really good when you came in when you did, to show me that it was possible to be Person Centred, to be experienced and be organised.'* She surprised me by telling me that 'we used to fight over you you know' and asking how I felt about that. Being favoured was discomfiting for me to explore, showing me how important the subject therefore was:

'I suppose it's one of those difficult things of, of being flattered on the one hand and on the other hand the difficulty it causes interpersonally and, and in terms of the practicalities- you know because you can't chop yourself in two so you can't give everybody what they want, and you want your other tutor to feel confident and, and to feel also liked and you know I've had situations before, like on the Diploma where you put your tutorial list up and umm one tutor might be completely full and the other one might be empty but then they might be teaching on another Diploma as well and the reverse might happen you know, so that at least is comforting, but when you are, you know when you are the person who's being chosen there's a kind of discomfort and when you're the person not being chosen there's also that discomfort.'

Paula wondered if some students might think she was a favourite of mine:

'I could banter with you and make a remark and I wondered if somebody watching us would think... oh does that look as if she favours her? 'cos I didn't think you did, it was just we got on and it was nice.'

Her comments on our banter connected me with how much more fully I can be myself when students relate to me not just as a trainer but also as a person:

Sandra: I didn't know loads and loads about you in your life but I felt you very clearly shared yourself

Paula: right

Sandra: and therefore... you were a fairly steady kind of person so you weren't going to sort of flip and change

Paula: right

Sandra: so that made it easier for me to be more fully myself

Paula: right

Sandra: you know, you know and you didn't have me on a, on a .. I knew that you had a very healthy respect for me and for what I was doing but I didn't feel that as a person you'd put me on a pedestal or anything but when you talked to me you talked to me, you know, as two grown ups together

Paula: yes definitely

Sandra: and that's something that I really love in those relationships because it does give you some more freedom to have some humour, to have a bit of banter, to feel as if you're seen, you know, you do expect to be seen in the role because that's an important thing there, but also, you know, to be seen as a human being that's... not exactly separate from but just seen more full somehow.

4.3.1.2 Teaching the incomprehensible

One of the challenges for Paula had been that there were some elements of Person Centredness that it took a long time for her to really understand. A year one assignment based on a session recording was excellent, but something she didn't attain the quality of again. As Paula and I explore together I deepen my understanding of the challenge of helping someone learn something they can't yet comprehend:

Sandra: The challenge I thought was .. that... you weren't quite sure how you'd done it [Paula laughs gently] or what you'd done

Paula: yeah

Sandra: and after that it never quite came back

Paula: no... no... which is bitter

Sandra: yes

Paula: it was bitter. I mean there were times I had to remember what you said to me to keep me going, the fact that you praised that was really important to me because otherwise I would have thought, I don't know what I would have thought actually well 'are you ever going to get past first base?' and 'what are you doing wrong?' and I still wondered that at times but I thought at least I could do it at one point and kept going back to work out what it was so no, that encouragement was really very very important to me.... Yeah... oh I remember that very well, you mentioned it a couple of times actually...

Sandra: I think that, that I was very aware that you needed that

Paula: right

Sandra: I mean, it came very naturally but that, that was maybe some of that consciousness for me of 'here I am feeling as if I'm being mean again' [Paula laughs]

Paula: yeah, yes that's right yeah, you had to say what you had to say, yeah sure

Sandra: yeah

Paula: sure

Sandra: and wanting to be able to find other ways to explain concepts to you to see what would make sense to you and I guess that, that kind of thing sounds as though it wouldn't have fitted easily with, you know, you usually being successful much more easily with things. I have a lot of admiration for your staying power

Paula: [laughs] right!

Sandra: you know, we'll sometimes say things like umm you know, 'something's just got to click and I don't know when it's going to click for this person'

Paula: yes

Sandra: you know, I might explain it in different ways or do whatever

Paula: yes

Sandra: but it's not that, it's not that you can go and tell the person to look here or look there

Paula: that's right

Sandra: you can try and explain something but it is that thing of... it's almost like a process has to happen that you feel as if you can hopefully help a bit towards it, but in essence you don't know what's going to click it and whether it will happen here, or whether it will happen out in their life.

4.3.1.3 An open door

One of my frustrations as a trainer is when students don't come to me for support when I explicitly invite them to. This deeply crystallises in reflecting with Paula as her empathic responses push my reflexive process:

Sandra: it's a sort of frustration because.. there's that, you know, knowledge that some people will come and will ask a question, like you're writing an essay and it says in the book 'come and check your essay title' so you get some who come and really check their essay title and the gist of where they think they're going and you, you give them feedback, and these might be people who usually score 40

or usually score 70, the same thing and you know you give that feedback and they go away and they use it and that really improves what they were doing

Paula: yes

Sandra: and then you've got other people who don't come anywhere near you and they write the most off the wall title that they don't really follow

Paula: yeah

Sandra: and... you know it's that frustration of

Paula: yes, yeah 'come and see me'

Sandra: I don't know, yeah, yeah 'I want you to come and see me and I.. I.. I can't make it okay for you to come and see me'

Paula: no, no

Sandra: you know what I mean, it's like however friendly I am

Paula: sure

Sandra: however many times I say to you 'come and check with me'

Paula: I see, okay

Sandra: I'm not going to come and tap you on the back and say 'what's your essay?'

Paula: sure

Sandra: and I think .. that's a hard... you know I find that hard because it's like I want people to do their best and I .. I want to be seen as a human being who is approachable and I can only have so much impact on helping that happen

Paula: right, so it seems you're really aware of that 'cos, say from my perspective I wouldn't know whether you knew that or not so it, it's good to, obviously you're fully aware then

Sandra: yeah sure, and it's hard, knowing that you're not always being seen in a way that helps people to access what you want to offer them

Paula: yes, yes that must be, yeah, yeah – 'I'm here ready and willing, come and ask me', mm yes and they don't.

4.3.1.4 Marshmallow coated hammer

Late in her course Paula gave me a metaphor of how she experienced me, a metaphor that stayed with me strongly over the intervening two years – a 'marshmallow coated hammer', I was surprised that it has also stayed with her.

It was a metaphor I had understood but was not entirely at ease with and our discussion resulted in a small but important adjustment so that it more fully encapsulated important aspects of me as a trainer:

Sandra: you reminded me of the marshmallow coated hammer

Paula: yes! [both laugh] What do you think about that? Can you equate with that at all?

Sandra: yes, I can equate to it, I think umm, I suppose the bit that it missed is the marshmallow in the middle of the hammer as well

Paula: yes, I came to that later actually

Sandra: right!

Paula: I did, definitely

Sandra: aaah, interesting, because I'm usually only trying to, I suppose I'm trying to sweeten the firm holding

Paula: the pill, yes [giggles]

Sandra: and yet also underneath that there's also a 'I don't really want to have to hold that' or

Paula: yes

Sandra: or an 'I'm only doing it for your good' or umm

Paula: yes

Sandra: you know, something like that, so I do really go back to the marshmallow right in the middle of that [both laugh]

Paula: I did get to that so there you are, that's good for you to know I did find that

Sandra: right, yeah, but I really took that away. I really, I really liked something about that

Paula: right

Sandra: yes

Paula: I felt a bit bad actually, when I said I thought... because it was absolutely right for me at the time

Sandra: yes

Paula: but I thought 'oh god should you have said that to her?'

Sandra: yeah, no I took it away and really thought about it and there are things about it that I really like and it was just in literally saying it then that I thought 'there's a marshmallow in the middle of it as well'.

4.3.1.5 What do we take away?

We drew together the essence of much of what we had reflected on by exploring how uniquely each student will take away their own sense of me:

Paula: you matter, it's just how you matter, and that perhaps varies then from person to person and then we get back to the relationship thing – because if you're very big for me I will take you with me in much more of a stronger way than perhaps somebody that feels more independent or more confident or, I don't know how to put it really for somebody that would carry you more lightly say

Sandra: yes, but even if somebody carries me less lightly it's not necessarily me

Paula: no, it's always their version of you

Sandra: their projections if you like

Paula: always, it has to be

Sandra: yeah, sure, interesting one

Paula: it's always our perception isn't it, always what we pick up from you that we take with us, and I would say to you 'it's really big, I got this all from Sandra' [laughs] and you would say 'I don't remember saying that!' [both laugh]

4.3.1.6 Interview Process

This first experience of a 1:1 discussion interview was intimate and powerful, as I shared with Paula in the post-interview reflection:

'We seemed to move around themes comfortably with the occasional bit of direction from me to make sure we covered all that I wanted. It felt like a special kind of chatting about things we had never directly talked about before.

I really appreciated the way you engaged fully and were able to share times when things I had done had not been comfortable for you... as well as check out queries of your own about my process on different occasions. I felt that you were secure in yourself and in your experience of me and so I could be open and honest and go with my own emerging process to discover new things such as my feelings when students don't feel able to ask me for help because of their own issues despite all my best endeavours to encourage them.

It was really helpful that you were able to tell me when 'memories' I had were correct or not. You also brought up things that I didn't remember at all It is amazing to see how talking together we can clarify and enrich our memories and explore some of our underlying queries...

When I reflected back on our talking I also realise that it felt cathartic to talk of my experience of you with you, these things will have been unsaid though they may have been indicated in the way that we were with each other in different ways but without saying the words and knowing that they are heard we don't know what got through and what didn't.' (1:1 01 post-interview email)

Paula subsequently shared her experience of the interview: *'I found our meeting a great pleasure. It was friendly and relaxed, and as you remarked, in some ways cathartic - a very good rounding-off of the course.'* (1:1 01 post-interview email).

4.3.2 Patrick – Conscious cautiousness with mutual warmth and respect

4.3.2.1 Closeness rather than distance

I experienced a strong and warm connection with Patrick, whilst also navigating two challenges to the relationship, and was pleased he was taking part, *'he seemed at ease in his own skin generally and I found him steady, interesting, engaged and warm.'* (pre-interview reflection). He had a complex sense of his memories of me: *'initial kind of thoughts and perceptions about you, which altered and then there's... the things I just re-remembered a few minutes ago... and then there are... set kind of impressions of you that have kind of lingered.'*

His initial experience of me was *'quite disconcerting and disorientating'* as I came theoretically from a very different position to the trainer I was standing in for. I then ran his 'working with difference' module and he wrote an essay on sexuality that:

'I didn't get a great mark from you, but it was actually really helpful to get the feedback that I got umm... and so, I think that for me, enabled me to feel more respectful and trusting of your knowledge and your experience.'

I was very surprised that what could have distanced him from me actually opened him to me more. We explored this further later in the discussion:

Patrick: when I wrote my essay on sexuality, I was very conscious of the fact that you were gay. I was kind of conscious afterwards [laughter]

Sandra: OK [laughing]

Patrick: because I wrote a lot about homosexuality, but I wrote about it as some kind of oppression you know and you made... the comment that had a real impact on me was, you know, 'there are good things about being gay'

Sandra: yes

Patrick: and I was like 'shit [laughter] I forgot about the good things about being gay!' you know, and I felt, even though you did it in a kind of gentle matter-of-fact way, there was a real consciousness of your gender [sic] and how I may have

come across in my work as someone who didn't have the same understanding, 'cos I'm not gay, you know. Err... I was conscious that... wondered to myself... kind of, what impact that had to... you know, to read something like that when it's the core of who you are, as well

Sandra : *yeah*

Patrick: *so...*

Sandra: *yeah, umm... I hadn't remembered about the essay, but you talking about it does remind me of it and I do remember having a sort of intrigue as to why you'd written it when I saw that that was what it was about. It was like I hadn't noticed it being a particular interest of yours...*

The downside of not having someone there as an interviewer is that it is only now, having heard it and read it several times, that I can see I didn't go with his caring and direct wondering about how his essay had impacted me personally. This shift towards something more focused on the student's process is common in me as a trainer, and often appropriate, these interviews however are aimed at supporting me to explore beneath the usual, to see what I don't usually see. On this occasion I didn't see the open door.

Patrick's care of me as a person felt unusual and very warming and was indicative of his real way of relating to me. Particularly in view of this the other challenge to our relationship was mortifying for me.

4.3.2.2 Patrick, or David?

Patrick had often come in early and we chatted briefly before the course started, during this time I consistently called him by the wrong name. Whilst I have done this once or twice with other students I have never done it to this extent and could never understand why it kept happening. I was aware that it must have an impact on him but he always brushed it off and indeed it took some time in the interview for him to share how he had experienced it.

Sandra: *I would call you David*

Patrick: *yeah, yeah god yeah*

Sandra: *and you would always say [softly] 'I'm not David' [Patrick laughs] and I would say 'Oh, shit!' sort of thing, and I just felt so mortified, 'cos I knew you weren't David and I had no idea how it came out of my mouth because it wasn't that I was mixing you up, do you know what I mean?*

Patrick: *It almost became...*

Sandra: *yes*

Patrick: *like it was of... your brain to call me David [laughs] when you knew... I could tell, I could tell. It didn't bother me at all after a couple... the first couple of times it... I thought to myself 'how can she think my name is David [laughter]. David is*

so different from me, you know. In some ways David is quite similar to me but' umm... there was a part that was kind of a little bit offended because of my... how I felt about David actually, as well, [laughing] ...

Sandra: yeah

Patrick: but, it sounded like it really affected you

Sandra: well, I hated it, because I really had no idea. You know, I would sort of, you know, see you and... out of my mouth would come 'David' and it was 'I'm not David'. It was like 'I know you're not David', because you were such distinct personalities... So, it was never about...

Patrick: yeah

Sandra: I actually thought you were David, but to keep calling somebody by the wrong name, I just thought was so umm... I would hate it if it was happening to me, do you know what I mean, it was like... I really, really didn't like it [sigh]

Patrick: I could see how... [laughing] how distressing it was for, you know. It was almost like tourettes, or something, that was like out of your control, at some point, but it... and I was able to... when I realised that that was kind of what was going on, I was OK with it, you know. I mean it was just like thinking... yeah... you know. It's almost funny, you know [laughing]

Sandra: I'm really glad that you kind of got to the [laughs] point of the shift, yeah

Patrick: well I could see how

Sandra: mortifying

Patrick: yeah, how... how mortifying it was for you... yeah... what it did for me, was it made... I've always – in terms of education – always found my relationships outside of the learning arena, kind of uncertain with my teachers, you know. There is a... I kind of never... kind of know where it goes, or what it... where it can go, you know umm... there's a sense of kind of, you know, the boundaries being different and not really knowing what they're about and stuff and so, that's what was going on there... you [laughing] didn't seem to know who I was. It kind of was a little bit disconcerting, umm... it was, umm... and so I felt a bit standoffish with you and more difficult to kind of approach you when I needed err... issues, when I needed to sort things out. I was aware that I had to make a bit more of an internal effort to kind of come to you and talk to you but by the end... by the end of the year, it was... because there was so much work and there were so many things to be done, I'd almost kind of overcome... but it was...

Sandra: mm, it did impact

Patrick: *yeah, it did impact, yeah, yeah*

Sandra: *yeah, I'm absolutely not surprised, yes*

4.3.2.3 Home group experiences

I am very struck by the two potential challenges to our relationship and yet the warmth and respect that we had for each other. Patrick seemed to have a secure sense of himself, for him the marking of the essay was about the marking of the essay and when he saw that I did know he wasn't the person I was calling him by but couldn't seem to stop doing it he felt okay about it. He was aware of the impact of my calling him the wrong name but was also able to stay in relationship with me and chose to work with me in home group. It was our work together here that was most significant and positive for each of us. Patrick shared how:

'I felt that was kind of the arena in which I got to understand you and build a relationship with you kind of most of all and I found you umm... I found you very consistent and very perceptive and umm... helpful and not critical. Whether I often felt... you know, walked away feeling criticised, but that was my... my process and my stuff going on. But I felt very umm... I felt very safe in the group and felt like I could bring stuff and take risks umm... and I always... yeah, it was a very solid place. It didn't feel like shaky or anything like that, in terms of my picture of the day, you know, that was a place where I knew I would get a lot of understanding from. So, that and you kind of therefore marking a lot of my work from then on, umm... I felt like my respect for you kind of grew... it felt like you were consistently able to give that criticism in a way that was umm... kind of in line with your own kind of belief system in relation to how you deliver counselling.'

A particularly powerful exploration together was sharing our experience of each other when he was working with clients who had particularly challenging issues:

Sandra: *so, I remember you know, just sort of initially having that kind of thing, thinking that you know, in my head, 'I need to check he knows what he's doing here', 'cos what you were doing was challenging stuff for somebody who was qualified, never mind somebody who was in training but I remember you... the way that you talked about it, the way that you'd thought about things and.. you had a handle on it and you... and I think that calmness and that solidity kind of, of it*

Patrick: *yeah, yeah*

Sandra: *would really... you know, felt as if it would be really helpful to your client, as well as you know, you had thought about things. You were aware, you were bringing it, you know*

Patrick: *yeah, I was actually bringing it into the room, it's just like*

Sandra: *yeah [laughs softly]*

Patrick: *'rule one' isn't there you know, of... of how to kind of develop your work, you know, umm... and I was conscious of the issues, yes. I always felt that way. Yeah*

Sandra: *so... so, I quite soon felt, you know, very trusting of that... there was a real openness to... you know 'what do you think?' and, knowing that you didn't necessarily quite know it all, which I think was vital for me*

Patrick: *mm, it's interesting, because I'm actually quite umm... – [whispers] what's the word... – I'm very affected by feedback in a way that's... that's made life difficult for me at times*

Sandra: *right*

Patrick: *umm... in that, when the feedback hasn't been particularly helpful, umm... I've ended up kind of listening to it more than my own instinct, or my own intuition, umm... and that's kind of the experience I've had in the counselling area this year and I'm very conscious, that even though you may have thought that you haven't had to be kind of hard line and dogmatic in order to get... to change my view, actually what quite often happens with me, is that I'll challenge and kind of be defensive about something in the moment, but actually, afterwards it will really have an impact and change my views and my thoughts about it. So, I'm really impacted on other people's feedback, umm... but the way you worked it, because you didn't take that line and didn't become dogmatic, umm... you kind of gave me the freedom to make my own choice... that was the lovely thing about the course, is that, for me, it suited me.'*

Subsequently Patrick shared that:

'Your feedback about how you perceived me was particularly valuable. As my home group teacher, listening to your sense of me as a trainee working with difficult clients. Your awareness of observing my dynamic with a client and assessing whether to rein me in or trust my process. You ultimately could see my self-awareness of the therapeutic relationship and didn't need to intervene, but you still held that conscious cautiousness for me.' (post-interview email).

4.3.2.4 Post-interview

Patrick's post-interview email was an example of his honesty and trust. He shared positives:

'It was really good to see you last week and the experience of reflecting on our student/teacher relationship was extremely enjoyable and enlightening. I think it is the first time I have been involved/invited in such an experience and it was valuable to me because of my past boundary issues/working relationships with my former teachers' (1:1 02 post-interview email).

He was also able to share something that had lingered. I had brought up the strange juxtaposition I experienced of his great warmth and acceptance of people yet his talking in the large group several times about someone in a much more negative way:

'I felt caught out when you mentioned it. There was some shame or guilt kindled by your words. These feelings were fleeting last week but came back when writing the email. I know there was no judgement in your words but I became conscious of guilt and remorse for perhaps portraying... unfairly' (1:1 02 post-interview email).

Again, he was able to hold his own issues separately from his sense of me, even though I had stirred these feelings. I wrote him a warm and supportive email but also trusted in my experience of him as someone who would get any further support he might need.

4.3.3 Patricia – Giving something back for being there results in warm feelings

4.3.3.1 Not a close connection

'I thought she might have gone either way with participating in my research. My slight reticence in terms of her being involved is because of so few memories of her, my overall sense of her is positive' (pre-interview reflection).

Patricia and I mostly related in the large group, a place where she was uncomfortable: *'I hate talking in groups, unless I feel really strongly about something'*. She enjoyed the clarity and structure I brought into the second year of her course but had a more emotional connection with my co-trainer:

'because of what she gave us in check in, a lot more about what was going on, I could so relate to it and I think she knew that even though it wasn't always spoken, I think she knew that and I felt there was a different connection, more of an emotional connection between the two of us that I didn't have with you'.

While Patricia rarely turned to me for direct support it was gratifying to hear what I hadn't known, that she knew I was available to her:

'I think, even though maybe we didn't have a lot to do with each other, maybe we didn't need to because, I knew you were there, I knew you were supportive, I knew if I needed anything, all I had to do was knock on that door or ring you, I knew that. That means a lot to me, knowing that somebody's approachable and there whether I tap into it, or not.'

One of my vivid memories of Patricia was at the awards ceremony, she was very warm and friendly with me and eagerly introduced me to her guest and asked someone to take a photo of the three of us:

Sandra: you, me and him umm... yeah I was just really touched and I thought... you know, I thought at the time umm... 'Gosh, what... what did I mean to you' because you were...in that time you were so warm and... and connecting and it... it was... yeah very moving, don't know if you remember that much?

Patricia: I think umm... crumbs that seems such a long time ago. I do remember that evening because it was just such a 'Yes! I've done it!'

Patricia clearly didn't remember those few minutes with me and I felt a little hurt that something that had seemed such a connecting experience hadn't left a lasting memory for her. This felt very powerful in the light of all the interviews, so much remembered and so much forgotten, or never having meant the same to each of us anyway.

4.3.3.2 Lesbian trainer

Patricia had had little previous experience of lesbians. She appreciated the way that I expressed being a lesbian, she noted that:

'from quite early on you sort of made it quite evident that you were a lesbian... and that you had umm... a partner, but I put in here [her notes] it never got in the way, it was never in your face umm... and I think that's what I liked about that and respected, as well, because when I look at what our first year was like with Ann and Frances [two students, one lesbian and one transgender] oh, my god, I felt like it was a whole year of gender and sex orientation... because it came into everything'

As our discussion progressed we explored further the richness for Patricia of having a trainer who was not 'in your face' about being a lesbian and a fellow student who, to her, was; she linked the influence of this to herself as a counsellor. Our discussion also prompted me to consider my own stance about how I express being lesbian as a trainer:

Patricia: so, it's getting different sides, I suppose. Somebody who could be in your face and... somebody who actually wasn't

Sandra: yes

Patricia: yeah

Sandra: I've certainly had times in my life, where I've been in your face with people, but I... I... even if I've been in that place that would not have been what I would have brought in as a...

Patricia: no

Sandra: as a tutor

Patricia: yeah

Sandra: because again, it's that responsibility of being there in the service of the other

Patricia: yes

Sandra: so...

Patricia: *but I learned things from it like, you know, when you have got a client and they talk about their partner and you don't know them and not to presume that they're married to somebody of the opposite sex and that was a real revelation to me, because that is what I would automatically do and how damaging that could be*

Sandra: yeah

Patricia: so, you know, I learned... I learned from it, as well

Sandra: so, you learned the subtle things and the big things

Patricia: yeah, yeah, which have been very... you know very sort of helpful.

4.3.3.3 Appreciation

Patricia held a sense of appreciation for what I had offered her on the course and repaid this by participating in the interview:

'my immediate reaction was 'Yes, I want to give something back'. I may not have felt the same way if it was about a different tutor but I wanted to help you, because I think you gave us a lot...you know, you gave us education, you gave us support, the whole kind of package but... I just thought, no, I really want to help you with this, because it's like saying thank you or it's... I don't know... helping you with what you want to now do. You've helped what we wanted.'

Patricia reported that the experience of the interview was very positive:

'It felt really comfortable meeting you again and I really enjoyed our discussion together too.... When I met you I again saw that steady, reliable and always interested Sandra and I'd forgotten that... Also how openly you accepted and were genuinely interested in knowing more about how I felt about the course and the tutors.... Another reason I am glad I came to see you, apart from wanting to help you in your research which I felt was giving something back to you as a tutor for what I had received, but because my time at Uni was hard, I had a lot of memories (mixed emotions) of the room, so many things I was going through and at times walking through the door... was hard, so I didn't know how I would feel after almost two years. I have to say it did me good and because you were so welcoming and 'you' my experience was good and so I left feeling nice, warm feelings for the first time there, so for me that was good. Thank you so much for that.' (post-interview email).

4.3.4 Petra – Rule evading lesbians in heteronormative environment

4.3.4.1 Not a smooth relationship

In the 2:1 interviews several conversational partners mentioned that it would be interesting to see what would happen in an interview between a former student and trainer who hadn't got on well, assuming that this would never happen as who would agree to such a thing. My interview with Petra is the nearest to that, as we share with each other right from the start:

Sandra: I think 'daunted' and 'excited' has been the sort of thing I've thought of generally with all of these... and I had that more in terms of talking about it with you

Petra: oh right, OK

Sandra: and I think... I think that's because I don't think we had a smooth relationship

Petra: no, we didn't

Sandra: right, a-and so... it's quite... I find... so, this one in particular I think is really intriguing as to

Petra: yes, yes

Sandra: where we go in terms of this

Petra: and I'm really glad you said that, because I kind of felt pretty similar umm... and it actually opens up the... discussion

I experienced Petra as 'eternally optimistic' and found this irritating in the large group, where I primarily related with her, as this tended to lighten, rather than deepen, discussions. In terms of counselling it also meant she struggled to stay with clients' pain and I took her to one side to be clear about the danger of this. Petra's openness meant that we could explore the impact of this, and my management of it:

Petra: never in my life before had anybody said 'Hey, Petra, you got to watch that optimism'

Sandra: right [laughing]

Petra: y'know, everybody had said 'God, Petra, I wish I could be optimistic like you' [laughs]

Sandra: right

Petra: y'know, and it was a first that I actually ever thought about optimism as a possible barrier

Sandra: right

Petra: in counselling and, of course when... y'know, when you unpack it, of course it is umm... and it was a very, very important learning point for me.

I mean, I still... I still kind of laugh about it because, it's not something I'm prepared to lose because I like it but [laughing], it's... it's certainly something that I need to be aware of and get a grip on and only allow when appropriate, yeah?

Sandra: yes

Petra: and... and to be... y'know, to be aware that sometimes people need to stay in their dark places yeah? and err...

Sandra: right

Petra: so that was a... and I think it was you that said to me 'Petra, if you don't do something about that, you're not going to pass tape four' and I thought 'right thank you'

Sandra: right

Petra: and that is what I appreciated all through about the way you gave me feedback

Sandra: right, OK, 'cos sometimes I think.. because what I experience sometimes was a... was a kind of block and a sort of defensiveness, a sort of a reasoning behind why... why you wanted to keep it and... I came in strongly

Petra: yeah

Sandra: to try and get it over to you

Petra: and it's interesting that it came across that I was actually arguing with you that I... I wasn't doing it I think... 'cos, I don't remember arguing with you, that I wasn't doing it. I may well not have understood what you were saying enough

Sandra: yes

Petra: until you really said it straight to me and I thought 'Woo! Right. OK' and that... y'know, and that was good.

4.3.4.2 Unhelpful rule evasion

Petra later brought up another occasion when I had taken her to one side and been firm, one that she hadn't experienced as positively. She had started a placement without submitting all the placement assessment paperwork and after asking for it several times I resorted to threatening to take away any placement hours she had completed so far as strictly speaking the placement did not start without the paperwork; I needed her to understand the importance of the paperwork:

Petra: *I appreciated the learning point, which was that health and safety matters, my own personal safety matters and I hadn't really kind of taken that on board terribly much. I thought 'Hey, it's cool' y'know', umm... [laughter], so that learning point was... was very important, but I did object to the threat of umm... my hours being taken off me. I thought that was unnecessary umm... and I couldn't understand why that threat had been made. I didn't believe it achieved anything because the point about the health and safety stuff had already been made umm... and I was upset about that; I was very glad and relieved when it was taken away*

Sandra: *mm hmm I think for me... I mean I hadn't remembered, but that... it's, y'know, come back fairly clearly now, umm... I would say that that kind of fitted with... with my perception of feeling as if you wanted the rules adapted for you*

Petra: *oh right [laughs softly]*

Sandra: *so it was a bit like the other thing I was saying before..., y'know: there was something about the way you were coming across, which was somehow you were different from everybody else*

Petra: *oh, oh*

Sandra: *and that it should be fine, but... but it had gone on far too long and I didn't have the paperwork*

Petra: *oh right*

Sandra: *and... so, therefore, we were not covered*

Petra: *right*

Sandra: *y'know, if something had gone wrong we did not have the documentation and I... I didn't trust, from the way that you were being, that you had actually taken seriously the underlying issues that it wasn't... y'know, th-that you were saying 'This is pieces of paper' and I was saying 'This is more than pieces of paper... and you're not taking it seriously' y'know, it was that and previously err... somewhere else that I had worked on a counselling course, that is what had happened*

Petra: *with that experience?*

Sandra: *that someone had their hours taken off*

Petra: *oh*

Sandra: *they had... had their hours taken off, because... because if certain things are not ... because the rules are that these have to be in place before you can*

Petra: *yeah, yeah*

Sandra: *start and... yesss, there's leeway, y'know, because people forget to give you the piece of paper and then it's a holiday and then they forget a bit more, but at some point you have to say, this isn't about a bit of forgetting, this is about you haven't actually understood what things are about*

Petra: *they haven't engaged*

Sandra: *exactly!*

Petra: *I haven't engaged with the process*

Sandra: *yes and then that's what I felt like so I suppose, it was another one of those times, like you're saying the time when I said 'You will fail tape four unless you get the hang of this', that that went in and that felt productive umm... this was another time, when I felt I was being harsh, because I needed you to understand and you weren't...*

Petra: *so, I actually...gave you the impression – the thing you said earlier – that I thought the rules should be adapted for me?*

Sandra: *yes*

Petra: *really?*

Sandra: *yes*

Petra: *I never intended to give that impression but I'm interested that that came across I would never expect rules to be adapted for me but I might try to slip through*

Sandra: *yes, I suppose it's that...*

Petra: *under it [laughs].*

Petra's realisation that she liked to go under or through the rules, rather than have them changed just for her, really struck me later and I shared my new understanding with her in my post-interview email:

'I am fascinated by the issue of 'rules' as I have recently had an experience that really showed me that I can be the same - wanting the rules not to apply and to just slip under or around them. That was a surprise to me and yet is not new either! As you said, it is distinctly different from the active and very visible issue of rules being changed for me which I also wouldn't want. Perhaps it is easier to be a holder of rules than to be a follower of them - at least some times?!' (1:1 04 post-interview email).

4.3.4.3 Lesbians – so what?

With some squirming, I agreed with Petra's perspective that I was sometimes hesitant in engaging with her in the large group. It was a challenge to hear that this had been noticed by her and by some of her fellow peers who had wondered why it might be:

Petra: all I can say is that occasionally I felt, if I voiced something in the large group there might've been a slight unwillingness to engage with what I was saying and it wasn't a big deal because, I could still get on with the work and do the course and... y'know so, it wasn't anything that was worth making a fuss about, but then talking to people... talking to friends at lunch time, they said 'She's got it in for you' and I said 'Has she? What, do you think so?' y'know. This was... they said 'Yeah, it was really off, the way she said that' and... I wish I could remember what it was about. But, they had an impression that you were off with me

Sandra: right

Petra: just sometimes in the group

Sandra: that's intriguing

Petra: and... I'll tell you the whole of this, 'cos... 'cos... I think...

Sandra: yeah

Petra: it... so, I think within that discussion in... over lunch... I think one of the questions was 'Is it because you're both lesbians?'

This was a shock to me and I was quick to clarify this wouldn't be so, but my later interview with Philippa showed me that there was perhaps more to explore on this. Near the end of the discussion interview we returned to the subject of us being both being lesbian:

Sandra: so, do you think it made any difference to you or had any impact that I was lesbian, oh and still am [soft laughter]

Petra: it certainly raised the profile of lesbian and gay issues in the group and I was really pleased about that umm... and it was really nice that you came out, I think, pretty early in... early on in the difference module, didn't you? umm... because I think a part of the quality of my experience on the Diploma was that I was who I am and you being outwardly lesbian enabled me to be I mean, I might've... I might've come out anyway. I can't remember now.

She reminded me that we had met at a lesbian group just prior to the course starting, and she shared the impact of this on her during the course. I was surprised at her complex working out how to relate with me within a predominantly heterosexual environment:

Petra: we had a little bit of superficial chat and umm... (clears throat) I think I was very aware of professional boundaries because of that, that umm... it... it needed to be quite carefully... I felt that I... I don't know about 'careful', because it wasn't a precious thing, but that even though, yes, you'd come out as a lesbian to everybody and that we knew, that it could not be allowed from my point of view to be a factor in the learning experience, because that needed to be completely neutralised

Sandra: ooh right, OK

Petra: *that's... I think that's how I saw it in the actual... my experience of the Diploma*

Sandra: *right*

Petra: *'Sandra is a lesbian, I'm a lesbian, so what?'*

Sandra: *uh huh*

Petra: *except that, yes, it actually makes... it legitimises me*

Sandra: *right*

Petra: *but, after that, End Of*

Sandra: *mm hmm ...as opposed to?*

Petra: *as opposed to 'We know we're both dykes' y'know*

Sandra: *right so it...*

Petra: *that would not have been appropriate...*

Sandra: *mm, that you couldn't take advantage of it, or something?*

Petra: *that ... I think if... if there'd been any occasion when I needed to... when it needed to be relevant then, I would probably have thought about it but I was very aware that only if it really became relevant should it be acknowledged any further yeah? I think, probably, because I live my life outside counselling very much with lesbians and I think I have a way of relating to lesbians, which I leave behind when I come into the straight world*

Sandra: *yeah*

Petra: *and I... it may be... it may not just be a way of behaving, it may be a sense of security in a lesbian group, that we all know where we're coming from, yeah, but I knew that... I knew I needed to leave that behind here so, I came here with a sense that I was coming into a heterosexual group with some heterosexism, probably on some subtle level umm... and that... that was something that I would simply do and that, yes, it was fine to me, relating as I am capable of doing in a heterosexual group without needing to impose my lesbian identity unless it's relevant umm... and I think I was very aware of that and therefore that might probably have been connected to the fact that '...and Sandra is a lesbian, well so what?' so... not an active avoidance of it, but a... just a sense that this is not a lesbian forum*

Sandra: *yes, so, you weren't in lesbian relationship mode?*

Petra: *no.*

4.3.4.5 Enjoying connection, but not in the large group

In the midst of our intimate and challenging sharing Petra said: 'I'm really enjoying *talking to you in this way...it's lovely.*' I also felt the enjoyment of our talking, experiencing her in sharp contrast to the Petra I had experienced on the course, one who I was now understanding was greatly impacted by the large group setting where we usually interacted:

Sandra: *it wasn't that you weren't saying enough words or something, it was that... it was like there was something all round you and I didn't quite feel as if I was getting you and it was that that was... that I found difficult at times. It was like... can I meet... can I meet you and right... y'know, us talking today I feel like it's all meeting*

Petra: *yeah, I... I find it quite difficult to trust in a group situation*

Sandra: *mm, right*

Petra: *I think that's what it is umm... I... the more I know about me the more I realise I'm much, much happier generally on a one to one with anybody.... y'know I can be part of a group and I can stand up and I can lead a group and I can train and I can teach and all that... y'know but that wasn't what that group was about*

Sandra: *no, it was a very*

Petra: *it was a very different kind of group*

Sandra: *different kind of group*

Petra: *y'know, and I think... I'm also OK about learning with other people but I had never in my life been in a group where it was about sharing my deepest personal stuff umm... so it was new, in that sense, mm: yes, it isn't at all about the topic, it was about sharing, being... yeah that was new and I think it was a... it was certainly an issue for me, but it's interesting the thing about, y'know, there was a part of me that you were getting to because I am kind of aware that there is still a part of me that most people don't get to*

Sandra: *right*

Petra: *so, that wasn't just you I think... and then there's probably a part of me that I even I haven't got to.*

Despite the challenges to our relationship, including an imbalance in our perceptions of each other with me viewing our relationship more negatively than Petra, we discovered that we still had sufficient working alliance. I was amazed when Petra shared how: '*I actually do believe that it was a mistake for me be in the other Home Group*' as my directness meant that '*I learned very well from your approach*'. I was shocked to hear her say: '*it was you that taught me the most important things that I needed to learn*'.

It was only in talking with Petra that I understood how positively she had viewed me amidst all of these challenges and in our sharing with one another a warm and real connection developed. Each of us found the interview a powerful experience and ended feeling, at last, warm and connected. In my post interview I shared with her that:

'Our talking felt very real and open and honest from the beginning. It felt amazing to have this sharing and reflecting together, to gain much more understanding of what had been going on for you and to be able to share what had been going on for me. The experience really shifted my residual feelings of unease towards you and I am left with a sense of warm connection and appreciation.' (1:1 04 post-interview email).

In her response Petra shared that:

'The thing I really appreciated was you saying you didn't know where I was coming from; I can so see how that would make it difficult to feel at ease with me. I would probably have felt the same if the situation was reversed. ...I too am really glad we had the session and feel much more mutual warmth now!' (1:1 04 post-interview email).

4.3.5 Penny – Swan ending ready to start sharing being visible

4.3.5.1 Smooth journey fiction

'I am intrigued about her agreeing to be involved and fascinated as to what she will say. I remember her very little... there are some bits of memories and 'senses': she was an excellent student in terms of skills, theory and understanding; she seemed self assured, never grabbed space but could get in there when she wanted; no sense of friction but rather of a fairly smooth journey through the course' (pre-interview reflection).

Our interview fascinated me as I discovered there was so much more going on for Penny than I had seen; while I had seen the serene swan she had been paddling intensely underneath the water. I had no idea how she had experienced me and was intrigued when she shared how she had actively avoided being in home group with me when I came into her course:

Penny: I couldn't hide

Sandra: oh right [laughs softly]

Penny: I couldn't hide. You're one of these people that I can't hide with you see and, you see, with Andrew because I had all this going on, I could hide behind it

Sandra: OK. So, you wanted to hide?

Penny: yeah I wanted to hide. Whereas, when you were there the first time we came in to err... one of these home groups and we did one of these little interactions and I remember thinking 'Wow! She's good!' [laughing] and I thought to myself, 'I could learn such a lot from you', but at the same time I thought, 'am I ready to put myself out there?' and decided, no, because I knew I couldn't hide from you and I took my time. It would've been good for me if I had, of course, but you have to come to it yourself, don't you?

Sandra: mm so, there's something about taking your time... what was the 'taking the time' about?

Penny: to be ready

Sandra: to be visible?

Penny: yeah, to be visible, to be ready to be visible and I mean, I really only came to that quite late on in the course. I think the thing is to... to be ready to be visible to myself more than to anybody else and I think it was that and so, with somebody like yourself, I thought I'm not ready to be there, yet Ann knew, she was good at picking up y'know, she was ever so good at it and Claire to a certain extent, too..

Sandra: yes

Penny: and I suppose because I knew her from before

Sandra: right

Penny: that helped a lot really, with Claire

Sandra: so you could be more visible with her

Penny: yeah, I could actually

Sandra: or safe enough

Penny: yes, I felt safe enough.

In the large group she felt safe enough to enjoy my way of working and so Penny held two experiences alongside each other: *'definitely with you it was that sense: "I couldn't hide" and the solidity that I felt and which gave me peace inside myself.'*

4.3.5.2 Exposure to others

Later in the interview Penny was able to return to the issue of having actively chosen to not work with me in home group. She explores with me her complex process:

Penny: and my 'good girl' comes in and I do what's expected

Sandra: alright, so if you were a 'good girl' with me then it would be about spilling more than you later felt OK with

Penny: ...well, yes, to a certain extent, but I think that I... it's like once I start, I don't really regret it later, occasionally I say things that I do regret, but I don't really regret it, it's more like I don't want to face it in the first place, 'cos I know that I will say it and it's like, am I ready to say it? and it's not you hearing it, I suppose it's me hearing it

Sandra: mm, especially with other people

Penny: with other people, yeah. It's umm... because I can't disassociate myself from other people in the group so, if there's somebody in it that I don't want to hear it, then this wouldn't happen, but you see, if I was with you, I would be torn between responding to what you were saying or how I would want to be with you and wanted to stop with someone else, yes, it's... mm

Sandra: so, with me there was that call to be more open which might be alarming for you

Penny: yeah

Sandra: to face aspects of you

Penny: or... no, I don't think it would be alarming to face the aspects of me, it would be alarming for me to have to do that in front of people I didn't necessarily want to do it in front of

Sandra: right, so, that the feeling torn

Penny: yeah

Sandra: between those two things?

Penny: yes

Sandra: OK, yeah

Penny: and it would've been hard to resist

Sandra: yes

Penny: because, the pull of needing to say it, wanting to say it

Sandra: yeah

Penny: would be very strong

Sandra: and that's really intriguing, 'cos, y'know, one of the things I'm finding as I'm talking to people is, y'know, is just these nuances th-that you can't know

Penny: no

- Sandra: *y'know, clearly as a tutor, the complications of what's going on in people and that kind of dynamic... is intriguing and I guess for me although working in a group that... that often... well, sometimes I'll work with the group and sometimes, in essence, I'll work with the one person and when I'm working with the one person, in essence everybody else has gone umm... and yet that... that's not necessarily so for*
- Penny: *the person*
- Sandra: *yourself or indeed, for the other people, they are still there y'know and the impact on potentially others being part of it who you might not want to*
- Penny: *yes*
- Sandra: *know things and that... that pull and I think I hadn't... I don't think I really appreciated that... that fully, in that way, that that pull might come from the two different places...*
- Penny: *and that's where, you see, if you give in to the one that... you really want which might be to spill it out, you would go home and regret that those people*
- Sandra: *yeah*
- Penny: *had been there*
- Sandra: *yeah*
- Penny: *and that can have really quite severe ramifications for you really, or for me certainly. So, for me, it would always be 'Well, I'd like to do this'... I mean that's what I felt that first day when I came into the group and you did this little... I thought 'Ah, yeah, I could learn such a lot from this. This is just so good. I really like this' but... I thought 'No, I'm not going to do this. I'm not ready to do this' because I know too much of me would come out*

4.3.5.3 Starting and finishing

Our sharing together supported Penny to share more profoundly of her experience:

'I can remember one day saying to you just before... it must have been the last week of the term... before the last term started, I remember saying that I was ready to start the course... it was really significant for me, because I thought 'Do you know what, I feel as if I've missed this whole course'.'

In contrast to this she really engaged with me throughout the interview and it was important to talk with her about this at the end:

Sandra: How is this? especially in the context of all the things you're talking about in terms of being with me and your previous anxiety of spilling more than you wanted to do. I'm very conscious particularly of... of checking out with you, y'know, how you have found it and whether you do have a sense of feeling your own management of what you've said and not said or...?

Penny: I've found it fine, actually. Always... always when I come into a situation where I'm going to be one to one I'm always nervous umm... but it's been fine and I was really pleased that I told how I was in the first year, because, y'know, that's the one, y'know, where I thought, y'know 'Should I say that or should I not say that, if it comes up?' an-and I was conscious that I wanted to say it and it's not really important in the context of what we're talking about, but I felt I wanted to say it so it's... I feel happy that I said it and it's out and also I don't feel I've said anything I didn't want to say.

This was affirmed in her post-interview email where Penny summarised her sense of me:

'How I felt about you at the time of the course was confirmed by our meeting. You have always struck me as someone who doesn't feel the need to share your soul with the world but who has the capacity to relate at great depth when appropriate. My assessment (sorry - can't help assessing people!) may be totally wrong but, believing that this was you, was of great benefit to me during the course and remains with me as a strong role model of a counsellor and counsellor tutor.' (1:1 05 post-interview email).

This was very powerful for me:

'I was very moved by your sentence: 'You have always struck me as someone who doesn't feel the need to share your soul with the world but who has the capacity to relate at great depth when appropriate.' You have put into words something core about me that I don't think has ever been so clearly expressed before, thank you for 'seeing me' and I am so glad that was helpful to you.' (1:1 05 post-interview email 2).

4.3.6 Philippa – Lesbians at a distance grieving forgotten loss

4.3.6.1 Distance and visibility

I was very surprised that Philippa agreed to participate in an interview as, at her behest, we had never worked closely. I had little idea of my impact on her and as we talked it became apparent that the reciprocal influence between us was particularly complex. Here I present examples from the interview, followed by a summary of our complex reciprocal influence.

Philippa and I started with exploring her request for distance from me on the course, something she hadn't remembered:

Sandra: I was doing the difference module and you came and... and you talked to me and it was very challenging for you, I think and... it was lovely that you did it and... you said something about umm... I can't remember it clearly enough to be able...but basically, stuff was getting in the way for you in your relationship with me, that you liked me, but there was something in the way and therefore you were keeping your distance

Philippa: did I say that?

Sandra: yes

Philippa: goodness me! That must have been another me. I don't remember that

Sandra: oh right! Wow! Wow! [Philippa laughing] no, really?

Philippa: I don't remember coming to you and saying that and being so transparent... about it all.

Later on she reflected on the powerful feelings she had around me:

'I guess, I'm just sat here wondering if... I couldn't bear it, if you didn't like me d'you know?... It would just've been too much to know that, to sense that and for me to not like you, it would've been too much to bear, given that I had to see you every week and, y'know, and engage with you on some level'.

I was amazed to learn that while I thought I had been invisible to her, because of her asking for distance, I was very visible, along with my colleague:

Philippa: I would notice everything about who was interacting with you, who got on with you. That would be my alert

Sandra: right

Philippa: and the same with Diane, y'know, 'who she's getting on with...' y'know. It would be that and how well you're getting on with them and, in some ways, I'd be trying to learn about the way you interacted with people by observation, rather than by experience

Sandra: it's interesting, because I think, I just assumed I was just... off the radar... y'know, you said 'I want space', sort of thing and I presumed I was just... out of... your... picture

Philippa: oh, no

Sandra: but that... is about me, you see, because, if... if I cut... something out, like if I don't want to... don't want to handle it [quietly], I suppose, maybe, I ignored you... y'know, you'd said 'I want space', so I could

Philippa: ah, interesting

Sandra: y'know, notice you sometimes, but other than that, not so much... y'know, and I can do that with anything, y'know I can buy a bunch of flowers and see them for a day or two and then they're gone

Philippa: you ignored me [laughter], because I said I wanted space. It seems so crazy... aaagh!

Sandra: I think... well, I think, for me, it's a kind of way of coping, y'know, it's like this person does not want what I can offer

Philippa: bloody hell!

Sandra: there's other people who can

Philippa: yeah

Sandra: I want to respect her desire for space, so I- I... back off and when I back off, one of the things that tends to happen, is that... that my strong awareness of that would dissipate

Philippa: yeah

Sandra: so, I would notice you in the big group and I would notice that umm... I thought you were a very interesting person and I-I felt very positively towards you, but I wo... I wouldn't ever then think of seeking you out for anything or approaching you or anything umm... it's like I didn't reach a point of... of coming back in and I think that's... that for me, is the bit that I regret., is that I wish, at some point, I had said... and I'm... I'm glad that this has prompted it. I wish at some point I had said, 'how about... y'know, are you up for us talking about it, now?'

Philippa: but, I think, it must have been too big a risk or something for me of... and not for you, but for me, to have clearly said that to you and to have created that distance and for you to have maintained that, out of respect, I can only assume that it was too risky to do anything else

Sandra: but then you'd forgotten that you did it

Philippa: yeah

Sandra: and I'd just got into normal... y'know

Philippa: that's what you do

Sandra: in lesser awareness umm... and then not picked up. So...

Philippa: but then, within all that... distancing, I would have learnt so much more from you in other ways but without me distancing I would have been learning so much – I'm guessing. So...

Sandra: so, did you learn anything from me..?

Philippa: yeah [laughing]

Sandra: *like what? [laughing softly]*

Philippa: *I don't know [laughing] umm... I'm trying to work that one out. It's... 'cos, I've heard you say, I'm not learning anything from you which is far from the truth... all I know is that I missed out on something with you and yet I still had a lot from you.*

4.3.6.2 Lesbian

Philippa shared with me how much our both being lesbian had impacted her relationship with me, particularly in it mixing with me reminding her of someone else:

Philippa: *sexual orientation just seeps through everything.... in that difference bit, 'I'm setting myself up to fail' blatantly, to me. It was like... around my interaction with you is 'I'm not good enough' which taps into that, I would say, transference issues around ex-girlfriend and... I think that was it, actually: around ex-girlfriend and... who was also a colleague...*

Sandra: *yeah*

Philippa: *...So, there was a lot of things that... about you that jarred up against different levels of me umm... and*

Sandra: *so, me being lesbian was very significant in that*

Philippa: *oh, definitely! [laughs]....*

In the large group some of that impact was also positive:

Philippa: *and then, I really appreciated you bringing, something quite small and it was so important to how I could see you - where you said one week umm... 'and we just sat on the sofa and we cuddled round and snuggled into each other', y'know, and I was like 'Yeees!' it was like... somehow that was intimate and somehow that was totally in my realm of experience and totally out of it, as well, because in... I mean, I would say, to me, I was treating this as work environment, not as a learning environment*

Sandra: *right*

Philippa: *I was still seeing it as a work place, too; for yourself and I guess with your other lecturers and that... so for you to be so out and so... about an intimate detail, too, it was just a revelation, it was so freeing*

Sandra: *right*

Philippa: *y'know, and then... and I suppose I didn't feel like there was some expectation just because you're a lesbian, you're going to have this; you're going to like each other; you're going to support each other more, blah blah blah;*

you're going to have more in common. No but, that said 'Yes'. That said, I was suddenly in the group y'know, it was like 'Yeah!'

Sandra: right

Philippa: it was like

Sandra: yeah

Philippa: it was like waving the little flag, y'know, the rainbow flag or the... whatever. It umm... and I could see you... y'know, I could see you in relationship then, so that was good and when you brought the slide show in [of my work in Nepal], I was like 'Oh! Wow!', 'cos you both went and it was so courageous and it really touched me to see that. So, that was kind of the positive aspect of the sexual orientation coming in

Sandra: right

Philippa: and it was by example I mean, an example that I hadn't experienced before. So, that was like 'Ah! Great!' It felt strong

Sandra: yeah

Philippa: y'know

Sandra: mm: yeah

Philippa: so... yeah. So, I just wanted to... wanted to balance it out really, because it's not all bad umm... around sexual orientation, but a lot of it was stuff I was bringing too.

With Philippa I am able to reflect on my response to lesbians or gay men in a group and I am shocked by the impact of that on her:

Sandra: I think, for me, one of the things I realise more and more, is... is that, y'know, it does make a difference when there are lesbians or gay men or... even transgender people as well... that there is something about a sense of connection that does do something to me when I know that umm... it's kind of intriguing and I think it's almost like I have a first reaction, which is almost like umm... a pull towards y'know, I get 'Ooo! Are they!' y'know, it's like 'Ooo, that's nice!' sort of thing umm... and I think it's because so much of the... the imagery we get in society is heterosexual, y'know, it's a bit like when you go pick up a lesbian novel, y'know, you...you've been doing all your heterosexual novels all the time and you think that's absolutely fine and they're great novels and you pick up a lesbian novel and you think [exhales] 'Haaagh!' y'know [laughter] 'I can really identify with this! It's so different!' y'know

Philippa: yeah

Sandra: *and I think, for me, it's a similar thing of... of being in a group and... and that being normal and y'know, sort of absolutely fine and then somebody saying 'So, y'know, I'm gay' or 'I'm lesbian' or and you think 'Haagh!' y'know, it-it... there's a sort of sense almost of relief and of connection and of something and then after that it's kind of working out, do I like the person;*

Philippa: *yeah*

Sandra: *umm... do I have anything to relate to;*

Philippa: *yeah*

Sandra: *how are they with the whole of their identity*

Philippa: *yeah*

Sandra: *and how are they with... with their being lesbian, y'know, because they might be that in a completely and utterly different way to me, anyway. So, after that, I think it becomes more rational in terms*

Philippa: *yeah*

Sandra: *of sussing out whether there is a connection there or not*

Philippa: *and that's 'pushing away', I think a 'removal' y'know, that...*

Sandra: *is that what it does for you, pushing..?*

Philippa: *umm... it's all part of the judgement in my head y'know, you're saying 'and then you find out' and I'm hearing then you start judging' y'know it's like... to me, it's almost you're going forward and then you're going back a bit just to review the situation and... and then it's quite... it can be disappointing. I think the level of disappointment is greater than if you were straight, 'cos there'd be an expectation almost, y'know, 'well, I'm not going to get on with them: they're straight'*

Sandra: *right. OK.*

Philippa: *then if you do, it's a bonus*

Sandra: *right*

Philippa: *but if you're a lesbian and you... you think 'Ooo, there's a chance to get on with this person' and you don't, the level of disappointment is huge!*

Sandra: *right*

Philippa: *so, like... let me just tell you this*

Sandra: *yeah*

Philippa: like going to the end, because I know I go round in circles, but to go to the end, you gave me a hug at the end of the course the amount, and the feeling of grief and loss that I experienced, was huge. I went to the toilets, I balled my eyes out

Sandra: Aww! [shocked]

Philippa: and I came back composed, of course... it was like there's such a big gap really, a big gap, or barriers bigger than us that had prevented us from actually getting to meet and know each other and it was huge...

4.3.6.3 Vulnerability and directness

We start talking about Philippa's responses to my marking and on to her vulnerability:

Philippa: I'd always put my essays in thinking they weren't any good. There would always be a bit of me saying they weren't any good and if you marked it, I couldn't read your comments, I'd have a look at the mark and go [blows breath out], whatever, but I couldn't read your in-detail comments in... in the margins, because they said to me 'You're not good enough' and they were... it was like weeks and weeks later that I would dare to look at them and I think part of that was umm no space... and moving on with the next assignment... and, y'know, sometimes I was behind there, so, there wasn't any space for me to take on board anything else. So, I was full up, here

Sandra: especially, as it sounds you put an awful lot of

Philippa: yeah

Sandra: hours into them

Philippa: yeah, so I couldn't bear to think that there was more [laughs], y'know and I'd missed out a valuable err... the insight that you had, or the comments that you made, which would direct or add to what I'd done. I missed out on them and I didn't even come to you. I didn't find time to come to you to ask you about them so, there was a dishonoring of you in that, that's what it felt like to me or... on reflection it feels like now umm... and I... I still ask myself why didn't I go? and... I mean, practically, I didn't have the space to do it and also it felt that it was touching the 'it's not good enough' and also, your comments now, to me, felt warm because I had all this stuff or whether they are... I don't know but it was

Sandra: yeah

Philippa: usually they were very to the point and we... we knocked up against that in another area

Sandra: oh alright

Philippa: and I said it's too... you were too... too... umm... what's the word? 'direct'

Sandra: yeah?

Philippa: y'know... and that would have knocked up against some judgement on me because I'd been called 'blunt' so, I would... err... see a negative there and also I was vulnerable and sometimes I'm more vulnerable than people realise

4.3.6.4 Needing to feel favoured

In the large group Philippa felt she could be seen by me in a way that felt safe to her:

Philippa: in that sphere of [the big group]... it's safe; totally safe... to speak with you and that... I mean, with everyone else and shine, it was safe to do that with you there

Sandra: yes... 'cos, I would have been very conscious if you never spoke

Philippa: and you never batted me aside and you... you never dismissed me and... I don't think I've ever seen you do that with anyone so, you created something where everybody could speak and I felt good around that y'know, so... that was valuable y'know, that's an enormous part... that I needed... to do all the other stuff - not with you

Sandra: yeah. OK.

Also, she had talked with me 1:1 about an important issue related to the course and so chose to: 'approach you for advice on major decisions'.

The home group was quite different though and for multiple reasons she chose not to work with me there; added to this she felt that I favoured someone in that group:

Philippa: I think what made it worse was, the person that I thought that you really favoured, was in that group

Sandra: right

Philippa: and was really strong

Sandra: who was that?

Philippa: err... Fiona

Sandra: oh, right

Philippa: yeah

Sandra: OK

Philippa: and I always felt that you really got on with Fiona and you really had a good laugh with her and you really, like, backed her up 100%.

She was in that group and I thought she was pretty good and I thought she was... y'know, with the skills, I thought, mmm, she's good. So, it was like, I couldn't do it. It was like 'No, I can't be the favourite. Can't be teacher's pet here. Actually, I'm looking more of a fool. Actually, they don't like what I do, anyway' 'So, humph! I'm out!' So, I went back to where I could develop which was

Sandra: yeah

Philippa: in the other group.

This then had a profound effect on how she related to that student, keeping her distance just as she had from me:

Philippa: I didn't ever work with her and she commented on that at the end

Sandra: that you'd never worked together?

Philippa: that we'd never worked together and that is why, because I'm probably jealous... because, I was jealous of the relationship she had with you simple as that.

She revealed later that she chose instead a home group where she felt she would be favoured:

Philippa: So I went back to where I could develop, which was in the other group I felt that I could be teacher's pet with her and in the first year that was what I needed, I needed to feel shiny so she gave me that, I felt connected to her enough, maybe not too much on a personal level but there was something there.

Sandra: so you knew you were favoured

Philippa: oh yeah!

4.3.6.5 Is the 'real relationship' a myth?

By this time in the interviews, and with the complexity of what Philippa was bringing I was, yet again, feeling really challenged by the concept of the 'real' relationship and where it was in training relationships. We explore an analogy together to deepen our sense of this complexity:

Sandra: y'know with you and... and with other people... I think it's complicated with Person-Centred, y'know, because Person-Centred, it's almost like we're... we're in a real relationship, aren't we? There's almost like a sort of myth of 'we can be real'. When actually, the more I'm exploring it, the real [laughing] is such a... such a tiny little bit

Philippa: yeah, yeah

Sandra: y'know how... however much you aim to be

Philippa: *it's so complicated. It seems complicated. It seems like umm... I don't know, it seems like [deep sigh] vast mirrors at the fair... sometimes real, sometimes not, distorted*

Sandra: *yeah*

Philippa: *but there's a pathway through it and it takes a lot to find it, unless you've trodden it before*

Sandra: *and you can lose it so easily*

Philippa: *yeah*

Sandra: *again and... and sometimes you can stand two of you looking into the mirror, because of the way it is and because you're coming in at different angles, you would actually both have different images*

Philippa: *yeah*

Sandra: *even though you're looking into the same mirror*

Philippa: *yeah*

Sandra: *and it would be like that, as well, wouldn't it?*

Philippa: *yeah*

Sandra: *'cos, we would neither see ourselves or each other*

Philippa: *no*

Sandra: *in quite the same way as the other person's seeing it. That's a brilliant analogy!*

4.3.6.6 Participating in the interview

Philippa was clear why she had wanted to come and participate in the interview with me:

Philippa: *I spoke to other people about it and they were like... 'Ah. No, I'm not going to do that.' So, I had to think about it and umm... then something happened external of it and I just thought 'No, it'll be interesting to do that' and I'll come along. A very late response but there was still something going on... there's still something going on for me around tutors. So, it makes it impossible to do that bridging thing of... mm... meeting somewhere*

Sandra: *yes*

Philippa: *y'know, so... it felt like umm... it was important to come and talk to you*

Sandra: *right*

Philippa: *and to help you with your research and to honour you in that way....*

Sandra: *right. So, there was a desire in you to 'let's address this in some way', do you think?*

Philippa: *yeah, but not knowing what it was.*

Philippa's post-interview email was, unsurprisingly, rich and detailed, here are selected parts from it:

'I felt elated on leaving the interview, initially. Then an incredible sadness came over me – perhaps the missing out on the relationship is in itself the lesson and the chance to reflect on that is the learning...

I thoroughly enjoyed the relaxed and open exchange and was elated to share in a vision – a metaphor for the process – this came about because at some level there was understanding.

THE BIGGEST SHOCK WAS MY INABILITY TO REMEMBER THE KEY INCIDENT AROUND OUR RELATIONSHIP WHICH WAS MY DOING – THE CIRCLING GOT WIDER AND THE AVOIDANCE AND LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT LESS.

As I said in the discussion interview, I really wanted to honour you by meeting with you to further your research. I'm really grateful for having the opportunity to speak with you so frankly about the difficulties I had communicating with you and my limited ability to approach you in certain areas of the course.

In my past experience, my teacher, over time, became my lover became my colleague became my friend. I needed something distinct and clear cut. Perhaps it was a little too distinct but I suppose I did prove I could hold that one clear boundary – but at such a loss. Too sharp a boundary didn't allow for the necessary softness or permission to test it and take risks. My trust in you and my 'relationship' with you could only be done at a distance by me witnessing others interact with you and by quietly noting my reactions and by only meeting you in my strongest arena where, unique to the person-centred experiential way of working, the intellect can safely meet the emotions and sensations and crucially this was witnessed by the whole group.' (1:1 06 post-interview email).

4.3.6.7 Summary of our reciprocal influence

Our relationship was obviously complex with important elements of it previously unspoken and reciprocal influence impacting us both in and out of our awareness. It seems useful to précis this:

As a fellow lesbian and a trainer I had what I now understand as my usual (countertransference) reaction – noticing Philippa more than others and then taking a step back

to see her more clearly as not only a lesbian. I found I liked her and respected how she was in the group (working alliance) but, for her, the stepping back felt like a rejection and a judging of her (transference). It fed into her feelings of inferiority and insecurity and was magnified by her history of broken boundaries with a former lesbian teacher/lover/colleague/friend. My running a 'working with difference' module, including sexual orientation, particularly daunted her and exacerbated her feelings. She was conscious of her strong transference reaction to me and we had sufficient working alliance for her to manage this proactively by talking to me one-to-one and telling me that though she respected me and liked me she needed to keep me at a distance to be able to work through it. I was disappointed but respectful and gave her that distance.

I felt a little rejected and I used my usual coping strategy (countertransference) of cutting out what I had no way of dealing with and so giving her plenty of distance and focusing on others. While I was doing this, unknown to me, she was carefully watching me and how I related to others. At some stage she forgot that she had talked with me and instead thought that I didn't want to relate with her and felt rejected (transference). This in itself probably fed her sense of failing at some test with me and when I marked her assignments she was unable to read the comments, and felt bad about this as she considered this as dishonouring me. She avoided working with me in the home group, having felt very exposed by me and seeing herself as inadequate; she also perceived someone else being favoured by me. She worked instead in a home group where she felt she was favoured and, feeling jealous, avoided the student whom she thought I favoured for the rest of the course. However, when she had an important issue to explore she entrusted that to me in a tutorial (working alliance). In the large group she enjoyed my honesty and clarity and my sharing aspects of my life with my partner, this helping her feel present in the group as a lesbian (elements of real relationship). She felt that she could shine in the large group and was confident that I saw this, as indeed I did (working alliance). On the last day of the course we hugged and warmly connected (real relationship), I found it very moving and unknown to me, she went to the toilets and cried at the loss of how we could have related. Despite her openness about key elements of her process at the time we didn't return to this later in the course, in my own countertransference I avoided this, something I later deeply regretted, and we were both left with unfinished business until the opportunity of the interview. She came for the interview, preparing for it carefully and taking care of herself. She wanted to honour me, to give something back to me and knew I would value what she gave (working alliance and real relationship). In her post-interview reflection she was clear that although she had missed a great deal she had also gained a lot from how we had related. Our relationship involved elements of the working alliance, transference/countertransference and real relationship and kept evolving over time, including the time since the course finished. There was no simple liking or disliking, avoidance or seeking, and healing for Philippa was in the boundaried distance, despite the accompanying grief for lost closer relating.

4.3.7 Phoebe - Feeling not valued by marking but enjoying straight talking

4.3.7.1 Not feeling valued

I had an ongoing connection with Phoebe through an organisation and was not surprised that she would want to take part in the interview; *'I don't have a lot of distinct memories of her but I have a sense of her as very committed and engaged, on the ball, asking good questions and being engaged in discussion rather than always deferring to me, and seeming very well organised. I have a sense of something else, I'm not sure if it is of her reserve or not. I have a sense of not really getting to know her deeply.'* (pre-interview reflection). I had no idea that anything had been a particular challenge in our relationship until long after the course finished when she mentioned how she had reacted strongly to my marking of an early essay of hers, we returned to this in our discussion interview.

Despite the high mark she received she felt I hadn't taken as much care with the feedback on her essay as I had with a friend of hers who also got the same mark. She shared the ongoing impact of this:

Phoebe: I'd been sitting on that for the first year umm... and I guess there was a sense of me thinking you were more open to being positive towards Diane than to me, that's how I suppose, maybe if I stepped back a bit, that... y'know, that... that you valued her contribution and therefore you were far more... y'know umm... this was how I interpreted it

Sandra: yeah

Phoebe: th-that you were more... you easily could say positive things to Diane, but with me, you were more likely to criticise and I thought 'Mmm, what's that about?'

Sandra: yeah

Phoebe: that's... that's how I sort of interpreted it

Sandra: so, it felt very personal

Phoebe: yeah

Sandra: 'cos, it was about the different ways I was relating to each of you?

Phoebe: that was just a man... manifestation. It was how you felt about the difference between me and Diane and I was thinking 'Why? Why does she feel like that towards me?'

Sandra: mm hmm and, of course, that would be a really difficult thing to actually ask about

Phoebe: yeah, couldn't have put that on the table and I would have probably have come and seen you about it, but umm... I didn't see you again

Sandra: *why?*

Phoebe: *because you came in and you did the difference [module] and then we didn't see you, 'cos, you weren't our regular tutor at that point... it was only later on and it was too much water under the bridge for me to then pick it up*

Sandra: *but did it follow through or was it just particular in the first year, then?*

Phoebe: *it was that particular essay. I didn't feel it after that*

Sandra: *ah right*

Phoebe: *but I was always looking out for it [laughter]. Obviously!*

Sandra: *and you didn't find it?*

Phoebe: *I don't think so... no, I... well, I suppose I'd come to expect that that was how you marked and I know from other people that you equally picked up on things like spelling and things like that*

Sandra: *right, so you'd been able to check it out a bit*

Phoebe: *yeah, yeah, so I knew it wasn't just me and umm... I sort of got used to that really umm... so, it was never... it was never massive, but it was always there in the background and I always... I always... I liked the thought of you marking my work, but I also thought that you were... if there were any... if there were any problems or mistakes, you'd be the one to pick 'em out*

Sandra: *right [laughter]*

Phoebe: *so it was always a double-edged sword, really, 'cos, praise from you, is praise indeed.*

Later Phoebe explored more:

Phoebe: *I think and I guess, just the one little thing that's at the back of my mind, is that we both had, y'know, a long page of... of references, as we both always did, y'know an-and you... tick, 'excellent' on hers, nothing on mine and it was just like a stark difference*

Sandra: *yeah*

Phoebe: *and then, y'know... and now I'm thinking that Diane needed a more sort of positive... y'know, and I'm thinking... and you thinking, 'she's so self-assured, she doesn't need anything'... that's something... I don't know, y'know, it's some... that sort of stuff goes on*

Sandra: *yeah*

Phoebe: *I guess, really*

Sandra: *absolutely, and that's really challenging, cos, y'know, the reality is that it may... maybe that I marked it at a different time*

Phoebe: *yeah*

Sandra: *and was just in a different space*

Phoebe: *yeah, yeah*

Sandra: *y'know*

Phoebe: *well, that's what...*

Sandra: *Diane's was the first essay and yours was the twentieth essay*

Phoebe: *yeah and that's what I thought... yeah, I thought that could equally be...*

Sandra: *but it hit a particular spot inside you*

Phoebe: *yeah*

Sandra: *I guess, y'know, when we have vulnerable spaces, there are often channels where it does go to*

Phoebe: *yeah, yeah*

Sandra: *it... it caused doubt for you*

Phoebe: *because the doubt was already there. So, it just...*

Sandra: *within you?*

Phoebe: *yeah, yes, so, just err... reinforced that, really and I guess a sense of umm... not standing out in the room and also not standing out on paper*

Sandra: *yeah*

Phoebe: *'cos, probably it was important for me to stand out on paper, because I didn't y'know, very often stand out in the room.*

4.3.7.2 Enjoying directness

Despite thinking that I didn't value her, and in contrast to Philippa and Penny, Phoebe actively chose to work with me because of my directness:

Phoebe: *and I actually chose, I wanted to be in your home group*

Sandra: *yeah?*

Phoebe: *so, there was certainly nothing there about... I actively wanted to be... because I liked your straight talking*

Sandra: *mm hmm, thanks*

Phoebe: *I like a... I don't like pussyfooting. I like it straight down the line, umm... so, that's why I chose to be with you, 'cos I thought that I'd get that and, by that stage, I'd really come to appreciate y-your wealth of experience. So, again, I really wanted to be with you.*

I was very impacted by Phoebe's different experience, it felt like such a huge effect from small things that I had done:

'and it... it's sort of, from my end, it's... it's... well, it's difficult, because it's like whatever you do as a... as a trainer can on the one hand mean absolutely nothing and on the oth... y'know like you can do a really big thing and it means nothing or you can do a really small thing and it means loads, y'know, to different people at different times.'

Phoebe's feedback about the interview continued her own directness:

'The session was really interesting – I love to explore relationship and have such a strong sense of not having done this with you before. But then haven't done it much with other tutors either... 'I am not surprised about not standing out, although not easy to hear. I would say this was one of my struggles on the course about wanting to but being fearful of being attention seeking or seen as showing off. I was often self-conscious and continually censored my thoughts, especially early on. I feared being judged by others but I was the one doing the judging.' (post-interview email).

4.3.8 Paul – Beyond shared real differences trainer tentativeness explored

4.3.8.1 Appreciating needs and seeing beyond

I was pleased that Paul agreed to take part, he engaged fully with the course and was well liked. He is partially sighted and: *'I was impressed with how he managed the delicate balance of dependence, being as independent as possible, and not being diminished.'* (pre-interview reflection). Due to having had a blind pen pal as a teenager, my initial career as an Occupational Therapist, and my experience with deaf sign language users, I had a good awareness of adaptations that Paul needed on the course. The need for me to keep aware of his needs meant that *'it made you very prominent in a sense'*.

Paul shared how I had seen beyond his white stick, something that some people struggled to do and for me it was invaluable that he had seen beyond my role as trainer:

yeah, one of the things that err... really struck me was you... there aren't that many students, I don't think, who find it easy to relate to a tutor on a simple human to human level without a lot of umm... sense of those different roles kind of somehow really impacting it and I think th-that you were one of the people who could do that some of the time...

Paul just saw this as normal and queried it, surprised at my response:

Paul: what's... what's the... what's the most common experience, then? What's... what's the...

Sandra: well, people not... not umm... relating to me as a person, but as a tutor

Paul: so, seeing your role, but not seeing you?

Sandra: yes or not even particularly caring

Paul: right

Sandra: about who I was as a person, but rather what I could supply or what I could umm... give them feedback about or their worries about what I [laughs] might say to them

Paul: even on... even on the counselling course?

Sandra: yes... mmm, so, you sound a little surprised at that

Paul: I'm... I'm a little bit surprised, but I understand why I'm surprised, because it's purely from my frame of reference of... of thinking, well, it just wouldn't be something that would occur to me to treat someone as their role.

Paul was also surprised at the concept that a trainer might have favourite students, his particular position on this fascinated me:

'all the tutors seemed very professional, you were... y'know you were very professional and I think part of that professionalism is that you don't have favourites and umm... I never experienced... I never felt anything like that. I mean, I never looked around and thought, oh, that person's a favourite or not a favourite or... I... but again, in my sort of way of looking at things it's like, well, it's... again it's what you make of it, y'know, if you look around for that kind of stuff, you'll find it, y'know. If you're looking around thinking... if you are the type of person that thinks, 'hang-on that person's being a favourite' and you're looking for that in some way you're kind of tuned in to look for that, you'll find it'

Being on a counselling course meant that Paul expected people to relate with each other differently than on other types of courses. He related to me as a trainer and as a person and he was respectful and appreciative of my sharing of my self:

'I mean, I know it was a counselling course and maybe there was some expectation of that, but, I mean, y'know, in my experience... you see, I never ex... I never expected umm... necessarily for people to share a lot about themselves umm... in terms of the tutors umm... and also I have this sort of way that I treat any sort of... kind of umm... any sort of information about someone's private life is something... something quite precious, y'know and that any kind of sharing of th-that kind of thing is... is to me quite a big thing.'

4.3.8.2 Pain and healing

Paul appreciated my sharing on the course my 'difference' in being lesbian and his gentle but intense interest in me supported me to share and explore more about painful and delicate experiences I have had in working with students with other differences, including him:

Paul: the only way your difference impacted on me, was in a positive way, I suppose

Sandra: mm, mm, yes, a kind of connection of a mutuality of a difference, acknowledging that

Paul: yeah, I-I... y'know, I... I love it when... I love it when people... express difference, but when it's genuine difference. I don't like people... to try and, y'know, sort of highlight difference... just to be different

Sandra: yes

Paul: because that's not genuine, that's not... y'know, but if... like yourself... y'know, genuinely, 'that's who I am', y'know, then I feel... that always impacts on me in a good way y'know

Sandra: mm. Yeah, well, I suppose for me, difference is very precious. I mean... and we're different and similar in so many ways, y'know, human beings

Paul: oh yes

Sandra: but umm... y'know, there's lot... at different times, there's... there's pain and there's great joy in being different depending on what's going on in life and I suppose with you, it... it's like I was always intrigued, because you're probably... it's interesting, 'cos it's like, I've never found it easy to actually think of talking to you about being partially sighted

Paul: you've never found it easy

Sandra: no

Paul: to think about that?

Sandra: no, to actually do it

Paul: to actually do it

Sandra: no and I remember that on the course and I'm aware of it kind of now. It's... it's kind of like it's...

Paul: why? Why is that the case?

Sandra: I think it's because... it's interesting, 'cos it's a sort of... it's a bit strange... strange one, in terms of... I think it's something about the way that you live it. It's to do with umm... on the one hand it feels kind of sensitive to talk about,

y'know, sort of a bit of an unknown quantity around it and on the... and I think it's because it feels as if it's either very sorted inside you or it actually has a very sensitive place inside you or maybe even a mixture of both, because we're never quite that simple

Paul: no, yeah

Sandra: yeah, but on the other... on the other hand of it, you're probably a person who lives with a disability like... apparently at least, with the least chip on your shoulder about it that I've ever seen

Paul: mm, yeah

Sandra: and in some ways, it's almost like that makes it hard to... to talk about it, because it feels as if it's poking at something that you just get on with, if you see what I mean

Paul: I see what you mean umm... I... I... the way I approach it, is I... I... I never mind talking about it to anyone y'know, because sometimes, I feel like, if people don't talk about it, it's like, y'know, they're... they're thinking it, but they're not saying anything which is like, well, just say it, y'know....

Sandra: ... it's been really important for me to kind of experience that in you as a human being and as a human being with... the partial-sightedness, because my overall... I mean, as you know difference, being a kind of really big interest of mine over the years, but it's also been a very big source of... of quite a lot of pain over the years, as well, really because, I think...

Paul: what, personally, for you?

Sandra: err... I don't mean personally in terms of my life, because actually, y'know, in terms of being lesbian, on the whole, that has been extremely positive an-and I think enriched my life, though, obviously a bit tricky at times, but umm... in terms of my involvement with people, who... I suppose it would be particularly disability umm... so, for example, having worked with deaf people; having worked with umm... either like whole groups of deaf people or having deaf people on a course or... or umm... having people with other kinds of difference, like umm... being transgender or umm... different... different differences along the way umm... but a lot of people having umm... a sort of mixed thing of appreciation and support, but also then being extremely demanding and unsatisfied with what they get

Paul: from... from..?

Sandra: from me or from a course so, umm... that experience of almost like umm... really trying to support somebody or a group of people and then feeling as if,

whatever you do, it's never going to be enough, they're never going to be satisfied and umm...

Paul: how does that impact on you, Sandra?

Sandra: I don't... I... it's not nice, y'know. It's very wearing, i-it's the kind of thing which make you think, y'know, I can't afford to have too many people with those kinds of differences in a... in a group I can't work with too many at one time, because it's not going to be umm... an easy experience, y'know, it's going to be one that's going to wear me out, rather than to feed me or to even be neutral umm... and I've thought about it often, in terms of that kind of thing often being normal, almost, y'know, so, it's like, if you look historically at the Women's Movement and initially men getting involved in it and umm... then when the Women's Movement kind of got more power and things like that, some of those men got kind of pushed out, there was no place for them because they were men and I think th-that certainly happened for me in the deaf community, y'know, in terms of... of really supporting the... a... a [course] for deaf people and being the kind of key trainer on it and

Paul: you felt

Sandra: kind of being...

Paul: pushed out by the deaf people?

Sandra: yes, y'know, there was that kind of experience of, we were offering so much more than they had been able to access before, yet then as soon as they got on the course... they were not satisfied with this and they were not satisfied with that and they wanted this and they wanted that. So, it was really kind of high pressure and then on the one hand, sometimes I was kind of included and sort of seen positively and then another time, I would almost be the enemy, because I was a hearing person, y'know and I've kind of had that experience in larger and smaller doses where you're kind of alright and you can kind of get kicked as well and so... and that hasn't just been with deaf people, but it's probably the most marked, because that's a group that I've worked with for quite a few years umm... but that has been my experience a lot of the time, with people who have certain kinds of differences where they... they feel hard done to in the world umm... that... that, somebody in my position as a tutor or something, can be both the person offering something that's really important to them and somehow also the person who's not giving... who's representative of all that they're not getting. So, then kind of you coming along was, again, refreshing, in terms of, you asked for what you needed; you were really clear; I knew when we weren't doing enough for you, 'cos you said, but you didn't jump up and down and you weren't horrid about it and you weren't, y'know, 'chip on your shoulder' about it, you were just clear umm... and you kind of took

responsibility for your own life for the aspects of it and it was... it was very new to me

Paul: *really?*

Sandra: *yes*

Paul: *mmm, that's good to hear. I mean, it's good to hear. It really is good to hear umm... yeah, it feels positive... to hear that.*

4.3.8.3 Relationship

His post-interview email continued his reflection, for example:

'I really enjoyed our time together on Monday. It felt very positive to me to reflect on our time together and the way we related during the course... I think it's very helpful to take a step back, as you are doing, and look at the relationship between counselling tutor and budding student counsellor. I do feel that particular relationship is quite different to that of many tutors to their students because in counselling the work is all about the relationship.'

4.3.9 Across the discussion interviews

Each discussion interview was unique and the chosen elements of each presented above have, hopefully, given a sense of each conversational partner and the complexity of our reciprocal influence during the course and within the interviews themselves. Risk taking congruence, curious empathy and warm unconditional positive regard offered by each of us supported us to be reflexive about our experience of each other and its resulting influence. While some of the richness of the interviews is expressed best through each separate interview some is expressed more effectively across the interviews, particularly as all the interviews involved one former trainer. Here I have chosen to explore: similarities and differences in how my former students experienced me, responses to my sharing being lesbian, and then reflecting on my experience of the discussion interviews.

4.3.9.1 Experiencing me similarly and differently

Being interviewed with eight former students, as has been seen above, gives a rare insight into how a trainer, myself, was experienced similarly and differently by a range of students; but, more than that, they also give an even rarer insight into how that experiencing then impacted them and how they related with me.

There was a good degree of consistency in how I was described though the same words weren't used by more than three people (see table 8), where I have grouped words that are related. Relative consistency in how I was experienced was, however, received and acted on in very different ways and I found getting a deep knowing about this through the interviews complex, exciting, and exhilarating but also confusing, disturbing, and at times disheartening. For example, responses to how I marked were hugely different with Phoebe perceiving my minimal writing on her essay as meaning I had no interest in her, despite the high mark (1:1 07); Patrick finding feedback from a relatively low mark useful and building respect and trust for me (1:1 02); and Philippa feeling so inadequate around me that she couldn't bear to read my feedback on her work (1:1 06). It is clear from this that my way of marking has had a big impact on several students and that their response to it cannot be foreseen without a good understanding of the student. That good understanding is hampered by such things as time constraints and little 1:1 time together and, perhaps even more crucially, by some students actively hiding their responses from me.

Consistent	Stable	Solid	Reliable
Organised	Structured	Determined	Focused
Person Centred	Experienced	Skilled	Professional
Sensitive	Compassionate	Helpful	Clear
Attentive	Perceptive		
Challenging	Frank	Direct	Straight talking
Open	Friendly	Approachable	
Individual	Sense of humour		
Robust	Calm under pressure		

Table 8: Words former students used to describe me.

Another complex example is around my directness. This was really appreciated by some and was 'cutting' to others, so while some actively sought out working with me because of it, others felt too vulnerable to work closely with me. However, more complex than different students responding to the same aspects of me differently was how some would respond to those aspects differently in different settings: Phoebe (1:1 07) was really wary of what I thought of her because of the marking but actively chose to work with me in the home group, while Philippa (1:1 06) and Penny (1:1 05) avoided me in home group but really enjoyed me in the large group.

4.3.9.2 Responses to my sharing being lesbian

Each of us has distinctive parts of our identities that, when known, stand out to others, to a greater or lesser extent, and one of those parts of me is that I am lesbian. As a Person Centred trainer, offering the core conditions as best I can, I regard it as a responsibility to find appropriate ways of disclosing important parts of my identity, such as this.

I hadn't known how my former students had really felt about my being lesbian and how I expressed this; as their trainer I hadn't expected to know. I don't just mean not know the nuances of each student's reaction but also just their overall reaction; their gift of sharing this with me feels very profound. This assumption of not knowing stands in stark contrast to how surprised I have been by how much I have not known about responses to me or my actions in other areas. Life experience has shown me that responses to my sharing being lesbian can never be assumed either positively or negatively and that what I am told will contain varying shades of the truth. In my work I have felt protected by the ethical framework (BACP, 2013) which demands that counsellors are non-discriminatory though I am sure that this has also meant that some students have hidden discriminatory responses, and of course could have done so during their interview.

I had taught the 'working with difference' module with the two groups my former students in this research came from and if the students hadn't known I was lesbian before then they did from the first session. My openness about different elements of who I am: female, white, middle class from working class family of origin, able bodied, lesbian, Catholic, etc. was essential to supporting students to really consider who they were, who their clients might be, and the impact of our interactions. Sharing being lesbian was sharing a private part of me in the service of the students while also finding the sharing positive for myself as it meant that I was more fully congruent.

Patrick (1:1 02) was very conscious of my being lesbian, especially as he wrote an essay on gay oppression, forgetting there might also be good aspects to being gay. His concern was personal as he wondered how it might have been for me to mark that essay. On the other hand Patricia's response (1:1 03) concerned her development as a counsellor; she appreciated her experience of me as a trainer who wasn't in her face about being lesbian and learned from it such things as not assuming her clients were heterosexual. Paul's response (1:1 08) came from another angle entirely, he appreciated me sharing with the group that I was lesbian and regarded it as a 'genuine difference' that he could relate to from his own experience of being a person with a disability. Paul therefore connected personally with me in terms of a shared experience of difference.

Petra and Philippa were also lesbian (1:1 04; 1:1 06) and each felt positive about how my being an open lesbian had supported their own presence and sense of legitimacy as lesbians in their respective groups. Along with this, they also had quite different responses. Petra (1:1 04) had thought through how to relate to me and although in some ways my being lesbian felt really important to her in other ways she cut off from it, 'neutralised' it, seeing the course as a

heterosexual environment and not relating to me as she would with lesbians outside the course. Philippa (1:1 06) was powerfully impacted by my being lesbian, it magnified her sense of inadequacy in relation to me and was very much at the forefront of her experience of me. It isn't however that simple as another of her trainers was also lesbian and her relationship with her was very different and my reminding her of a specific person had added to her response to me.

As I have revisited the transcripts to explore this and other themes I have been struck by several of my former students saying how they knew more about my fellow trainers personal lives than about mine. I have previously put this down to me keeping my check-ins on courses brief and in the service of the students but I am also for the first time wondering if that is only partly true. As I sit with this it seems much more true that I share only a little of my life because it is a lesbian life, one where a few words about my world have the capacity to support lesbian and gay students presence in the group but also to provoke prejudices. Sharing my life becomes a political statement rather than just being itself, something I both resent and utilise, Phoebe (1:1 07) , for example, considered that I would run the 'working with difference' module well as I was a member of a minority group and so had good knowledge of, and passion for, the subject.

4.3.9.3 My experience of the discussion interviews

I knew this research would not be simple but in this journey I have lost and regained my equilibrium so many times. Intellectually I knew that there would be complexity in this exploration but the subtle nuances and variations have astounded me and rocked me. My experience of these interviews with my former students was intimate, delicate, fascinating, emotionally powerful, humbling, refreshing and challenging; their relational immediacy gave me what I most sought – a deeper access to my own process through a deeper understanding of our process. In the immediacy of mutual reflection with my former students I felt safe and open enough to explore what was on the edge of awareness, supported and challenged by my conversational partner in what was itself an example of reciprocal influence. At the same time I was holding responsibility for how the interview was going, guiding the content when appropriate, and caring for the wellbeing of us both. I was open, warm, and sensitive as well as challenging – in keeping with their descriptions of their experience of me on their course.

There were some big surprises for me in every interview. Paula (1:1 01) and I had held onto an image of me that she had given me on the last day of the course and together we tweaked it to make it more accurate. Patrick (1:1 02) seemed so laid back that I was really surprised when he shared that he was really impacted by feedback and how hard this had been for him previously. I was relieved that the way I had worked with him had not fed into this. While I had known that many students did some healing from school experiences as they were supported through assignments I was amazed by the different ways several former students had been impacted by my marking their assignments (Phoebe 1:1 07; Philippa 1:1 06; Patrick 1:1 02). I was surprised by Patrick (1:1 02) and Philippa's (1:1 06) experience that keeping clear boundaries between us

felt healing of previous experiences where boundaries had been broken. Petra (1:1 04) and I worked through the challenges in our relationship and reached a warm connection whilst I also learned that I had been significant in her learning. I had no idea of the journey Penny (1:1 05) went through on the course, she had seemed to go through much of it smoothly and easily. I had no idea I was being actively avoided by her in home group, or the strength of feeling of peace and solidity she enjoyed when I was running the large group and the complexity of what she shared with me felt profound. I hadn't appreciated that although Patricia (1:1 03) never came to me for support she knew I would be there if she asked and that was really important to her. I was surprised by how much I explored with Paul (1:1 08) about previous challenges in supporting some students because of his open interest and questioning.

It has not always been easy to hear the experience of my former students and it is likely that it is these areas that I would not have been able to reach on my own. Some of their comments rocked me:

'I feel pulled up short... I do try to express myself clearly and to be sensitive but also know I don't hold back from the points that could be improved. I wonder how I would feel if I got my own feedback? I know the spirit in which it is intended but wonder if I might sometimes be rather harsh? When I wonder I lose heart again, feel despair... There is such a sense of vulnerability behind this competence, who am I to have such an effect on other people? ... It frightens me and thrills me that I have an impact on the students I work with. I can do my best in the service of their growth and the requirements of course and Uni but I can't control how they will receive me and what perceptions, memories and feelings of me they go away with... I feel the anxiety and fear right now, makes me want to scurry away and hide.'
(reflective diary 11/3/09).

My responses were often complex and conflicting:

'She also said however that as the course progressed she could make more use of other styles of approach and that all were important. There's no winning with me as I responded internally with disappointment and a wondering if my style was best suited for the early stages of a course and I was then outgrown. There was also a more cognitive pleasure in the acknowledgement that the variety of styles and of people was important, which of course it is for really good learning. I do tie myself in knots. I wonder if perhaps some of my 'negative' response to the appreciation is shame at how much it means to me to be appreciated and to be seen, and my fear of its fragility in perhaps so easily being taken away. I cannot take it in and hold it, polish it, have it to take out and have pleasure from; if I receive it and then place it out there between me and 'other' then it can also be taken back in some way quite easily, I will even help so that it does go and I am without the insecurity of it again. That reads as though I am so very insecure but it is not only that, it also brings old fears of 'the professor' of arrogance and self-righteousness which I have seen

sparks of within me occasionally and I hate it, I won't be that way and I guard against it, if I take on appreciation in the moment and hold it as belonging to that moment and the next moment being potentially different then I am acknowledging the ever-changingness of me and those I work with, this is very much about phenomenology and existentialism! The everchangingness of experience means that all is fluid and there is no meaning in holding on to others feedback to me as reality about me, no basis for arrogance or self-righteousness but rather for fluidity and internal self awareness and unconditional acceptance of self.' (reflective diary 15/4/10).

Yet overall my response to the interviews has been positive:

'I feel myself jumping up and down inside myself with the joy of this experience, with the wonder of being able to explore what we consider was going on then and how we see that now, engaging with one another to share and explore and take forward our new awarenesses. My relationships with each person feels deeper, more intimate, trusting and precious. I am filled with aliveness and joy at the wonder of this experience and all it has given me, and I do believe has, at least to some extent, given each of them. I knew this felt like the right way for me to take this research forward and the experience I have had so far is confirmation, there is an internal cry of 'yes!' as the rightness of it resonates through me.' (reflective diary 15/4/10).

Overall then:

'This research is full of small shifts and big learning... The learning about myself feels like a series of small but important shifts, I was fairly well aware of myself as a trainer, my strengths and weaknesses and how I had changed over time, how I relate to others, how others were likely to perceive me. In this process though that learning has deepened, I am more fully faced with myself and faced with others perceptions of me and the lens they see me through; perhaps the latter is where the most learning is, and my sense of being fairly helpless at times in the face of that, and then my response to that. Yes, my eyes are opening much more, my understanding is fuller, and I see how much I will never fully know or be able to influence in the way I would want' (reflective diary 3/4/10).

4.4 Across the interviews

While many themes could be drawn out across the interviews there is insufficient space to fully do that justice here. I have therefore chosen to consider one main content theme that has only lightly been touched on up to now – the vicarious growth of the trainer - and then to address

some areas related to my choice of methodology: why people participated, power and equality, and discomfort and pain from the interview.

4.4.1 Vicarious growth of the trainer

Along with liking and favouritism, that were discussed earlier, the vicarious growth of the trainer is perhaps another taboo subject. The interviews inspired me and I found that:

'I have a sense of wanting to liberate the trainer/teacher/lecturer's positive experience in their role that is essentially in the service of the other; to appreciate our gains without that tipping the balance of who is the priority in a given relationship. If we didn't gain why would we do it? So, never mind the wounded healer (Nouwen, 1994) or the vicariously traumatised (McCann & Pearlman, 1990) what about healing through training? or vicarious growth?' (reflective diary 31/10/09).

I sat with the term 'vicarious growth' and what it evoked in me, staying with the heuristic process:

'I really like the idea of 'vicarious growth', when I feel myself smile I know that I am connecting well with something creative and positive, something that excites me in the jump it is making (the links seem so simple and linear and yet I know they are not as I experience a little leap inside me, like a synaptic something or other jumping the gap, like De Bono (1997) talking of how new connections seem obvious only retrospectively. 'Vicarious growth' expresses something particular for me, (what are synonyms: explicit, shocking, sensational, vivid, juicy, with 'bland' as an antonym – I like the vividness of these words, very unbland, and for me the thrill of being part of others learning is growth enhancing for me so it does feel 'vicarious'. (reflective diary 25/11/09).

I have always been strongly aware that learning and developing is a two way process and known that when I didn't experience that then I shouldn't be training. Throughout these interviews there have been several examples of what I am calling 'vicarious growth', for example, my sense of healing from the pain in some of my work with students with disabilities through my experience with Paul (1:1 08). In the 2:1 interviews there were also examples. Tara felt supported by some students, including Samantha, and so grew more easily into her daunting new role on the course:

Tara: but there was something about certain individuals would actually within that group disclose something about themselves rather debate a theoretical point

Samantha: yes, yeah

Tara: and you were one of them

Sandra: *so she was one of a few who did that and that helped you feel as though 'I know what I'm doing'*

Tara: *yeah*

Sandra: *and it sounds like that gave you some kind of*

Tara: *anchor, you did say anchor didn't you? [Sandra nods] ... (2:1 01).*

Teresa explored how the main influence that Sue had on her:

'is in enabling me to work with my prejudice around Christianity, umm, because I have a certain prejudiced position around that... I think that the way in which Sue really impacted me was to meet a very kind of mature person in their faith who was also open to exploring ways in which that faith might be like person centredness and not like person centredness... So it felt for me that the dialogue was a kind of dual dialogue and me learning 'oh that's how you can do, oh that makes more sense to me now'. (2:1 01 Teresa).

However, this wasn't so for all the trainers, as I reflected in my post-interview email to Tony and Stuart, my experience of Tony was that there was: *'little sense of newness or growth in you as a result of your 'relationship'. I wonder if you see that as due to your long years of training?'* (2:1 03 post-interview email). He clarified his perspective: *'Not so much my long years of training, rather that at [my age], I'm not likely to experience new growth so strongly. Maybe some re-learning of things learned before would be more accurate.'* (2:1 03 post-interview email).

4.4.2 Why participate?

In the 2:1 interviews I invited one person, usually the former trainer, to participate and then they chose one former student to be interviewed with. Unsurprisingly, as already noted, they chose people they had got on well with and felt sure enough of in terms of what they might say to each other, though that still left some anxieties, including for former students. Sue (2:1 01) shared that:

'Although I was looking forward to the interview, I was also slightly apprehensive. I knew that Teresa had influenced me throughout my training, as indeed had John. What was more difficult to gauge was in what way I might have influenced Teresa. I knew intellectually that I would have done, just as I know that my students have influenced me. However, I was slightly nervous. Would she say things I would not want to hear?

Perhaps a little fearful that she would have little to say at all - that my influence has been minimal or negative in some way. General insecurity niggles. It seemed important that she liked me, and I felt vulnerable.' (2:1 01 post-interview email).

She also shared that, following the interview:

'The fact that I so influenced Teresa has deeply impacted on me, and made me more mindful whilst I am in relationship with others, that I am influencing whether I am aware of it or not.' (2:1 01 post-interview email).

With the 1:1 interviews the eight who became conversational participants were a mix of people whom I had got on with well, had had difficult or complex relationships with, and others who had not stood out strongly for me in their group. This countered Teresa (2:1 01) and Tara's (2:1 02) wondering about how different it might be to talk with former students where the relationship between former student and trainer had not been really positive and their doubts about whether such people would ever want to participate in an interview.

While in the 2:1 interviews a primary theme was the sharing of mutual liking in the discussion interviews the opposite was more apparent, with the interviews being an opportunity for previous difficulties and issues to be explored and worked through. While it would be easy to say that more risks were taken in the discussion interviews because of more focus on exploring previous difficulties this is not really accurate. In both the 2:1 and discussion interviews there were some interviews that I experienced as intimate, delicate, and meeting at emotional depth, and others that were overall at a lighter level. In each interview the participants influenced each other in terms of how far they were prepared to explore with themselves, each other, and me. One difference was that, in being the former trainer/researcher for the discussion interviews, several of the former students participated, at least in part, because they wanted to give me something back for what I had given them during the course.

4.4.3 Power and Equality

In any interviews power and equality are important issues, they are also important in terms of Person Centred counselling and therefore training. In these interviews, where former student and trainer are interviewed together these issues may be much more apparent and relevant than in the more usual researcher-participant interview. Power issues will impact what is shared, and how, and the subsequent feelings each have about the interview. It is therefore very interesting that across the interviews words used to describe participants experience of the interviews included: valuable, enriching, enlightening, and sharing.

It is fascinating that all the former students from the 2:1 interviews, who sent back post-interview reflections, expressed a sense of equality:

'I felt safe enough to be open and honest, and felt Teresa was too. Did not feel I had to edit anything. Felt power was equalised between the three of us.' (Sue 2:1 01 post-interview email);

'It felt new, unusual for me. There was an element of real equality at times - both of us as interviewees.' (Stuart 2:1 03 post-interview email);

'I felt at ease throughout the interview and felt I said all I wanted to say. I was not aware of any power issues because this has never been a problem in our relationship.' (Sean 2:1 05 post-interview email);

'I was not at all uneasy and looking forward to the interview alongside Tessa and there were no power issues before, during or feelings afterwards' (Sara 2:1 06 post-interview email).

In the discussion interviews the former students didn't talk of a sense of equality but of shifts from how the power differential had felt during the course. One of the motivations for Philippa participating was because *'there's still something going on for me around tutors'* (1:1 06) and she saw this as an opportunity to work on it. Phoebe was aware that *'there's a tendency for me to put people on pedestals'* and she did this with several of her trainers, including me. Near the end of the interview we reflect on this again:

Sandra: So, have I got off the pedestal, yet?

Phoebe: uurrmmm... you're still on there, because you still don't feel... if... when I get to know you as a person, that's when you'll come down off it, but you're still up there in terms of looking-up to you

Sandra: yeah

Phoebe: we're still not like that; you're still up there and I think you'll probably continue to be, to some degree, because I do have that great sense of, y'know, you're so accomplished and, y'know, with such experience umm... that I don't have... but, I guess if we had a different kind of relationship, then that might become less important. (1:1 07).

My greater experience was something that Penny also felt separated us still, and perhaps forever:

Penny: the bit that I came for was actually the bit that we're talking about now, it would be just you being real in a situation, but what I didn't realise, at the time is, I could never really be in that place with you, because you were so far ahead of me and you were also my teacher, no matter how I looked at it

Sandra: so it's a kind of place we couldn't reach?

Penny: I think it is a place we can't really reach. I don't see how you can. (1:1 05).

Yet as we talk more Penny does find a bridge in more 'real' elements of relationship:

'valuing each other and respecting each other I think that can go a long way to umm... and I think it does. I think in areas like that, I never felt disrespected and I always respected you and the... and the others and I think that... when that happens you can feel that it's bridged gaps, because that's not about the teaching

part of it, that's about human beings relating on a person-centred, if you like. Umm... so that part can be bridged, I think and it's a very, very important part, because if you lose that, then it would just be like any other course. (1:1 05).

For Petra it was my forthright honesty with her that sometimes gave her a sense of equality with me on the course:

'I like being told how it is, y'know I mean that... [sighs] and I like sort of... I like feeling that I'm meeting my tutor on an equal footing and I always felt, that when we talked about that kind of stuff, we were umm... which I really appreciated' (1:1 04).

This was followed through in the interview when I started by acknowledging previous difficulties in our relationship:

Petra: I'm really glad you said that, because I kind of felt pretty similar... and it actually opens up the... the discussion and that's fine y'know

Sandra: good [laughing softly]

Petra: absolutely fine. (1:1 04).

The former trainers were more conscious of their previous role and there was some reference to still carrying a residual continuing responsibility for the student and what they felt able to share and how. Teresa wondered if she had avoided talking about difficulties in judging Sue's work even though she had enjoyed the flow of the interview that resulted from their previously 'easy relationship' (2:1 01 post-interview reflection). Tara reported feeling very uneasy in her interview with Samantha as she worked out how much or little to share (2:1 02 post-interview reflection).

I was very aware of a sense of residual continuing responsibility in the discussion interviews, exacerbated by me also being the researcher. I didn't avoid difficult areas but instead was very sensitive in the way that I approached them, owning my own experience around them both then and now.

While many conversational partners, students or trainers, didn't mention consciously feeling they were managing what to say and how, or of avoiding particular subjects, it is impossible to know if they were and just didn't share that with me. Students were either: unaware when their former trainer was working out how much to share, didn't experience this as a power issue, or didn't share about this. Of course this doesn't mean the former students don't also monitor what they are saying, we all monitor what we say in different contexts, but there was no report of this and no sense of them monitoring from a sense of responsibility towards their former trainer.

4.4.4 Discomfort and pain from the interview

Across the interviews the most common feedback from participants on their experience was that it was: friendly, relaxed, enjoyable, and developed more warmth between participants. However, some of the conversational partners acknowledged painful feelings following the interviews, for

example Patrick said how he had later felt *'caught out... some shame or guilt kindled'* (1:1 02 post-interview email) and Philippa initially felt *'elated,.. then an incredible sadness'* (1:1 06 post-interview email). A comparison can be drawn between these responses and that of Tara (2:1 02), where the interview left her feeling uncomfortable about some things, though Tara's response was more in relation to training and Patrick and Philippa's were more about themselves. It may be that this kind of response did happen to some other participants but they didn't tell me. It may also be a result of us exploring in the discussion interviews areas that were more challenging than those in the 2:1 interviews. In the 2:1 interviews there was little sign of the former student and trainer having difficulties with each other while in the discussion interviews this came up with several and were explored with mutual sensitivity but, along with positive feelings, may also have resulted in some residual painful feelings.

Discomfort could also be in the receiving of positive feedback in the interview, as it was for Philippa:

'let me just say, it was very uncomfortable to hear you say all of that... [laughs] exceptionally uncomfortable, even though I know some of it's true umm... it was just like 'Stop! Stop! Stop!' umm... 'Are you sure you've got the person?' y'know' (1:1 06).

Exploring with someone our perceptions of them and their perceptions of us does carry the risk of painful feelings being evoked, the pain of what was missed, what had hurt another, what touched on a sensitive spot in us now. I trust that, as trained counsellors, each was able to reach for any support they needed and to reflect on the discomfort in a way that became helpful to them.

My experience of participating in so many interviews was intense and a roller coaster ride of emotions. Following interviews I was sometimes left with a sense of feeling overwhelmed and hopeless, just as at other times I was thrilled and excited, all seemed essential for the task. It was this variety of feelings and subsequent thoughts that I mulled on and synthesised.

4.5 Conclusion

From these findings there can be no doubt, if there ever was any, that reciprocal influence between counselling students and trainers is very powerful, complex and individual – both during the time of the course and, to a lesser extent, following that.

All of the interviews took place with a former student and trainer, the richness of this is apparent throughout the findings, with so much that could not have been gained in interviews with each person separately. Tara put this best when she described the experience of talking with Samantha as having *'almost developed like a photo while we talked'* (2:1 02).

Of course interviews from a retrospective position will be quite different from those about a current relationship, as Paul expressed it: *'there's a bit of distance in terms of... it's like, I can*

look back on it, rather than being in it' (1:1 08). Indeed some of what we all talked about could only be discussed from this retrospective position; while there may have been some losses in not working with current students and trainers this retrospective stance also held advantages.

Together the 2:1 and discussion interviews revealed a complex and little known world of reciprocal influence and, while this was a world I had been actively searching for, its emergence deeply impacted me. Over time I realised more than ever before, that while what I do does matter, how it matters today, to this student, depends so much on what is going on within them. It sounds obvious but through the interviews I experienced this at a much more profound level, in moments of intimate and vulnerable openness together. Initially it resulted in feeling overwhelmed, helpless, inadequate, and grieving for my more innocent self who had so strongly believed in my capacity to really support students' learning. Over time a strength emerged, if I couldn't be all of that then what I could be is myself. I could live, more or less, the core conditions that were at the centre of the Person Centred Approach (Rogers, 1951, 1959, 1961; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994) I taught, and that I truly valued, and reach out to students without expectations, though of course still with hope. Just as Rogers talked of counselling students becoming the counsellor they are, I am increasingly becoming the trainer I am, though that isn't always entirely the trainer I want to be.

5. CREATIVE SYNTHESIS

The last stage of heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990) is a creative synthesis, a stage that is just as applicable to relational heuristic research. While it encapsulates many of the core elements of the findings, it is also incomplete. The very acts of attending to the material again, and then of not attending to it, continues the heuristic process and in the writing of the findings chapter new elements emerge, sometimes something already known but now known at a much deeper level, other times things previously on the edge of awareness or unknown. At some stage however, as with all other heuristic researchers, I must reach some kind of point of completion and put the words on the page with their accompanying uncomfortable sense of fixedness and permanence (Moustakas, 1990).

This creative synthesis aims to reach out to, and into, you the reader; to give a sense of the depth of the relational heuristic process and where it sits with me now. I hope that it also evokes in you your own internal process with this theme of reciprocal influence.

Who am I?

*to have such influence on you,
with little control over how you receive me
or what you take away in my name.*

Who am I?

*to be influenced by you
in ways in and out of your control.*

Look and you will find:

*favouritism, rejection, and judgement,
in your sense of unworthiness and inferiority;
precious sharing, inclusion, and mutuality,
in your sense of security and personal value.*

*Distorting mirrors at the fair,
the myth of 'real' relationship?*

*Held at a distance or kept close,
fought for or avoided,*

*Experiences of me reinforce or heal
hurts from the past,*

*Your experience of me
different to any other's,
and so varied within you.*

*An open lesbian,
not in your face,
not in your way,
Lesbian in a heterosexual space,
so what?
so much!
raising the profile,
legitimising,
making present,
but,
the pressure of heightened expectations
carrying risks of disappointment.*

*No need to share my soul with the world,
yet open to relating at great depth;
A marshmallow coated hammer
marshmallow as the core;
X-ray vision for mistakes
- both loved and hated,
Praise from me
is praise indeed.
Frank talking
with a wealth of experience,
My frankness cutting
or growth enhancing
cutting and growth enhancing;
Giving valuable lessons
and unwelcome threat,
One student's pain
is another student's gain;
Connecting to your place of peace within
or your frightened vulnerability,
me seeing into places barely known.
Approachable
and unapproachable,
Always interested
yet unwilling to engage,
Perceptive,
quietly expectant,
passively challenging.*

Solid,
 steady,
 reliable,
 consistent;
Clear,
 direct,
 my beliefs put into practice.

Yet,
 I cannot make it okay
 for you to come to me,
 make best use of me;
I cannot click into place
 what is incomprehensible to you
 however much I try;

Who am I?
 powerful and powerless,
 seen and unseen,
 known and unknown.

In this fluid everchanging landscape
 where is stable ground?
Each evolving moment has its truth
 but is never the whole,
 never just me and you
 – clean and clear.

Returning to my self,
 your responses to me,
 your influence on me,
 vibrating as a tuning fork within
 I reject the false comfort of a fixed concept of my self.

Overwhelmed
 I want to turn away,
 shut down,
 defend,
 protect;
 so many of our experiences
 contaminated by our previous experiences.

Yet

*we sit openhearted,
we share our reciprocal influence
in all its complexity and richness.*

Humbled

*I want to gently be all I can be
in any moment,
without expectation.*

*I want to live the core conditions
empathy,
unconditional positive regard,
and congruence.*

*I want to be self aware,
and aware of other,
enough to be safely stable and available.*

And so,

*realistically,
I live somewhere between the two,
doing the best I can
in any moment.*

That has to be enough.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

I hope that the reader will agree that I have not dealt with the findings in a simplistic way that would *'beckon voices to "speak for themselves" or that reduce complicated and conflicting voices and data to thematic "chunks" that can be interpreted free of context, circumstances, other texts, theoretical concepts, and so on'* (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013, p. 261).

Returning to the literature to position the findings of this research, and show their value, is the task of this discussion chapter. This is the traditional position of this chapter in a thesis and indeed it sits well here for me. At last a comforting sense of linear development amongst an otherwise complexly inter-related and distinctively non-linear journey. That is not to say that this chapter will not also contain complexity. How could it not with the richness of subject matter and methodology.

The danger in entering a discussion is that the uniqueness of each interview and my heuristic process will be lost in seeking links with the literature or, conversely, that I will hold the uniqueness so strongly that its worth beyond the participants themselves is lost. There is a tricky balance to be sought here and I hope that I will achieve it sufficiently. As with the writing of the other chapters, my heuristic process is stimulated further with the literature deepening the meaning of the findings, and the findings illuminating aspects of the literature. I aim to continue the writing stance I have taken so far – keeping connected to the relational heuristic process and reaching out personally to the reader whilst meeting academic needs.

In this research, my aim has been to explore how counselling students and trainers reciprocally influence each other, with my own heuristic process as the core running through. This is a theme fascinating to me but one that has had little academic attention. It is gratifying that two recent pieces of research have explored aspects of the counselling student-trainer relationship from the perspective of counselling students (Smith, 2011) and trainers (Ballinger, 2012). However, my research continues to be the only one that has: interviewed both student and trainer, interviewed them together, and interviewed them about their reciprocal influence.

Even when considering the data from individual interviews *'the challenge of conducting analysis or presenting findings in a way that sensitively captures the multiple levels of a research encounter remains one of the biggest challenges for the qualitative researcher'* (Riach, 2009, p. 356). How much harder this task has been with the 2:1 and discussion interviews. In exploring the student-trainer relationship and presenting some lengthy pieces of transcript, some of the previously unknown aspects of the reciprocal relationship have been revealed. The discussion chapter has endeavoured to take this further by making what is implicit explicit (Egnew & Wilson, 2011).

As with most, if not all, qualitative research, there are so many aspects of the research that I could discuss here and I have had to choose carefully which are the most important to include. First of all I explore the complexity of the reciprocal relationships and then elements of the student-trainer relationship that particularly stood out: liking and favouritism, healing and nourishment, challenges, and then lesbian trainer. Methodology and methods have been so important in this research. Therefore there is a discussion on their ethics, consideration of power and equality, and what was gained from using this methodology and methods. Pulling all of this together is my process of transformation and summary of learning and the conclusion. I trust that the reader will see, from what has already been said and what is yet to come, that I have met Koro-Ljungberg's (2012) challenge to qualitative researchers:

'to ask questions such as, "Are my research processes creative or innovative in ways that they push me off to other directions and toward the unthought?" "How often do I get surprised when conducting research studies?" "How often does my research surprise others?" "How do my methodological approaches create analytical surprises?"' (p. 808).

6.2 Complexity of reciprocal relationships and their impact

6.2.1 Curiosity and complexity

My stance with this research has been one of open curiosity towards myself and the other conversational partners. This is in keeping with the Person Centred Approach's belief that a person is the expert on their own experience (Rogers, 1951, 1959), and the heuristic perspective that curiosity *'inspire[s] the search'* (Moustakas, 1990, p. 41). My inclusion of conversational partners in order to support me to see my own blind spots and deepen my self-understanding was stimulated by, and enabled, open curiosity towards my own experience. I consider open curiosity to be a stance of not knowing and of being as open as possible to whatever emerges. It includes being authentic, empathic and non-judgemental; in this case that openness is to self, other, and between self and other. Within each interview the conversational partners mutually constructed (Aranda & Street, 1999) the conversation and participated in *'real time-reflexivity'* (Weick, 2002, p. 897). I believe that it is this stance, and the apparent simplicity of 'just' exploring reciprocal influence, that has allowed for and stimulated rich and complex discussions in the interviews.

The findings chapter revealed complex relationships where former students and trainers have each influenced the other in different ways and have then been influenced by how they influence the other, and so on. Much of this was unspoken and included misunderstandings regarding how we 'really' felt towards each other and how we would have liked to have been able to relate. The unspoken also sometimes included a shared sense of connection which felt positive for each, being experienced through subtle gestures and events.

This reciprocal influence cycle is familiar to me. As a counselling trainer I have tried to draw this out with students in terms of their relationships with clients. In supporting students to write case studies and analyse counselling sessions, I have emphasised the necessity to explore, for example, their response to a client, how that led them to respond in a particular way, how that impacted the client, and so on. The summary of the reciprocal influence of Philippa and I (see 4.3.6.7) shows particularly well a complex interweaving cycle of reciprocal influence that each participant reinforces, reduces or expands in various ways. We '*each contribute to interactions*' with our relationship '*being understood as mutually constructed*' (Aranda & Street, 1999, p. 75).

This research reveals the limits of research that only looks at the impact of one person on another and then stops. It also reveals the limits of research that explores only one theme and misses the complexity of each person's responses to another. This complex interweaving cycle of reciprocal influence would be impossible to discover without having interviewed the two people together with a stance of open curiosity.

6.2.2 What counselling students find most helpful in trainers

Whilst the focus of the research was not on what elements of relationships helped or hindered, our motivation and development as students or trainers, exploring reciprocal influence necessitates considering how they view the impact of that reciprocal influence on each person. I am cautious in how I phrase this as although training is often seen as vital to effective counsellor development, there is little evidence of a direct link (Folkes-Skinner et al., 2012). The impact has sometimes been linked by conversational partners to elements of their motivation and development. As a result it is possible to draw out some examples of what they reported helped particular individuals and offer these to illustrate, and compare with, literature on adult education (Brookfield, 2006) and counsellor training (Jones et al, 2008; Smith, 2011) (see table 9).

The first column of table 9 includes the 3 elements of Gelso's (Gelso, 2009a, 2009b; Gelso & Carter, 1985) tripartite model of relationships; I link Brookfield's (2006) 'credibility' with Gelso's working alliance and his 'authenticity' with Gelso's real relationship. I have then taken Jones et al (2008) and Smith's (2011) findings in relation to counselling psychology and counselling training and positioned them as seems appropriate. I have finally added from my own findings and it can be seen that there are many similarities across Jones et al, Smith, and this research.

It is clear that what students want fits best within the working alliance and real relationship rather than the transference/ countertransference (Gelso, 2009a, 2009b; Gelso & Carter, 1985). This is unsurprising as there is safety in a here-and-now relationship between student and teacher/trainer rather than the insecurity of relating through the lens of previous relationships.

(Gelso, 2009a, 2009b; Gelso & Carter, 1985)	(Brookfield, 2006)	(Jones et al, 2008)	(Smith, 2011)	Taylor – this research
<i>Tripartite model of modes of relationship</i>	<i>Distillation of characteristics students prefer in teachers</i>	<i>What elements of the counselling student-trainer relationship supported student development</i>	<i>What counselling students found most positive in their relationships with trainers</i>	<i>What elements of the counselling student-trainer relationship former students said supported them on their course</i>
Working alliance	Credibility: skills, knowledge, insight wisdom, information	Agreement on tasks and topics		Person Centred, experienced and organised Effective feedback Skilled Knowledgeable
			Sense of equality and shared exploration	Mutual warmth and respect
			Trainer modelling an effective relationship	'rock', constant, steady, always there; Approachable
		Trainer able to manage interpersonal difficulties		
		Trainer maintaining appropriate boundaries		Giving freedom within boundaries Sharing self e.g. 'out' lesbian
				Direct Saying it straight
		Trainer attuned	Empathy Affirmation, Encouragement, Support	Affirmation, Encouragement Support, Praise, Perceptive, Consistent,
Real relationship	Authenticity: openness and honesty	Trainer non-defensive	Openness, genuineness, Self-disclosure	Sense of unspoken connection, Self-disclosure
		Feeling safe with trainer		
			Acceptance	Acceptance Interest
Transferential/countertransference relationship				

Table 9: What students find most helpful in teachers/trainers

While none of the students used the word 'caring', many of the words are linked to it, for example warmth, respect, acceptance, support, affirmation. Where these were experienced, there was a sense of appreciation in the student and no sense of it diminishing the sense of power they saw in the trainer. While Paley (2002) linked caring with a slave morality it was not something that either student or trainer linked with in this research.

Several students described how connecting with some of these aspects of their trainers enabled them to feel anchored, kept them on the course through difficulties, gave them strength to be themselves, and gave them legitimacy in who they are. It may be difficult to make direct quantifiable links between this feedback and student achievement but links are clearly there.

While the table shows key things that students have mentioned, they do not of course apply across the board in all situations and it is helpful to have more than one trainer so that students can utilise particular trainers to meet particular needs (see Sue 2:1 01). This is in keeping with Gubi (2007) and Ladany's (1996) research where counselling students and qualified counsellors chose what to share with what supervisors.

If we put all of the students comments together we can see how they connect with the relational paradigm (Schrodt et al., 2009), socio-cultural perspective (Davis, 2003) and systemcentrism (Robertson, 1999a) discussed in the education section of the literature review (see 2.2.1). However, this only shows up strongly because it is a collection from across the interviews. This doesn't mean that it isn't necessarily true but rather that questions weren't asked about this and so the comments are limited.

It is intriguing to me that only two of the students expressed a general sense of the relevance of the student-trainer relationship to their learning to be counsellors. With my understanding from this research that would be something that I would now strongly emphasise, regardless of the seeming difficulty in proving it alongside all the other potential influences (Lowndes & Hanley, 2010).

While Robertson (1996) and I (reflective diary 11/3/2008) may talk of the soul of training and hooks (2003) sees it as a '*commitment to service*' (p. 83), none of the students gave any sense of expecting this kind of level of engagement.

6.2.3 Transferential/countertransferential relationship

While the working alliance and the real relationship might be experienced as safer than the transferential/countertransferential, the three modes of relationship, previously explored in the client-counsellor section of the literature review, tend to work in an inter-related way (Gelso, 2009b). This way of viewing the counselling student-trainer relationship is helpful in exploring the complexity of the relationships between former counselling students and trainers. My relationship with Philippa in particular (see 4.3.6.7) illustrates the complex interplay of the three modes of relationship and how they change over time.

Watkins (2011) notes that, unlike research on the working alliance and transference/countertransference relationship, *'after a century of psychotherapy supervision, any mention whatsoever of real relationship phenomena is absent'* (p. 99). Similarly Gelso (2009a) considered it was the 'real' relationship within therapy that seemed to be hidden by the preponderance of research on the working alliance and transference/countertransference relationship. In contrast, through this research, I realised that for me it was the transference/countertransference relationship that was more hidden. While I am well aware that each person has a different experience of the same classroom (Perry, 1988), and we read meanings into the actions of the others (Brookfield, 2006), it was still a shock to discover the enormous impact of our previous experiences on how we relate with each other. I can now see why Robertson (1999b) identified more than 350 items in the college teaching and transference literature.

I attribute my emphasis on the real relationship and working alliance to my training as a Person Centred therapist and my reading of Rogers' (1989) which left me with a perception that transference and countertransference are dissolved by the real relationship and therefore do not need much attention. Indeed this is in keeping with Watkins (2011), talking of supervision, who regards the real relationship as *'touching, supporting, and strengthening the alliance and providing the safe container for and reality antidote to transference-countertransference manifestations'* (p. 110). Perhaps I have assumed this is a quicker process than it sometimes might be.

An important point, obvious to me and yet understood now much more profoundly, is that the trainer's offering of a working alliance and real relationship does not mean that the student will receive it, or at least will not fully receive it. For some this may evoke the question McCullough (2009) puts forward concerning counsellors offering of a real relationship: *'how useful is it if the patient cannot resonate to it?'* (p. 266). What we have seen here however is that students' processing of their experience goes on even when they are not apparently receiving the offered relationship and beyond the end of the course.

In my student-trainer relationship with Philippa my own countertransference is owned. Its trigger in Philippa's response to me is noted as well as the resulting impact of my countertransference on Philippa. From this it is clear that using the theory of the simultaneous modes of relationship (Gelso, 2009b; Gelso & Carter, 1985) and identifying active elements for student and trainer could be very useful in training supervision to help to unravel complex relationships, such as this one, and the trainer thus be more able to offer a working alliance and real relationship.

6.3 Elements of the student-trainer relationship

6.3.1 Liking and favouritism

A strong connection was often cherished and a valued support to both students and trainers participating in the interviews. However, except for one student (Philippa 1:1 06), there was a taboo against trainers openly acknowledging these connections as that might lead to perceived, or actual, favouritism. This is reminiscent of the Harry Potter novels (Rowling, 1997) where speaking Voldemort's name was supposed to make something feared take form.

Both former students and trainers showed awareness that there were different qualities of connection between different trainers and students, but they did not usually go on to see this as favouritism.

Both former students and trainers (for example: Petra 1:1 04, Tara 2:1 02) mentioned that trainers giving some students more individual time could be viewed as favouritism. However, they both recognised that this was often a misperception as it was at the request of the student.

Trainers didn't want to use the word 'favourite', preferring 'liking' or 'connection'; however they acknowledge that these students did indeed get something extra from the others. Reflecting on this I can see a distinction between favouritism and potential obvious preferential treatment and the more subtle and relational differences that the trainers talked about. For Tara this was about '*that level of engagement, that level of care, that level of really prizing, that I can't make happen for everyone*' (2:1 02 Tara). There seems to be a very fine but important dividing line about what is preferential treatment and overt favouritism and what is about subtle, perhaps unavoidable, differences where there is strong, and usually undisclosed, connection. While Philippa (1:1 06) was unusual in wanting, and indeed feeling as if she needed, to know that she was a favourite others enjoyed a more subtle sense of special connection with their trainer (for example: Stuart 2:1 03, Samantha 2:1 02).

Linked to this is an important point that emerged in the discussion interviews about the perception of favouritism - it is only there if someone is looking for it and names it as such (see: Tara 2:1 02, Samantha 2:1 02, & Paul 1:1 08).

Trainers descriptions of what they connected with in students were both personal and related to seeing their potential as counsellors.

Knowing that one is a favourite can be discomfiting or enjoyable, or a mixture of the two; it may be avoided or actively sought. While favouritism tends to be focused on the student it is obviously also possible for one trainer to be favoured over another. I found it uncomfortable in one of the discussion interviews (Paula & Sandra 1:1 01) when Paula described some students' preference for me over my co-trainer. This was not in keeping with Berg, Skott & Danielson's (2007) finding that while nurse-patient relationships were unique they positively influenced patients' relationships with other nurses but rather meant that students were eager to work with me in preference to my colleague.

My discomfort was practical as well as personal, trainers need to work with all members of the group, gain their respect and support their learning. Having one trainer favoured over another is quite common in my experience and for the overall good of the group has to be managed effectively and minimised rather than being encouraged. My experience has also shown that while one might be more popular with one group you might be the less popular in another group and this helps to maintain a realistic sense of self and avoid the danger of grandiosity (Page, 1999).

6.3.2 Healing and nourishment

It is clear that some elements of the counselling student-trainer relationship can be healing and nourishing. In this context I am linking 'healing' particularly to students and 'nourishment' to trainers. Clarkson (1990) talks of a reparative mode of relationship, alongside the working alliance, real relationship, transference/countertransference and transpersonal, she discusses this as something that is actively offered by a therapist with reparative intent. In counselling training however healing or nourishment are things that I have regularly seen or experienced but never overtly offered or sought.

Several of the former students experienced elements of the training experience as healing. What is perhaps more surprising is how trainers can experience feeling nourished or having vicarious growth from their experiences with their students. Not surprising to trainers, such as me, who experience this but a surprise as there has been so little attention paid to this in the literature (Davis, 2003). Interestingly, at much the same time as I had been mulling on vicarious growth of the trainer (see 4.4.1) Ballinger (2012) was thinking very much the same thing as part of her research:

'The interpersonal nature of the [counselling trainer's] role provided a strong sense of reward and a consequent sense of personal growth and development for the trainers. My journal captured my attempts to describe this: I tried phrases such as 'vicarious excitement' and 'vicarious renewal' (p. 262).

The findings show that several of us former trainers talked of feeling nourished by our connections, spoken or unspoken, with particular students. As with Alexander and Charles (2009) study of social workers, it was often small and subtle behaviours of the students that revealed and fed the connection. This nourishment was experienced by some of the trainers not only personally but also as nourishing them in their role as trainer and as a result enhancing the whole group's experience. In the absence of nourishing relationships in a group training could be much harder. Despite these positive effects trainers expressed discomfort due to their ongoing responsibility to the whole group. However, focusing on the needs of the whole group without experiencing nourishment may be problematic, as one of Ballinger's (2012) participants found as she experienced disappearing into being everything to everyone. Trainers did not describe ever actively searching out these connections or their benefits but rather, as Alexander

and Charles (2009) found with social workers and Rosenblatt (2009) found with counsellors, they are a *'byproduct of the... relationship'* (Rosenblatt, 2009, pp. 170-171).

To acknowledge the student-trainer relationship as potentially healing of the one and nourishing of the other is to acknowledge that the relationship has an important, but little acknowledged, place in the course experience. Even where the expectation is for a functional relationship healing or nourishment may still occur as happened, for example, for Samantha (2:1 02). These findings show the relationship as potentially going far beyond being functional for student and trainer and much more something that is very important in itself (Howe, 1998).

6.3.3 Challenges in the student-trainer relationship

One of the most striking things that this research has to offer is an insight into how difficulties in the student-trainer relationship are experienced and worked with by both the counselling student and trainer. As far as I am aware no other research has explored this issue though there has been research into ruptures in the client-counsellor relationship (for example: Rennie, 1994, 2001; Safran, Samstag, Muran, & Stevens, 2001) and other relationships such as the social work student-instructor (Mishna & Rasmussen, 2001). The particular richness here is in the student and trainer exploring this together.

It is perhaps not surprising that none of the 2:1 interviews brought up difficulties in their relationships; in moderating their levels of vulnerability with each other, and me as researcher, the pairs were of people who had got on and felt sufficiently safe with one another. More than this though, they were also, because of the circumstances, perhaps more likely to explore the positive dimensions of their relationship, as Rennie (2001) had found in his study exploring clients experiences of their counsellors. Indeed in the first interview Teresa said that: *'one of the things I'm intrigued with is how are you [sic] going to get a couple where the relationship didn't work'* (2:1 01).

As I invited all 22 former students that I had finished working with 18 months previously I did not have the luxury or limitation of choosing only students whom I had got on well with. Of the eight that became conversational partners with me there was: one with whom I had consistently not got on well with (Petra 1:1 04); one with whom I had a good relationship but also two pivotal points (Rhodes et al., 1994) or relational turning points (Docan-Morgan, 2011) that I was aware of (Patrick 1:1 02); and one with whom there was a difficulty that I was not aware of until long after the course ended (Phoebe 1:1 07). The difficulties in the three relationships were for various reasons, including the result of *'not understanding... disagreement... shaking one's head... demand and challenge'* (Mearns & Schmid, 2006, p. 180) as well as lack of time to talk things through and *'ducking'* (Mearns, 1997) problems. This does not of course mean that all the other relationships were entirely positive but these three offer quite different examples with clear impact of particular difficulties. I was, and continue to be, deeply appreciative of their trust in me to accept my invitation to the discussion interviews and to participate so fully.

While the ideal would have been for each of the students and I to talk through the difficulties at the time, as has been found in the client-counsellor relationship (Bordin, 1979; Hill & Knox, 2009; Rhodes et al., 1994), we hadn't done so until these discussion interviews. Indeed much had been unspoken during the life of the course and, of this, I was unaware of quite a bit. While I was surprised at what I hadn't known this limited awareness of what students don't say is perhaps similar to Regan and Hill's (1992) findings that counsellors were only aware of 17% of the things unsaid by clients. Significant positive experiences of each other had also not been shared, unlike Regan and Hill's (1992) research that found that most of what clients didn't say was negative. The students did not reveal to me the difficulties and/or their impact, similarly, many clients choose not to disclose some of their experience to their counsellors as their '*way of protecting and fostering the alliance*' (Rennie, 1994, p. 435).

My experience of talking through these challenges with Petra (1:1 04), Patrick (1:1 02) and Phoebe (1:1 07) was sensitive, intimate and powerful. It strengthened and warmed our relationship, in keeping with Hill & Knox's (2009) findings that the client-counsellor relationship is strengthened by talking through difficulties. This has both increased my awareness and understanding of potential challenges but also given me more confidence and strength to encourage students to talk things through with me more thoroughly at the time. I assume that the training relationship is similar to the counselling relationship in that having a previous good relationship supports the ability to address difficulties (Hill & Knox, 2009). The challenge, as ever, is in carving out the time but the chief responsibility does lie with the trainer not to avoid things or duck the challenges that arise (Mearns, 1997); just as the responsibility lies with the counsellor in the client-counsellor relationship (Rennie, 1994).

I am fascinated and full of admiration that each of these students had particular difficulties with me but were also able to gain from working with me and at times actively sought me out, getting enough of a positive experience to benefit from working with me in some environments (Brookfield, 2006). They didn't seem to put aside or ignore the difficulties but hold them alongside the positives. While Frymier & Houser (2000) concluded that '*when a trusting and caring relationship develops between teachers and students, a safe learning environment is created*' (p. 217) these interviews reveal that this is far from something that is either there or not but is rather a matter of degree and context. Also, while some of the challenges were similar, for example two concerned marking, the students' reactions were very different with one experiencing being assessed not just for her learning but also as a person (Light et al., 2009) and another experiencing only their essay being assessed. While education research has shown that marking is generally a difficult area (Brookfield, 2006) we can see here that it also very much depends on the student's perception of marking.

Prior to undertaking this relational heuristic research I had never appreciated how someone could so actively avoid me in one setting and yet really enjoy me in another. Even when a student feels discounted and unseen they may still actively choose to work with a particular trainer that they still respect, and a student who admires and values a trainer may still choose to

avoid working with them. I'm not aware of research that has explored this and perhaps the relative unusualness of counselling training, where students and trainers regularly work in different types of groupings, has enabled it to become apparent. While the experience of only three students and one trainer have been particularly considered in relation to challenges in their relationship the value is in the detail and complexity of their shared experience that shows how there is no simple linear cause and effect but rather that potential challenges to the relationship are unique to each of us in the way we perceive and deal with them.

There is a great challenge as a trainer in realising so deeply that both accurate and inaccurate communication of liking, and not, is received by students seemingly regardless of my intent and actions. We do not have the luxury of knowing clearly what has been received by whom, though there will be some indication – which the trainer then will pick up more or less accurately. This lack of control is challenging for any trainer and I consider that all, and everything, we can do is to relate with respect, warmth and transparency, with students, being the person each of us is as best we can. The key factors for me are that I need to be able to answer to myself and to others for my ways of relating, and that I need to support myself to manage the responses of students – whether accurate or inaccurate.

6.3.4 Lesbian trainer

While there has been several pieces of research over the last two decades on the impact of both teachers and counsellors 'coming out' to students or clients (Jennings, 2010; Macgillivray, 2008; Russ et al., 2002) this is another unexplored area in the relatively small counselling training research literature.

As a Person Centred trainer, offering the core conditions as best I can, I regard it as a responsibility to find appropriate ways of disclosing that I am lesbian and avoiding assumptions of my heterosexuality (Moore & Jenkins, 2012). As Wright (1993) says: *'coming out is not a discussion of intimate sexual details, it is a discussion of identity.... Secrets also isolate and distance us from others, leading to inauthenticity in relationships.'* (p. 27).

I would be surprised if 'coming out' was not seen as a responsibility for gay and lesbian trainers, particularly on Person centred courses where authenticity is so important. This does not fit with O'Leary et al's (2012) traditional conceptualisation of professional boundaries but rather with their dynamic model, where personal details of the worker may be shared with the client (see 2.3.4).

'Coming out' makes a trainer vulnerable; just as what clients say remains confidential but what counsellors says isn't (Sweezy, 2005), so what the student says remains confidential to the training team but what the trainer says doesn't. While the trainer is in a vulnerable position I agree with Ballinger (2012) that overall it is the student's position, with the requirement for personal development, that is still the far more vulnerable one.

My 'coming out' is also supported by the requirement of students and peers to adhere to the BACP ethical framework (BACP, 2013) and work in a non-discriminatory way, though the counter of this is that discriminatory attitudes may go underground.

As Duncan, one of Jackson's (2008) research participants, found in sharing with his students that he was gay, so I experienced sharing being lesbian as enabling me to be fully present as a trainer and bring all of myself to the work. However, this is not straightforward as it was also noted that I shared less personally than some other trainers. This is a complex mix of 'simply' personal choice and perhaps some internalised homophobia – an expectation and discomfort that what I say will always be seen through the lens of the receiving person's attitude towards lesbians. This is in keeping with Moore and Jenkins (2012) findings in their UK research on gay and lesbian counsellors, several participants spoke of internalised homophobia – assuming that clients would think they wanted something sexual from them, would be prejudiced, or would dislike them if they came out to clients.

My former students didn't speak negatively about my being lesbian or coming out as lesbian and of course there may have been things that they were withholding. However, what they did say was rich and varied and did not uncover any reduction in my sense of credibility for them (Russ et al., 2002).

King et al's (2007) systematic review of the LGBT counselling research showed that a counsellor 'coming out' to a client was critically dependent on its relevance and the client's position in relation to it. The findings here are in keeping with that, for example: Phoebe (1:1 07) thought that having a lesbian trainer running the 'working with difference' module would mean we would cover the issues really well; Patricia (1:1 03) thought that it had helped her development as a counsellor as she no longer assumed people are heterosexual; and Paul (1:1 08) considered it as us having a shared experience of difference that he related to from his experience of disability.

The above fits well with Gates (2011) perspective, related to social work training, that '*Healthy self-disclosure in the classroom is good for teaching and good for our relationships with our students.*' (p. 72) but, as with so much of this research, the findings had more complex elements.

Evans and Barker (2010) found that one of the lesbian counselling clients in their study '*felt that she may compare herself unfavourably with a lesbian counsellor, making comparisons that would not be there with a heterosexual one*' (p. 383) and this links with Philippa's (1:1 06) magnified sense of inadequacy around me. However, just as Philippa was aware of her response and worked actively on it so did their research participant: '*I see that as part of the transferential process and therefore a useful part of the therapy, (P60, female)*' (Evans & Barker, 2010, p. 383). As the setting of my research was not the one to one of counselling but rather the group setting of counselling training my coming out also impacted Philippa (1:1 06) in other ways.

Both Philippa (1:1 06) and Petra (1:1 04) were lesbians (in different training groups) and found that my coming out supported their own presence and sense of legitimacy in the group, just as school students in Macgillvray's (2008) study had.

Alongside this however was Petra's (1:1 04) other response, to 'neutralise' her knowledge of me being lesbian as she considered herself in a heterosexual environment. Petra was clear that her behaviour was different in a heterosexual environment than in a lesbian environment, different and less secure. There is an apparent paradox here, Petra both feeling more present and legitimate as a lesbian in the group due to my being openly lesbian and her sense of neutralising her knowledge of me being lesbian. Both Philippa (1:1 06) and Petra (1:1 04) had complex responses to us being lesbian and it would be a useful area for further research.

While 'coming out' can be a benefit for trainer and students alike it is clear that it is not straightforwardly so and the complexities of their experience are important. As yet we still know little about this and so this is an important, though very small, addition to our knowledge.

6.4 Methodology and Methods

6.4.1 Consistency and ethics

Undertaking the journey towards relational heuristic research and the methods of 2:1 and discussion interviews between former students and trainers has been daunting, challenging and exciting and a following of my 'tacit' knowledge (Polanyi, 1962), just as West (2011) said was possible. The interviews have been set up and carried out with care for the wellbeing of all participants and ethical practice while other aspects of the process, before and after, have necessitated me to relinquish a sense of conscious control. This was essential for finding the best way of carrying out the research and work with the data has needed time to emerge. Attempts to understand and control the research have at times led to feelings of being overwhelmed, helpless, and useless. As a relatively new researcher my confidence in what has evolved is tempered by an uncomfortable sense of audacity as I have adapted heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990), a well respected methodology, and used methods seemingly not used before in the counselling field of interviewing former students and trainers together. I am encouraged that my thinking is part of a broader movement towards increased emphasis on relational reflexivity and relational ethnography, the essence of the latter being: '*speaking reflexively and dialogically about and from within relationships.*' (Simon, 2013).

Following this journey has resulted in consistency between my underlying assumption of reciprocal influence between student and trainer, the methods used and the methodology and resulted in rich and complex findings. While utilising my heuristic journey as the core running through I have, as Thompson and Walker (1982) recommend, also retained the sense of the dyads and not fallen at the last hurdle:

'Data analysis is often the final and fatal snag in much of the current dyadic research. Two major weaknesses exist: data from both members of the pair are aggregated rather than reflecting the pattern between people; and the conceptual underpinnings of the constructed relationship pattern are not clear' (p. 892).

The consistency has continued through the data analysis to the writing of this thesis and invitation to you the reader to engage with this theme and undergo your own process in relation to it.

The interviews were not passive or objective, they were intimate, subjective and interpersonal – definitely *'interventions'* (Patton, 2002, p. 405). Interviewing the pair together was crucial for exploring reciprocal influence but it also brought up some ethical concerns. I shared the kind of response a student had to Ellis (2007) writing about her mother: *'I don't feel right reading about your mother when she doesn't know you've written about her.'* (p. 3). With conversational partners sharing with each other there would be no surprises later. Interviewing together does of course carry the challenge that some conversational partners might not feel comfortable sharing some things with the other (Hertz, 1995) and my stance is that if something cannot be shared with each other then they should not be shared in a thesis or other work.

In the discussion interviews, far from a sense of withholding, we have seen how former students who did not have strongly positive relationships with myself volunteered to participate and together we engaged in intimate, sensitive, and deeply congruent sharing about the challenges and positives in our relationships and how this impacted us.

'I feel deeply moved that together these former students and I have been able to share so contactfully and deeply. Of course I don't know what they still hold back, just as they don't know what I might have held back, what we did share though has a depth of contact and sense of realness and mutual respect and so for me carries weight and validity.' (reflective diary 11/5/2010).

This new shared understanding, and the process towards it, meant that we felt closer, and more empathic of ourselves and each other.

Though there had been some concern that in research such as this the conversational partners might overexpose themselves (Patton, 2002) none of the conversational partners expressed this and no one asked for any parts, beyond other people's names, to be excluded from the thesis. Interviewing both together also enabled the conversational partners to develop a coherent 'story' of their reciprocal influence which meant that my role as researcher didn't involve the ethical challenge of deciding how to make sense of differences between separate interviews, as Hertz (1995) experienced in her study of spouses.

Participants were all trained counsellors, had previously engaged in personal therapy and were in regular supervision. While a couple of interviews left participants with uncomfortable feelings to work through there was an expectation, as with Ballinger's (2012) research on counselling

trainers, that they would be able to cope with the impact of what emerged in the interview and were also offered ongoing support, though none took this up.

2:1 and discussion interviews both present potential challenges to the researcher who is also a conversational partner. I needed to hold each perspective fully in order to engage effectively with the other conversational partner(s) and to ensure that we stayed on track and sufficiently safe. I found this positioning to be comfortable and familiar; as a trainer and counsellor I am used to using 'self as tool' (Combs, 1969), offering aspects of myself in the service of those I am working with whilst also carrying out the tasks of trainer or counsellor.

6.4.2 Power and equality

As Brookfield (2006) points out:

'I know that as the teacher I always have power in the classroom and that I can never be a fly on the wall withering away to the point that students don't notice I'm in the room' (p. 36).

Alongside this Kvale (2006) notes that utilising interviews in qualitative research '*has often been regarded as a democratic emancipating form of social research*' (p. 480) but he considers that actually '*power is everywhere*' (p. 495) with interviews often being one-way, ruled by the interviewer, and the interviewer having the monopoly of how the interview is interpreted. These are both compelling reasons to consider power in relation to my interviewing the former students and trainers together.

The interviews here have offered something to the participants, a rare conversation into the student-trainer relationship; each participant was encouraged to bring their own queries to the discussion and participants have reported gaining personally from their experience of the interviews and in terms of their relationships with each other. However, the purpose of the interviews has been my research, I have guided the interviews, however lightly, and have chosen what to include here and how to interpret that.

In the 2:1 interview power is also relevant between the former student and trainer. Tara (2:1 02), for example, following the interview, monitored what she said and had some discomfort with elements of both what she did share and chose not to share. While I didn't experience this as strongly as Tara I was conscious of being very sensitive of how I asked questions and shared my experience with former students, especially where the relationship had not run smoothly. The former student and former trainer relationship remains '*asymmetrical*' (Berg et al., 2007, p. 100) and some former trainers were conscious of a residual sense of responsibility towards the former student, other students and trainers on the course, and the organisation.

The former students in the 2:1 interviews didn't talk about feeling responsible for their impact on the trainer and so it is perhaps not surprising that the four who returned post-interview reflective emails (Sue 2:1 01; Samantha 2:1 02; Stuart 2:1 03; Sean 2:1 05) all expressed a sense of

equality of power, at least at times, during the interview. This can perhaps be attributed to the subtlety with which the trainers manage and offer themselves so that after the course, and the end of the trainer's involvement with assessment, equality can be experienced while the trainers may also be managing what they say and ask. Of course this doesn't mean the former students don't also monitor what they are saying, we all monitor what we say in different contexts, but there was no report of this and no sense of them monitoring from a sense of responsibility towards their former trainer.

6.4.3 What was gained?

The question that has to be explored in any innovation of methodology and methods is - what was gained that could not have been by using current methodology and methods? Including interviews in heuristic research is usual and was consistently an important part of Moustakas' methodology (Moustakas, 1961/1989, 1990; Sela-Smith, 2001, 2002). What is innovative here is the adaptation to relational heuristic research and the type of interviews used - 2:1 and discussion interviews between pairs of former counselling students and trainers.

Overall I agree with Racher et al (2000) that for this research

'The trustworthiness of the study is dependent on the use of the conjoint interview. If single-participant interviews were conducted, much of this information may not have been available.' (p. 376).

The purpose of the interviews was to deepen my heuristic process and enrich it with the addition of other experiences and the findings show that this was achieved as well as the value of the other participants voices and experiences having great value in their own right.

The combination of former student and trainer was essential to tap the actual reciprocal influence of one on the other, it is the opposite of separate simultaneous interviews that are intended to actively *'disrupt the couple's collective memory of events and feelings'* (Hertz, 1995, p. 436). Exploring the conversational partners' experience of each other together meant the reciprocal influence could be corroborated. While accurate in some ways the word 'corroborated' is too static and solid. Talking together revealed the surprises about what had not been known before, prompted forgotten shared experiences, and only through talking together could the reciprocal influence be truly known to each, only then could the complex ramifications of each scenario be taken further forward and made sense of. This knowledge and experience could not have been gained on my own or by interviewing people separately.

Having discussion interviews with my former students was an even more profound experience, so much emerged that I, and my former students, knew little or nothing about before. It would have been impossible to get to the depths of understanding I have reached without their active participation. With their engagement I have, at least partially, achieved my aim of becoming more naked and known to myself (see 3.3.2 Emperor's new clothes analogy).

West (2010) applies the Johari window (Luft & Ingham, 1955) to qualitative research interviews and one of his tables is adapted here for the 2:1 and discussion interviews:

While West (2010) considers that the bottom right section is the one that is the real challenge for the researcher to gather, in this research all the sections have significance – along with clarifying what lies where. Some memories of events and ways of relating to and perceiving each other were known about and agreed (A) while some were not known by one or the other (B & C) and there were other things that were only remembered for one of them in the discussion (B/C to A). There is also another layer at work here as the ‘knower’ in B/C at times thought that they were talking about things that the other also knew i.e. thought they were in A. It was only through sharing A, B, and C that some D emerged and so moved to A.

<p>A</p> <p>Already known to both student and trainer but important to confirm this knowledge</p>	<p>B</p> <p>Known to trainer but not to student</p>
<p>C</p> <p>Known to student but not to trainer</p>	<p>D</p> <p>Not known to either</p>

Figure 8: Adaptation of Johari Window as used by West (2010).

The marker for when something has not been in the area expected has been surprise, and this has been present in all of the interviews: in one jogging the others memory, in what was remembered and what was not, in the putting into words things that were barely known by one or either, and in the fresh revelations to the self of each as well as to the other.

While the traditional perspective of the interviewer is of a dispassionate researcher without strong personal links to the interview issues this has changed over the last twenty years or so and interviews are now often seen as ‘inter views’ (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) involving both interviewee and interviewer who are both active participants (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995), ‘engaged in the mutual construction of meaning’ (Mills, 2001, p. 285). It is these ‘interactive interviews [that] offer opportunities for self-conscious reflection by researchers as well as respondents.’ (Ellis & Berger, 2001, p. 852). We are also seeing more interviewing where the researcher/interviewer has strong personal connections to the material being explored and using methodologies for these studies that include narrative and heuristic methods (for example: Ellis & Berger, 2001). In these types of studies the importance of the researcher being transparent about their own link to the research is emphasised. In this research my link to the theme, and my transparency, have been apparent at every stage, with conversational partners and in this thesis. The impact of all of the interviews and the extensive process around them has culminated in the creative synthesis of the last chapter and, in quite a different form, the summary of learning in the next section.

7. TRANSFORMATION AND SUMMARY OF LEARNING

As with Etherington (2004) *'during this study I have been moved, surprised, excited, curious, and transformed by what people told me'* (p. 9) but more importantly by what we created together as conversational partners. *'This is what can happen, at best, in community with others. I have also been troubled, anxious, angry, doubtful and bored at times, and wondered why on earth I started down this road. But I have learned from all of this.'* (Etherington, 2004, p. 9).

In his later life Akeret (1995) travelled to visit several of his former clients because of his sense that: *'There is one awful frustration built into being a psychotherapist: I never know how the story ends. ... Yet my frustration runs far deeper than that. After devoting my entire adult life to helping people examine and change their lives, I don't really know if I have been effective.'* (pp. 15-16). There is something of his journey in mine; it has been a journey to explore how I have influenced others and how they have influenced me. I have particularly discovered that I have falsely assumed that other elements of my person and role have not carried the same power and variety of responses from others as my being lesbian was likely to have.

In this journey I have gained a much broader and deeper understanding of what helped and hindered our relationships and our mutual learning and growing, and I know so much more about myself. This learning has, in the way of heuristic research (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990; Sela-Smith, 2001, 2002), transformed me. Not in grand ways that others will find obvious but deeply within me and summarised in the best ways I am able to in my creative synthesis (see chapter 5) and summary of learning (see table 10). My journey has not only been at the cognitive level but, equally importantly, experientially and for each it has been essential to include former students and trainers. The process of achieving deeper and deeper understanding is described vividly by Heaney (1980):

'Usually you begin by dropping the bucket half way down the shaft and winding up a taking of air. You are missing the real thing until one day the chain draws unexpectedly tight and you have dipped into water that will continue to entice you back. You'll have broken the skin of the pool of yourself. (Heaney 1980a, p. 47)'
(Bolton, 2010, p. 91).

In meeting former students and trainers and exploring ourselves together, in the 'felt shifts' (Gendlin, 1978) of linking this experience with theoretical concepts, and in all the connections made in the process of writing up this thesis I have gradually transformed.

I have not always stayed with the intensity of the journey, often having long stretches of time away from it over the six years as well as doing presentations on some of the research findings from a more phenomenological than heuristic perspective (see appendices 12-14). While these might be viewed as 'avoidance' by Sela-Smith (2001, 2002) I would dispute this. Sometimes I was too close to what I was doing; I was seeing and experiencing the grain of the wood and

needed to also see the trees, I needed to step back to get more perspective. New awarenesses often came when I wasn't focused on the detail and was 'mulling', for example on a journey by public transport, at breakfast, when half watching television. I agree with Moustakas (1961/1989, 1990) that this wasn't avoiding but rather trusting my own process. Sometimes it was by apparently leaving the work that I would gain my greatest shifts in it. A deep trust in this process is one of the elements of my transformation; I no longer strive with difficult decisions, tangling myself in them even more. Instead I move back and wait, trusting that new insights will emerge from within.

The last six years have been a huge learning curve in so many ways and it is a challenge to encapsulate my learning about reciprocal influence in words. My creative synthesis may be too ephemeral and poetic for some to find directly helpful and so I offer another mode of expression, a summary of my learning. The challenge here is that the words seem to deaden and flatten the depth and richness of the learning and may make it appear simplistic and trite. The reader may respond with the 'so what, I already know all that' that is my most dreaded response to my work. It is only when the words are received in the context of all that comes before that they have life and richness. I hesitate to share my learning in this way as I must entrust this task to you, the reader, and the degree to which you do that will determine the degree to which you really see me and this work of mine; I am vulnerable and dependent on you.

The best way I can express my learning is offered in the table below. De Vito (1986) developed a list of important skills for teachers to develop in their relationships with students, assuming their general applicability while emphasising the uniqueness of each relationship. My stance here is to offer my summary of learning as something personal to me that may, at least in part, have a more general applicability. I have therefore chosen to use 'I' in each statement and I encourage you, the reader, to consider how each statement resonates for you, to weigh it up or try it for size.

1. We, students and trainers, perceive and respond to each other in different ways because of who we are; what is important is our openness to working on how we influence others and they influence us, and to supporting others to do this;
2. Our relationship is important in helping students develop as counsellors, its value will be much greater if we explicitly acknowledge this;
3. We are each responsible for respecting ourselves and each other, for reaching out to each other, and to engage with each other; as trainer I have more responsibility to both do this and support students to do this;
4. Students have really different expectations of me as a trainer and of their relationship with me and this will impact hugely how they relate to me and experience me;
5. Students can't always take in what I want them to learn, but that shouldn't stop me offering the learning in different ways that they might find more accessible;
6. Managing offering the core conditions as best I can at any moment and being a trainer in an educational context is tricky but not impossible; I need to work on how they can fit better, not how they can clash more;
7. Being myself in a considerate and real way helps others to be more real;
8. As a trainer, my sharing being lesbian can give presence and legitimacy to others who are lesbian or gay; conversely, the presence of lesbian and gay students nourishes me, though I won't necessarily get on with them more or less than other students;
9. When I feel a strong connection with a student I often pull back from them to check out the substance of that connection, this might be felt as a rejection or a pressure to the student so I need to be sensitive to this;
10. Relationships are complicated and there are rarely simple answers to anything about them;
11. Time is always a scarce resource but taking time to get to know students and have them get to know me will really help our mutual satisfaction and learning;
12. Students can only tell me what they are aware of and they will only tell me what they feel safe enough to tell me;

13. Not everything can be dealt with, there isn't always enough time and it can feel too risky or painful; this has to be okay;
14. Some things can be dealt with and I need to monitor when I might avoid this and get support from myself and peers to face my anxieties and act;
15. Students, and I, will adapt behaviour to keep safe enough, with the degree of self-challenge that can be handled - I need to trust in this process but not be complacent about my role in stimulating growth;
16. I need to provide a safe enough context for challenges to be able to be met; aim to be a 'safe base' while knowing that for some people I will only be safe at a distance;
17. However safe the secure base feels risk is still risk; I need to be sensitive to how this is different for different people in different contexts;
18. Distance and closeness aren't always good indicators of what someone thinks of me or how visible we are to each other;
19. I can't make everything okay however much I want to be able to;
20. Is my heart still in my work? If not, why am I doing it and should I be?
21. The more self-aware I am the better, the more I am aware of how others experience me the better, the more open I am to continue learning about myself the better - life is a journey not a destination.

Table 10: Summary of Learning

8. CONCLUDING CHAPTER – AN ONGOING JOURNEY

8.1 Introduction

As with any heuristic process, it is never truly finished and cannot be switched off as the thesis comes to a close. Indeed it would be regrettable if it did as this continuing process is what will support me to take forward my research, fulfilling the purpose of research by disseminating it and offering it to others. This offering to others is in itself about reciprocal influence with proposed articles, presentations, workshops, and perhaps a book, all inviting others to connect with, and respond to, this research.

Purposefully and actively exploring this theme in a relationally heuristic way with a variety of people from a range of geographical locations and therapeutic orientations, as well as with some of my former students, has been invaluable, illuminating, and productive in enabling me to develop as a trainer, and person, as well as offering an addition to a still meagre stock of counselling training related research.

Here I explore the strengths and limitations of the research, its implications, its impact on me, and then end this part of my journey.

8.2 Strengths and limitations of the research

8.2.1 Relevance and trustworthiness

A fundamental way of considering the strength of a piece of research is to consider its relevance. Hamersley (2008) sees this as having two elements: the importance of the topic and the contribution of the conclusions to existing knowledge. The former is an interesting point, while brief comment has been made of the importance of the counselling student-trainer relationship it is only with Smith's (2011) recent work on this relationship from the perspective of students that it has been given more prominence. No work has previously been carried out that has explored the reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers and there are several reasons why this might be, for example: the focus of interest is the learning of the student and so reciprocal influence is not deemed important enough to study; or, there is a recognition of its importance but an uncertainty of how to explore reciprocal influence as it requires methods not usually used within counselling research. I have assumed the latter and believe that this research also offers something to the former in how former students have explored how their trainer has impacted their learning. I believe that this research also meets Hammersley's (2008) second element – contributing to existing knowledge – this is explored more in 8.3.

A second way of considering the strength of a piece of research is in its trustworthiness. Williams and Morrow (2009) put forward three categories that they consider qualitative research should attend: data integrity, a balance between reflexivity and subjectivity, and clear communication of the findings.

Data integrity is in its size and quality and how the data and its interpretation fit together (Williams & Morrow, 2009). As qualitative research using 14 interviews between former students and trainers was, like Ballinger's 16, '*ambitious*' (2012, p. 290), yet it is also a small number on which to base any meaningful findings. This may be even more so as they included two types of interview: six 2:1 interviews with me interviewing former student and trainer together, and eight discussion interviews with me as participant/researcher with my own former students. However, I am clear that the findings I offer are unique to each person and pair, and that my creative synthesis and summary of learning are personal to me. Unique and yet also offered to the reader and wider to be resonated with your own experience and knowledge. In this resonating I believe that many elements of these findings will find confirmation and validation.

The quality of the data is in the quality of the discussions within these in-depth interviews between former student and trainer and the subsequent liberal and lengthy use of parts of the transcripts in the findings chapter. While this may occasionally feel tedious to the reader they are there to give examples of how the discussion unfolded and the interplay between conversational partners, showing its richness and complexity and the active participation of each.

Data integrity is also in how the data and its interpretation fit together and it is the reader who must determine this. What I have done is attempt to communicate the findings clearly, the third of Williams & Morrow's (2009) categories, and show their links with the literature along with the impact on me through my creative synthesis and summary of learning. As well as communicating what I found they also emphasise the importance of showing why this matters, fitting with Hammersley's (2008) contribution to existing knowledge and explored more fully in 8.3.

Their (Williams & Morrow, 2009) second category is an effective balance between reflexivity and subjectivity – between what participants say and the interpretations of the researcher. This is particularly important to consider here because of my dual role in the discussion interviews of being participant/researcher. I believe that I have achieved a suitable balance, moving from one position to another with fluidity and ease due to my long experience as a counselling trainer and counsellor and so avoiding '*putting the personal self so deeply back into the text that it completely dominates*' (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994, p. 578). The writing up of the research has included deeply personal revelations and shifts, often but not always, from my reflective diary. This diary became a piece of data that my researcher self explored and picked out from in much the same way as I did from the interview transcripts. Whilst I consider the balance of reflexivity and subjectivity fitting to this research whether the reader does or not will depend, at least in part, in your own expectations of how this balance is, or should be, expressed in research.

8.2.2 Limitations of the research

As with any research there will always be limitations in any study undertaken. What is important is our awareness of this and transparency about it. Here I offer my thinking on possible limitations of the research.

As this research considers a theme not previously explored in counselling training research, the reciprocal influence of students and trainers, there are no other directly comparable studies to compare the findings with. Added to this, there was a relatively small number of participants – 20 of us, with an emphasis on my deeply personal heuristic experience. Six pairs of former student and trainer were interviewed together and there were eight interviews between myself and my former students. These types of interviews do not seem to have been undertaken before in the counselling field and, while the interviews provided rich data it is unclear what was not said in this setting that might have been in a more traditional interview. As Katz (2002) queried regarding his father-son interviews, the participants might not tell the truth, try *'to put on a good show or say what they thought I wanted to hear'* (p. 17). As a result the findings might be taken with more caution or skepticism than would have been otherwise and be less generalisable than a bigger study. In addition there are ethical concerns that arise in interviewing two people together, especially when the subject is their relationship with each other. The added dimension of some interviews having me as participant/researcher brings up further potential ethical issues. While I consider that I have reflected on this effectively, taking care of all of us and keeping communication open and clear it may well be that others still have concerns about some elements of the ethics of these types of interviews.

As is common with qualitative research far more data was gathered than could ever be included and it has been a painful challenge to decide what to include when so much must be left out. The choice of a relational heuristic methodology and the following of my experiential sense of what was most important to stay with, focus on, and leave, means that other researchers would in all likelihood have made different choices. This can be expressed as a limitation but is also a fact, to a greater or lesser extent, of all research, especially qualitative.

Taken at a meta level, it may be that the reader will see nothing interesting or unexpected in the findings. In order to show the quality of the interviews, and thus the data, I have included in the findings some lengthy chunks of transcript. For some people this will be received negatively, fitting with Williams & Morrow's (2009) finding that:

'Even within the counseling and psychotherapy research community, there exists a subtle and lingering concern that qualitative research provides merely a collection of anecdotes and has not firmly established its scientific grounding.' (p. 576).

As a relatively new researcher I have developed relational heuristic research as a modification of Moustakas' (1990) heuristic research and while using the commonly used method of in-depth

semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1996; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) the types I have used do not seem to have been used before in the counselling field. While I have shown the development towards these and the integral link between them and the research subject it still remains that this is a lot to manage. When all aspects of something are new and the researcher is also relatively new to the task I would expect some weaknesses to be present. To me everything seems essentially sound and I am pleased with this, the reader may see weaknesses that I cannot.

8.3 Contribution of this research

8.3.1 The personal and the universal

Taken at a meta level much of what has been uncovered within the interviews and my experiential process may not come as a surprise, and may even have been expected. This does not reduce the importance of this piece of research. I cannot imagine anyone thinking other than that students and trainers do have an impact on each other; that while that might to some extent be expressed, much of it will be unspoken; that at least some of the unspoken will be received by the other; and that there will be some errors in their assumptions and what they 'receive'. To find what was expected is to find something. To find something that was expected is to reassure ourselves that our assumptions had validity and were on the right track. This is of great importance in our ongoing work with each other as students and trainers.

At a micro level the wealth of detail expressed within the interviews and in my journal could not have been foreseen and it is this that provides the richness of thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) showing the ultimate uniqueness of each relationship (Martin, 2002).

This research is about counselling students and trainers in relationship and helps build on, and move broader than, Rosenblatt's (2009) call:

'We need research on therapists, not only to build on the very substantial literature we have on therapists as therapists, but also on therapists as humans' (p. 179).

We need to know more about the experience of counselling students and trainers, to hear their voices and take account of them and this research is an important part of that.

This is a work of passion (Moustakas, 1990) and exuberance (Jamison, 2005); as with all heuristic research, it is a very personal piece of work (Moustakas, 1961/1989, 1990; Sela-Smith, 2001; 2002). This, along with the relatively small number of conversational partners involved, means that there is no certainty that the findings of this research have wider applicability however:

'it would be pointless to do research if findings were considered to be completely ungeneralizable. Qualitative research therefore often adopts what we might call a 'common-sense view of generalizability such that the reader is left to make up his or her own mind as to how far the evidence collected in a specific study can be transferred to offer information about the same topic in similar settings.' (Elliott, 2005, p. 26).

I am of the same view as many others in believing that what is most personal is often most universal (Moustakas, 1990; Nouwen, 1972/2006; Rogers, 1961) and indeed it is this premise that underpins the value of so much qualitative research.

8.3.2 What this research contributes

At a basic level, this research adds to the still small body of knowledge of counselling training-related research (McLeod, 1998; Timulak, 2008). Specifically, it adds to recent research that does consider, to a greater or lesser extent, the relationship between counselling students and trainers (Ballinger, 2012; Smith, 2011). However, this is the only research that has explored the reciprocal influence of counselling student and trainer, and has not only interviewed both former students and trainers but interviewed them together. This research has invited the voices of both former counselling students and trainers, voices that have been heard very little up to now. It confirms that there is reciprocal influence and it can be important in our relationships and highlights the need for more research in the area of the counselling student and trainer relationship while providing a starting place.

While this research included a small number of conversational partners these findings show the importance of what the individual brings to their course and the relationships within it. Lengthy transcript pieces and reflection on the interviews show the complexity of reciprocal influence and its varied impact in the same person and between one person and another. We have seen how much has been unspoken and how that unspoken can still be received by the other in subtle ways but can also be misinterpreted, each having long lasting consequences.

The dearth of comparable research into the experience of counselling student and trainer is very apparent and while research into the relationship between school children and teachers, and students and lecturers in further and higher education, has been carried out they have not explored the relationship in such a deep and intimate way nor with a view to reciprocal influence. This research reveals the limits of research that only looks at the impact of one person on another and then stops. It also reveals the limits of research that explores only one theme and misses the complexity of each person's responses to another. This complex interweaving cycle of reciprocal influence would be impossible to discover without having interviewed the two people together with a stance of open curiosity.

Along with the broader issue of reciprocal influence this research offers some more specific and important findings, for example, how the experience of having an 'out' lesbian trainer impacts students, the various impacts of marking on counselling students, liking and favouritism in the student-trainer relationship.

In order to explore the theme effectively I have critiqued and adapted Moustakas' (1990) heuristic research, via Sela-Smith's (2001, 2002) adaptation of heuristic self-search inquiry and into my own adaptation of relational heuristic research. This methodology can be used as it is or be adapted by other researchers. My daring to make this adaptation may also give confidence to others who find that the methodologies that currently exist do not fit sufficiently for their research.

The use of 2:1 and discussion interviews appear to be new in the area of counselling research and their use here offers alternative ways of carrying out interviews. I consider that this research has shown that they were invaluable in this research and I believe that they can have an important role in future research when used specifically to explore relationships. Also, while four of the interviews were unique to former student and trainer, two of the 2:1 interviews involved the same trainer and all eight of the discussion interviews involved me as the trainer. Together these provided variety across 14 students' experience of six trainers, along with the wealth of data gained from the varied experiences of eight students with me as trainer. If there had been enough capacity in the thesis I could also have looked more closely at similarities and differences in Sean (2:1 05) and Sara's (2:1 06) experiences of Tessa (2:1 05 & 06).

While the specific findings of this research are individual, and the degree of resonance each reader has with them will vary, there is much that this research can directly contribute to counselling training. These contributions will support students and trainers to work with more awareness and effectiveness with the complexity of their reciprocal influence. This has the primary aim of supporting the development of the student as a counsellor, but will also add to the satisfaction, enjoyment, and personal development of each. As we have seen, the role of trainer was already understood as complex and challenging (Ballinger, 2012; Johns, 1998b; Mearns, 1997; Thomas, 1998) and if anything these findings reveal even more complexity and challenge. Counselling trainers are already well aware of needing to effectively manage their relationships with students, however the detailed findings here will deepen their appreciation of the complexity and individuality of these relationships and the impact it can have on trainers. Vicarious growth is emphasised, while the challenge of the trainer role is also clear, and the findings affirm the need for trainers to have training supervision. Trainers may, for example, usefully explore their countertransference responses to particular students, noting the impact of this on the relationship and on the student, and work on reducing this while increasing what they offer in terms of working alliance and real relationship (Gelso, 2009b; Gelso & Carter, 1985).

In this research trainers have a resource for making overt to students the potential complexities and impact of their reciprocal relationships. Linking this to their development as students and counsellors gives greater impetus and responsibility on each person to work on their relationships with each other. This is of course not straightforward as some of the trainers' responses to students may not be appropriate to share, as the former students themselves stated in relation to potential favouritism. It may be more appropriate to find ways of supporting students to share more about their experiences of the course and the trainers, followed by trainers finding ways of responding both honestly and with consideration for the whole group. This is one argument for not having separate personal development group facilitators from the core trainers, as is traditional.

Current counselling students may feel more empowered by reading these findings, both to explore what they are bringing into their relationships with their trainers but also in exploring their reciprocal influence with trainers themselves. This research can be seen as an invitation to students:

'we cannot possibly know enough to effectively and competently facilitate learning for all persons enrolled in our classes. Therefore, we must implicitly invite students, supervisees, and clients to teach us how to most effectively work with them.'

(Magnuson & Norem, 2002, p. 170).

Former counselling students, and indeed trainers, may find this research helps to make sense of some of the events, feelings and processes that went on during their course(s) and give them examples that help them to reflect on their own part in this.

This research also offers a resource for those considering starting counselling training or interested in becoming a counsellor trainer. For each it can provide greater awareness of some of what may emerge for them during this process. It can also be used to support self-reflection prior to starting. This would improve their psychological readiness and give them a greater sense of responsibility and agency for their part in student-trainer relationships.

Broader than the individuals is the counselling course and its curriculum. From this research it is clear that course reviews need to consider how the student-trainer relationship is built into a course, and how effective this is. We need to note Redmond & Sorrell's (1996) finding that caring was being squeezed out of nurse education and Brown's (2011) finding that caring was not always effectively designed into curricular.

As a counselling trainer and course developer I can see the wealth of material within this thesis that can be directly used, with appropriate support and gentle challenge, in trainer supervision and counselling course sessions. I offer some examples in table 11 for course sessions. Some examples may be more relevant on an individual basis with students, for example, Penny's experience of finishing ready to start could be useful when working with a student who doesn't seem to be really connecting with the course.

Table 11: Potential Course Sessions

1. Take different examples from the findings section that have particular relevance, for example:
 - a. The summary of Philippa and Sandra's relationship.
 - b. The different examples of how students responded to marking.
 - c. Examples of what students brought from their past relationships into the course and relationship with trainers and the impact of this.
 - d. The example of Petra and Sandra talking through the difficulties in their relationship and coming to new understandings.
2. Consider the following questions (more specific ones can usefully be added for each of the above):
 - a. What is your initial response to reading this?
 - b. What parts of it do you particularly connect with?
 - c. How does this affect how you are in the different parts of the course and with your trainers?
 - d. How might you be able to work on this more effectively? What might get in the way of you doing this and what would support you?
 - e. What will you do differently as a result of working through this?
 - f. From all of that, what links can you make to you as a developing counsellor?

Note: the impact of these sessions should be that students request time to talk with trainers and time must be made available for this.

Further contributions of this research will emerge in different forms as I present and publish papers, and perhaps a book, based on this. This is a piece of research that, in its different elements, easily lends itself to being directly used as part of counselling training for the benefit of both students and trainers.

8.3.3 Recommendations & Future research

As befits the methodology the findings have been explored in different ways, they are: presented in the findings chapter, offered in my poetic creative synthesis, compared with the literature in the discussion, and offered in my transformation and summary of learning, as well as being evaluated in this concluding chapter. There is richness in these different forms of expression and perspectives on the research and they will speak, to greater or lesser degrees, from one reader to another and to different aspects within each reader. I recommend that each reader consider what fits for them or not, is helpful to them or not, helps them explore their own relationships more, or not.

What I would not want to happen is that my work is taken and made into particular procedures for trainers to follow. Procedures and guidelines, the focus of much social work literature on the client-practitioner relationship (Mishna & Rasmussen, 2001), is the antipathy of what this work is about.

While this research is explored through my Person Centred lens I believe that it is relevant beyond this context. I expect that at least some parts of my findings will resonate with counselling students and trainers from any theoretical orientation, whether currently training or having done so previously. It may also be of interest to those considering training as counsellors or becoming counselling trainers, helping them to prepare themselves more fully for the experience ahead of them.

The role of trainer is complex and challenging and yet the BACP has discontinued its accredited trainer process and status and offers little guidance on what training or support a counselling trainer needs to have. I hope that this research is another argument for organisations such as the BACP to increasingly engage with this and look to developing a clear, supportive and developmental pathway for those becoming counsellor trainers.

In the same way as my literature review included education settings more broadly, and health settings, it may also be that people in these settings will be able to helpfully link my findings to their own settings.

I hope that this research will also lead others to further research in reciprocal influence in similar deep and intimate ways. My ideal would be for counselling trainers/researchers who have taught across different theoretical orientations to follow this methodology and methods and participate in discussion interviews with several former students. In this way we could steadily build a valuable body of knowledge on the reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers across orientations and compare them.

There may also be former students who are researchers who follow the same route but participate in discussion interviews with several of their trainers; this is less likely though due to there being less trainers per student than students per trainer and so less people to approach to participate.

This could also be done in other educational settings and, if even more carefully considered and set up, by counsellors with former clients, supervisors with former supervisees (or perhaps even current), and health professionals with former service users. In some cases the ethical considerations would mitigate against this being likely and I am certainly not advocating that this methodology and methods be used willy nilly. The interviewing of pairs, especially when one is also the researcher, must be done with a lot of forethought and ethical consideration and approval. As Thompson and Walker (1982) said: '*The potential for dyadic research is vast, and researchers have much to learn.... We need to move on with imagination and care*' (p. 892).

Further research could also be done, and new perspectives gained, by the analysis of this thesis by other researchers from their different perspectives and perhaps theoretical orientations, much as Mansor Abu Talib (West & Talib, 2002) did with West's (1998) research into counselling and spirituality.

8.3.4 Impact on me – researcher, trainer, person

The experience of the last six years has been immense and as I move towards the completion of this thesis there is relief that I can 'get my life back'. I look forward to being able to pick up books of fiction and 'waste' time relaxing. Yet for virtually all this journey I have enjoyed the process, thrilling at my growth and learning in theory, skills and self.

My conversational partners have given me an enormous gift in experiencing the memories of, and in the moment, reciprocal influence of former students and trainers. I remain overwhelmed by the enormity of this gift from both people I knew little or not at all before the interview and from my former students. They have helped me to see our relationships and myself through the eyes of others and much more deeply through my own eyes in a way that would have been impossible without them. How much I still don't know, how much I have not taken in though it was there in the interviews, is unknown and probably impossible to know.

As a result of her research into the experiences of counselling trainers Ballinger (2012) has:

'become much more measured in the extent to which I reveal myself. I have become more aware of the need to balance self-revelation with self-protection. .. However, a tension remains. I know that my openness is valued by students and helps me to form effective relationships. I know that I consciously attempt to model openness as a tutor' (p. 282).

In seeming contrast to her experience I find that as a result of my research I am more inclined to share more of myself with students, though still in the service of the student. Whether we are far apart in what we actually share can only be known by understanding what this means in action for each of us.

While I don't assume to know myself fully, who of us does, I do know so much more; this fits very much with Rogers' (1994) thoughts on what it means to find oneself:

'In the first place it is a process, a direction, not some static achievement. In my estimation no one is ever completely successful in finding all her real (and everchanging) self. But there are certain characteristics of this process. Persons move away from hiding behind facades and pretenses, whether these have been held consciously or unconsciously. They move toward a greater closeness to and awareness of their inward experiences. They find this development exceedingly complex and varied, ranging from wild and crazy feelings to solid, socially approved ones.

They move toward accepting all of these experiences as their own; they discover that they are people with an enormous variety of reactions.' (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994, p. 65).

This process has taken me deeper in and out of myself and I am transformed and yet the same. I take my creative synthesis and summary of learning to keep with me and return to when I move into training again, though they are also useful generally in my relationships. I know more clearly who I am and am at peace without being complacent, with Cozolino (2004) pinpointing something crucial I have taken on:

'An essential part of becoming a therapist is the journey to self-acceptance in the face of our own limitations. Accepting ourselves with our limitations is very different from self-acceptance despite them.' (p. 204).

The process of this research, and this thesis that is the culmination but not the end of the journey, has been deeply moving and exposing; I now experience excitement and anxiety as you, the reader do with my thoughts, feelings and experiences what you will. Back in 2009, before the discussion interviews had even taken place, I was aware of this anxiety and linked it to:

'the time when I was at work and someone sent me some red roses for Valentine's Day, no card and I had no idea who would send them. It scared me to think of someone thinking of me in that way and me not knowing who they were, I felt unsafe and could not enjoy them' (reflective diary 2/3/09).

While I still have some of that anxiety I am now in a steadier place, supported by experiences such as that in September 2012 when a couple I had finished counselling with sent me a beautiful bouquet of flowers, with a note. This was such an important healing experience, being seen and appreciated in this way I could receive and enjoy the flowers as the givers had intended.

8.4 Concluding and ending

Returning to the quote I started with it remains as powerful as when I wrote it six years ago:

'I am impacted by the students I work with, it is the work with them that inspires me, interests me, drives me, tires me, grieves me, annoys me, wears me out and energises me. At either end of ecstasy and despair there has always been the work with students.' (reflective diary 8/12/2007).

I now have a much greater understanding of the reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers, as understood through my Person Centred lens, and have resources to support me in the future.

Perhaps for some other people as well it:

'may change us, move us, help us to see ourselves in new ways, lead to new self-awareness, and give us new resources and stances for dealing with the world'

(Rosenblatt, 2009, p. 172).

I trust that the reader will find it of value and hope that it will be the start of this new area of counselling training research and perhaps wider research on reciprocal influence.

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10. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - Assumptions of a Person Centered Teacher

Whitlock (1984)

- (1) I assume that leaning is a rewarding and pleasurable experience. This assumption does not mean that it is devoid of hard work, or even of pain, but it is nevertheless rewarding and at times exciting.*
- (2) I assume that learning is both a personal and an interpersonal experience. At times it is not only rewarding to learn with others, but it may be necessary. There are only some things that I can only learn from others such as that provided by feedback which may be used to make corrections in a particular course of action. In this sense, others are important in providing a healthy learning environment. On the other hand, there are some things that I can only learn from myself, such as an awareness of my own feelings and sensory experiences. In this sense, it's crucial that I remain aware of my responsibility for myself and for my learning.*
- (3) I assume that the learning that involves significant changes is "self-discovered" and "self-appropriated learning." (Rogers, 1969, p. 153) At least in the final analysis, the self must discover and appropriate the learning, or the experience does not eventuate in learning.*
- (4) I assume that the forming of healthy interpersonal relationships is conducive to learning. This assumption does not mean that learning automatically occurs when such conditions are met, but that a sense of relatedness with others provides a base from which learning possibilities may be enhanced.*
- (5) I assume that if I trust and value a student as a person, that the possibilities of learning are enhanced. Valuing the learner as a person means humanizing the learning process. This assumption too, does not guarantee learning. The valuation simply enhances the learning possibilities.*
- (6) I assume that the student wants to learn and to make discoveries, and to actualize potential. The learner will not necessarily be eager but there are those moments that are filled with learning possibilities and to which students want to respond. Although it may be spasmodic, there are those teachable moments in which significant learning occurs.*
- (7) I assume that learning to value self and experiencing a sense of self identity and self worth is conducive to learning. The students who clearly understand themselves increase the actualization of their potential for learning. (Drews, 1968, p. 100)*
- (8) I assume that sensory awareness, fantasy and imagination are important ingredients of the creative learning process. The use of awareness and fantasy exercises and other*

exercises of the imagination may enable the student to actualize some of the unused potentiality of being a human being.

(9) I assume that in a true learning situation the teacher and student are mutually involved in the learning process. They may share in both the co-teacher and co-learner process, but they are both learners together. This assumption does not negate the expertise of the teacher, but it does involve the instructor in an openness to the learning process.

(10) I assume that the facilitation of learning takes precedence over teaching as the chief responsibility of the faculty. Indeed, Carl Rogers indicates that he has lost interest in being a teacher since he has come "to feel that the outcomes of teaching are either unimportant or hurtful." (Rogers, 1963, p. 133)

(11) I assume that accepting responsibility for one's self will enhance the learning potential. This means sensitivity and awareness of who I am, where I am going, and what I want to do along the way.

(12) I assume that the honest awareness of uncertainties, the owning up to them, and the sharing of my puzzlement with students may enhance the learning process. Rogers says, "It seems to mean letting my experiences carry me on, in a direction which appears to be forward, toward goals that I can but dimly define as I try to understand at least the current meaning of that experience." (Rogers, 1969, p. 154)

(Whitlock, 1984, pp. 70-72)

APPENDIX 2 - Ethical Approval for 2:1 Interviews

University of Manchester - statement

School of Education Research Ethics

ETHICAL PRACTICE IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH

STATEMENT

Student: Sandra Taylor

Programme of Study: PhD

The main method of gaining research data is interviews of pairs of ex-students and ex-trainers from professional counselling training courses. None of the interviewees will be children or vulnerable adults. All interviewees are clear that their involvement is voluntary – see Participant Release form attached.

I will recruit interviewees using networks available to me via work, PhD supervisor, conferences, etc. It is expected that usually I will initially have contact with one member of the pair and that this person will ask an appropriate person to be their interview partner. The first person will give me the second person's contact information, with their permission, and I will then contact them both to check if they are both still interested and make mutually convenient arrangements for the interview.

Within the interview I will monitor the power relationship between ex-student and ex-trainer and ensure that the ex-student, in particular, is sufficiently comfortable with the interview structure and content. I will record the interviews and transcribe them. The research material will be kept in a way that maintains confidentiality of identities.

Interviewees will be asked to reflect on their experience of the interview, having been provided with my own brief reflection. This will be followed up once and if there is still no response I will cease contact but still use the data unless asked not to. All interviewees will be given the option of seeing and checking the interview transcript and will be asked to treat the transcript with a level of confidentiality agreed with their fellow interviewee. All interviewees will also be offered the opportunity to stay involved with the research as it progresses and so help me ensure that I am using the material appropriately and not making false assumptions / conclusions.

The research will, as detailed above, be carried out in keeping with University of Manchester and BACP's ethical guidance.

APPENDIX 3 - 2:1 Interviews Participant Release Agreement

PARTICIPANT RELEASE AGREEMENT

I agree to participate in the research study 'The Reciprocal Influence of Counselling Students and Trainers' by Sandra Taylor .

I agree to meeting at the following location:

.....

On the following date:

With my interview partner and the researcher Sandra Taylor,

for an interview of 1-2 hours.

I grant permission to tape recording of the interview.

I understand that following the interview I, and my interview partner, will receive a request for some guided reflection on the interview, along with the interviewer's initial response to the interview. I will also be given an option to receive the interview transcript, for checking, and to stay involved in the evolving PhD. I understand that I may subsequently be invited to a Focus Group to discuss the experience of participating in this research. If I attend this I understand that it will be recorded.

I understand that Sandra will destroy the recordings when they are no longer required for her Ph.D. but that she may keep the transcripts that will have been anonymised.

I understand the purpose and nature of this study and that involvement in each stage of this research is voluntary. I grant permission for all the data to be used in the process of completing a Ph.D. degree, including a dissertation and any other future publication.

I understand that a brief synopsis of each participant, including myself and my interview partner, may be included e.g. first name (or an alternative), how and when worked together, age, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, dis/ability, and any other information that will help the reader to get an understanding of the range of participant pairs. I grant permission for the above personal information to be used.

I am aware that Sandra's Ph.D. supervisor is William West, Manchester University, and that if I have any concerns I can contact him to discuss them. Tel: 0161 275 3397
email: william.west@manchester.ac.uk

Research Participant

Date:

Researcher

Date:

APPENDIX 4 - Questions to guide 2:1 interviews

Contexts

- In what contexts have you worked with each other? Info about the professional level counselling course... etc.
- Are there any other contexts in which you know, or have known each other?

Initial Perceptions

- What were your initial perceptions of each other?
- Did the other know this?
- Did the other's perception match their self-perception?
- How do you think these initial perceptions impacted how you related to each other?

Impact on professional training course - general

- In what ways do you think the other impacted your experience of the course? And you?
- Can you think of particular events?

Impact on professional training course - identity

- How have aspects of your identities affected the impact you have had on one another? (race, gender, age, dis/ability, sexual orientation, religion, etc. etc.)
- Can you think of particular examples / stories?

Talking now

- How are you experiencing talking with each other, and me, about all this? (any surprises to them?, feelings now, etc.)

APPENDIX 5 - Example of post 2:1 interview email

Dear Stuart and Tony

Again many thanks for taking part in the interview, it is much appreciated.

Over the last few days I have thought about the interview and what lingers for me from it.

Beforehand I had wondered if it would feel any different for me to be talking with 2 men, my previous interviews having been with women, and whether you would express yourselves in ways more typical of men. I'm sure there were differences but it is often difficult to discern what is about our gender and what is about us, what is about what I bring, what is about what you bring, and what emerges in the between. I am wary of simplistic assumptions and pigeonholing so that will take some mulling over.

You were both warm and welcoming and that was much appreciated; you were also very forthcoming and open in talking with me and each other. Each of you was very conscious of your family histories and how they impacted your ways of relating with each other and wider. You had clearly been on, and continue on, quite a journey together that includes mutual liking and respect. I was struck by your sense of how much had come up and been worked on by you both in relation to issues concerning your father, authority, and identity Stuart. Alongside that the sense of liking of Stuart that you experienced Tony though little sense of newness or growth in you as a result of your 'relationship'. I wonder if you see that as due to your long years of training?

I felt that the interview flowed well and you were each able to bring in things that you felt were relevant as well as responding to my questions. You both seemed able to make your own judgements of how much you wanted to say

I really enjoyed the time with you both and again thank you for the gift of your time and talk.

I would appreciate your feedback on any of the above and the following:

1. How did you find the experience of being interviewed in a pair? (You might, among other things, want to consider: ease/unease, what was said/unsaid, power issues, surprises.)
2. What is your perspective on how we all related to each other and how we influenced each other in the interview?
3. Following the interview, what thoughts / feelings / ideas were you left with?
4. What, from your perspective, were important themes of the interview?
5. Would you like to receive the transcript of the interview and my initial summary of the interview (when drafted) in order to comment on anything else you notice from reading them?
6. Would you be interested in reviewing sections of the PhD that reflect on the interviews? (If so, I will contact you again when I am at this stage.)

Best wishes

Sandra

APPENDIX 6 - Ethical Approval re. 1:1 interviews

University of Manchester

School of Education Research Ethics

ETHICAL PRACTICE IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH

STATEMENT

Student: Sandra Taylor

Programme of Study: PhD

It is proposed that research data will be gained from three sources:

- 1) Interview pairs of ex-students and ex-trainers from professional counselling / psychotherapy training courses;
- 2) Ex-students of the researchers, in discussions / interviews with the researcher, from a Diploma in Counselling that ran 2006-8 at the University of Cumbria;
- 3) The researcher.

None of the interviewees will be children or vulnerable adults. All interviewees are clear that their involvement is voluntary – see Participant Release forms attached.

Ethical approval was given for 1) above by the Programme Director on 20/5/2008. 2) is a much newer development that has arisen as a result of the pilot interviewing of pairs of ex-student and ex-trainer and I am going through the University of Cumbria's ethical approval process to gain permission for this to go ahead. No ethical approval is required for 3.

1) Pair interviews

I will recruit interviewees using networks available to me via work, PhD supervisor, conferences, etc. It is expected that usually I will initially have contact with one member of the pair and that this person will ask an appropriate person to be their interview partner. The first person will give me the second person's contact information, with their permission, and I will then contact them both to check if they are both still interested and make mutually convenient arrangements for the interview.

Within the interview I will monitor the power relationship between ex-student and ex-trainer and ensure that the ex-student, in particular, is sufficiently comfortable with the interview structure and content. I will record the interviews and transcribe them. The research material will be kept in a way that maintains confidentiality of identities.

Interviewees will be asked to reflect on their experience of the interview, having been provided with my own brief reflection. This will be followed up once and if there is still no response I will cease contact but still use the data unless asked not to. All interviewees will be given the option of seeing and checking the interview transcript and will be asked to treat the transcript with a level of confidentiality agreed with their fellow interviewee. All interviewees will also be offered the opportunity to stay involved with the research as it progresses and so help me ensure that I am using the material appropriately and not making false assumptions / conclusions.

2) Discussions / Interviews with ex-students

The research is heuristic self-search inquiry and these interviews will enable me to explore my own process and experience in a deeper and different way from the pair interviews above, as well as honouring the ex-students own experiences in their own right. I intend to write to all those students on the 2006-8 Diploma in Counselling at the University of Cumbria, Lancaster, as I worked with them for at least one year. I will meet with those of the approximately 30 ex-students who are interested in participating in the research. They will be given the option of meeting with me 1:1 or in pairs or small groups. We will usually meet at the venue where they completed their course and that is familiar to all of us. Together we will negotiate time and place for the interview.

Prior to the interviews they will be provided with the range of themes that I would like us to cover, the same themes that I address in the pair interviews, and given the option of including other themes that are important to them.

Within the interview I will monitor the power relationships between us and support the ex-student(s) to offer their perspectives as well as giving mine. I will record the interviews and transcribe them. The research material will be kept in a way that maintains confidentiality of identities.

Interviewees will be asked to reflect on their experience of the interview, having been provided with my own brief reflection. This will be followed up once and if there is still no response I will cease contact but still use the data unless asked not to. All interviewees will be given the option of seeing and checking the interview transcript and will be asked to treat the transcript with a level of confidentiality agreed with fellow interviewee(s). All interviewees will also be offered the opportunity to stay involved with the research as it progresses and so help me ensure that I am using the material appropriately and not making false assumptions / conclusions.

The research will, as detailed above, be carried out in keeping with the University of Manchester, University of Cumbria, and BACP's ethical guidance.

APPENDIX 7 - Letter to University of Cumbria Ethics Committee

26 August 2009

Dear ,

Thank you for your letter of 24th July concerning my request for Ethical Clearance – Ref No. 08/29.

I would like to clarify the issues that you brought up:

The audio recordings will be stored in my home in my personal safe and be brought out to work with.

The transcripts will be stored on my laptop which is kept at home and only used by myself, obviously parts of these will potentially become part of the public domain via presentations and publications – as agreed with the participants.

Other information about the interviewees e.g. names and any personal details, will be kept in the safe and destroyed as soon as no longer needed.

The focus group possibility is something that may happen much later and yes, their data cannot easily be withdrawn but any specific requests for elements not to be passed into the public domain will be respected.

As you know I also had to apply for Ethical Clearance at the University of Manchester where I am undertaking my PhD. They brought up other areas of concern that I have now satisfied. These were as follows:

*'(1) **Recruitment.** It was felt that direct recruitment of your own ex-students could be seen as coercive and that it was better to ask the University (i.e., someone in your part of the School) to make the initial contact.*

*(2) **Support of participants.** You cannot be both researcher and counsellor and the Committee would like you to have a strategy for dealing with distress and, in the information sheet, have guidance about where the participant subsequently might obtain support.*

*(3) **Location of interviews.** Interviews should take place in public or semi-public places. If, for instance, they are in someone's home, then you need to operate a lone worker policy.*

The Committee did have some misgivings about effectively inviting criticism of yourself, but were persuaded that you are trained to deal with this. The Committee, however, hope that you bear this in mind and make sure that you are well prepared for what could be a difficult assignment.'

My response to these was:

I have 2 colleagues who are agreeable to making the initial contact and offering some support, if needed, following the interview discussions. They will also support the participants to make use of other resources already available to them as practicing counsellors.

It is expected that the interviews will take place in the setting in which the students trained as it is familiar to all. If any interviews take place in someone's home a lone worker policy would be in place. I have undertaken one of my dyad interviews in the ex-students home which was unfamiliar to myself and the ex-trainer. My partner was aware of where I was and remained in the vicinity during the interview. I can assure you that I take the safety of myself and the interviewees seriously.

I am aware of the potential challenges in undertaking the interview discussions with my own ex-students but am well prepared and supported. While this type of interview is less usual than other forms it is essential for what is a strongly heuristic piece of research to gain deeper awareness of myself and how I impact and am impacted by my students. I appreciate your overall support for my research.

The University of Manchester's Committee on the Ethics of Research on Human Beings has now confirmed their ethical approval and I attach a copy of their letter.

I trust that I have now met all of your requirements and look forward to written confirmation so that I can progress.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Taylor
Joint Programme Manager of Counselling Courses

APPENDIX 8 - Letter to those interested in 1:1 interview

Dear

Thank you so much for wanting to participate in my research. Ten people have volunteered and initially I will focus on those that can come and meet with me over the next few weeks here at White Cross, either in the day time or early evening.

If you have volunteered but can't meet with me here I will contact you again later but will probably only meet with some of you. You can of course contact me in the meantime to check out anything that you want to.

As you know my research is concerned with the reciprocal influence of student counsellors and trainers. It has a particular focus on my own experience and hence the discussion interviews between myself and former students.

I have attached two documents:

The first is an information sheet, it gives you more information about the research and what would be involved in participating with me in the discussion interviews.

The second is a consent form, I would need to have one of these completed by you before we could start the interview and I will bring blank copies with me.

If you change your mind about being involved in the research after reading all this then do please tell me. If you have any questions about any of this then please do ask. It may be easier to contact me via my personal email address: staylor66@tinyworld.co.uk or via my mobile phone: 07770 807 910.

If you are happy to go ahead with the discussion interview with me then you have the option of meeting with me individually or with one or more of your peers who have also volunteered to be involved. Please tell me what your preference is.

If you are able to come to White Cross to meet with me then I would appreciate it if you would contact me with some possible dates and times. The best times for me are: Monday p.m., Tuesday, Wednesday p.m.. I will however be able to make some other times if these aren't okay for you so do give me some options of what fits for you. I am hoping to do all the interviews by the end of April but as I am away for 2 weeks over Easter we are looking at dates from 12th April unless you can come on Wednesday 24th or Thursday 25th March.

Again, many thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Sandra Taylor

APPENDIX 9 - Participant information sheet for 1-1 interviews

The Reciprocal Influence of Person centred Counselling Students and Trainers

Participant Information Sheet – Former Student & Former Trainer/Researcher Discussion Interviews

You are being invited to take part in a research study that is part of one of your former trainer's PhD. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why I am undertaking the research and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the research

Sandra Taylor

PhD student at the University of Manchester

Joint Programme Manager of Counselling Courses, University of Cumbria

Title of the Research

The reciprocal influence of Person Centred Counselling students and trainers.

What is the aim of the research

To illuminate the little explored area of the reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers, particularly those training in the Person Centred Approach. We understand something of the importance of the therapeutic relationship between counsellor and client but what of the relationship between student counsellor and trainer – does it matter?

This is a piece of heuristic research that has a primary focus on the researcher's experience while also including the experiences of former students and former trainers.

Who will be interviewed?

6 interviews have already taken place between pairs of former students and trainers who had worked together for a minimum of a year on a professional level counselling / psychotherapy training courses. The information from these pair interviews have informed the subsequent discussion interviews.

Up to 10 former students of the researcher, who have worked with me for a minimum of a year on a Diploma in Counselling, will be interviewed. They will be interviewed 1:1, pair or small group of former students with myself.

Why have you been chosen?

You have been chosen because you are part of one of the last Diploma groups that I worked with, you worked with me for at least an academic year and have shown an initial interest in taking part.

What would you be asked to do if you took part?

I will liaise with you to arrange a mutually convenient time for the interview. We would then meet for the interview which would be recorded and would take approximately 1 hour. I would have the following areas to cover within an informal discussion type interview:

Contexts

In what contexts have we worked with each other? Are there any other contexts in which we know, or have known each other?

Initial and Overall Perceptions of Each Other

What were our initial and overall perceptions of each other? Any surprises in that? Did it fit with how we saw/ see ourselves?

How do we think these perceptions impacted how we related to each other?

Impact on professional training course - general

In what ways do we think the other impacted our experience of the course?

Can we think of particular events concerning each other that were memorable?

Impact on professional training course - identity

How have aspects of our identities affected the impact we have had on one another? (race, gender, age, dis/ability, sexual orientation, religion, etc. etc.)

More general issues

Issues around preference, connection and favouritism have come up in the initial interviews and your perspective on this would be really appreciated. The following questions might help you discuss it:

How do we think we got on with each other compared to others?

Who did we seem to get on with better or worse than others?

Who did we spend more or less time with than others?

What do we think might have been the impact of the above?

Overall

Where has our discussion taken us in terms of whether there is any importance in the student counsellor and trainer relationship?

Talking now

How are we experiencing talking with each other about all this?

You would also be able to include other areas that are of interest to you. It would help me if you told me of these in advance so that I can consider them beforehand.

As you would be interviewed with one of your ex-trainers, who is also conducting the research, and we would be talking about our influence on each other it may bring up a range of emotions. It is likely that some things would come up that would be a surprise to each of us and we may at times feel uncomfortable as well as really enjoying other parts of the interview. It is important that you share with me only what is sufficiently comfortable to share and that you monitor this effectively.

If you want support after the interview please talk with me or with Trudy Johnston as well as using the other sources of support you have available to you e.g. supervision, friends.

A few days after the interview I will email / write to you with my brief reflections on the interview. You will be invited to answer some questions in writing on your experience of the interview.

If you wanted to remain involved in the research you would be contacted as the research progressed to comment on aspects that related to your interview.

What happens to the data collected?

I will use the data to inform my PhD thesis; I may also use data from the interview in conference presentations, journal articles and in other published forms. These may include direct quotes and transcribed sections.

How is confidentiality maintained?

Interview recordings are kept secure on cd roms. When the PhD thesis has been submitted these recordings will kept in a secure state for up to 5 years before being destroyed. Any transcriptions are kept on the researcher's password protected laptop and on paper in a secure setting, they will be kept and may be used in future work.

As the research participants are part of a small professional field which is also the primary target audience of the work care will be taken with information for publication and presentation. Participants will, where possible, be contacted before publication or presentation of elements that I am concerned may lead to you being identified and ask for your advice on appropriate changes and to gain permission.

What happens if you do not want to take part or if you change your mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself. You can choose whether to leave your data in the research or have it withdrawn. If you withdraw from the research and have your data withdrawn your participation will still impact the research because of its impact on me and my own reflections will still be included.

Will you be paid for participating in the research?

You won't receive any payment for participating.

What is the duration of the research?

The research is part of a PhD and is likely to take until 2012 before it is completed. Interviews are likely to be completed by the end of April 2010.

Where will the research be conducted?

This will usually be at the mutually well known venue of the training rooms at White Cross.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

Aspects of the research are likely to be published in journal and book form during and after the PhD thesis is submitted.

Contact for further information

Sandra Taylor Sandra.taylor@cumbria.ac.uk or staylor66@tinyworld.co.uk

What if something goes wrong?

Contact one of the following:

Researcher: Sandra Taylor

Academic Supervisor: William West William.west@manchester.ac.uk

Or, Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL

APPENDIX 10 - Participant consent form for 1:1 interviews

The Reciprocal Influence of Person Centred Counselling Students and Trainers

Consent Form

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below.

I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above research that is being undertaken by Sandra Taylor and that I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment.

I understand that the interviews will last for approximately 1 hour and be audio-recorded.

I understand that Sandra will keep the interview recordings securely. When the PhD thesis has been submitted these recordings will kept in a secure state for up to 5 years before being destroyed. Any transcriptions are kept on Sandra's password protected laptop and on paper in a secure setting, they will be kept and may be used in future work.

I understand that I will be asked for some feedback on my experience of the interview and that this will be part of the interview data.

I agree to staying involved with the research as described in the information sheet.

Please initial

Yes

I agree to the use of anonymous quotes.

I grant permission for any of the data (anonymised) to be used in the process of completing the researcher's Ph.D. degree and for presentations and publications.

I understand that a brief synopsis of each participant, including myself and my interview partner, may be included e.g. how and when worked together, age, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, dis/ability, and any other information that will help the reader to get an understanding of the range of participant pair

Research Participant

Researcher

Date:

APPENDIX 11 - I-Poems

ONE

I know

I am choosing

My desire

My desire

My wanting

My wanting

My findings

I have so many questions

TWO

I am impacted

I work with

I keep making contact

I know

I watch

I also continue to grow

I know

I have an impact

My 'voice'

I get feedback

I come across

I like

I agree

I continue

I was

I have changed

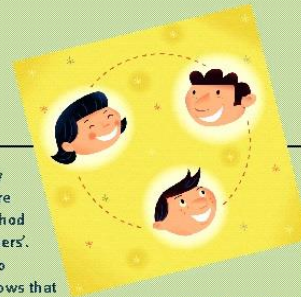
I don't think

I admire

I look at

I know

The 2:1 Interview: Rarity, Richness and Reflections



Aim/Introduction: Why is the 2:1 interview within the field of counselling/psychotherapy so rare? What is its potential richness in exploring issues about specific relationships? Here we explore these issues and link them to reflections from early interviews using this method in the presenter's research into the 'reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers'.

Whilst interviewing is the most common qualitative research method this usually refers to 1:1 interviews. Where dyad or pair interviews are referred to closer inspection usually shows that the interviews have been undertaken separately. The 2:1 interview is rarely noted in research theory literature and the few examples are primarily within the family research field.

Design/Methodology: The 2:1 interview is a more transparent research method than the pair but separate interview as the primary research data emerges with all three present and engaged. A richness of data is gained whilst the experience is also potentially enriching for participants. Initial anxieties of not finding research participants were unfounded as people's interest in what may emerge in the process became obvious.

Results/Findings: 'Truth' and 'memory' are not fixed entities for the interviewer to uncover but rather are constantly evolving and their expression is impacted by the setting and the people present. Reflecting together on their experience of their relationship during a counselling training course ex-student and ex-trainer 'mutually regulate' the content and process of the interview. Deep contact is made between the three co-researchers / co-participants in this semi-structured interview as memories are evoked and negotiated, similarities and differences are expressed and considered, their influence on each other are shared – often for the first time, and surprises pop up in unexpected areas.

Research Limitations: The research itself is in its early stages but gives enough material for this method of research to be highlighted in this way.

The method, while potentially very useful, may also be very daunting for some potential participants, it may be more likely to encourage participants who got on with each other and so miss out more negative relationships and, it will impact the relationship between participants and so should be timed appropriately.

Originality/Value: The 2:1 interview is a relatively rare research method with the potential to offer a great deal to the field of counselling and psychotherapy research. It offers greater transparency when research explores specific relationships.

Conclusions/Implications: Current research using this method reveals the richness of the data collected, including data that would not have emerged via another method; and shows interviewees primarily positive responses to their experience.

Sandra Taylor
Programme Manager of Person Centred Counselling Courses, University of Cumbria
PhD student, University of Manchester
Contact me via:
sandra.taylor@cumbria.ac.uk / 01524 383622

Richness



An Ex-Trainer: 'If you had asked me before my reactions towards S, I wouldn't have thought I would have much to say.

But they almost developed like a photo while we talked...'

Surprise is an important element of the 2:1 interview and is one of the most rich aspects of this type of interview. Surprise may emerge as a result of several things for example:

i. Surprise at the unexpected unfolding of thoughts and feelings that were previously unclear to the talker – as above;

ii. Surprise at what the other remembered:

An Ex-Student: 'She's even remembering what I was wearing! – although I did use to wear stripy trousers a lot. But she knew I was wearing them that day!!

iii. Surprise at how much one was known:

When an Ex-Trainer warmly refers to the Ex-Student as 'eccentric' the Ex-Student is surprised, though she does see herself as eccentric. When asked about this she says:

'Well I just, because, I don't know how much you know about my life really.'

And the Ex-Trainer responds:

'Not a lot. Well, you know, it's on the skin, it's worn on the skin isn't it'

Ex-Student: 'Well I suppose when I stop and think about it yeah'

i. Surprise at different perspectives:

An Ex-Student remembers feeling that she came across in an adult and independent way to which the Ex-Trainer is 'dead surprised' as she perceived her as 'incredibly vulnerable' and 'childlike'. This allows for the Ex-Student to consider this and clarify:

'I think it kind of makes sense because when I, what I meant about the adult-adult aspect was about the academic.'

Within the 2:1 interview previously known influences can be talked about more openly than may have happened on the training course and can be explored further, again provoking some surprises:

An Ex-Student and Ex-Trainer are well aware that they connected with each other and influenced each other around spirituality, despite their very different beliefs and views. They had had several 'adult-adult' discussions about this during the course and considered subjects such as the role of prayer in counselling.

While the Ex-Trainer described the Ex-Student's influence as: '**I think the main thing I would say is in enabling me to work with my prejudice around Christianity**' the Ex-Student commented that: '**actually I would say that you'd had the opposite effect on me. ... You were one of the few people I've met who were incredibly accepting of my viewpoint.**'

As well as spirituality other influences related to similarity and difference were acknowledged as influential for example:

Ex-student: 'the fact that you, yeah, that you were a mother of a teenage daughter that, you know, where everything had not run smoothly all of the time'

Ex-Student: 'you mentioned that you were coming from a working class background and I remember that I really related to that.'



Rarity

'Seldom has the joint interview been the method of choice for data collection.'

(Racher, Kaufert, & Havens, 2000, p. 369)

As a Person Centred Therapy trainer undertaking a PhD and exploring the reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers it seemed 'obvious' to me that a good method of data collection would be to simultaneously interview pairs of ex-student and ex-trainer from professional level training courses. This would surely give me a transparent, vibrant, collaborative, emerging sense of their influence on each other that was clarified and validated by each of them in the here-and-now of the three of us exploring the themes I put forward in a semi-structured interview. There having worked together for at least one year on a counselling/psychotherapy training course, and having both chosen to be involved in this research together, would mean that each would be likely to be able to relate to one another at some depth and with a good amount of openness, honesty and sensitivity to each other and themselves. Little did I realise the rarity of this apparently 'obvious' research method.

The 2:1 interview is a rarely used method of data collection and has been primarily used within family research for example with couples, fathers and sons, close friends (Thompson & Walker, 1982). I have been unable to find, as yet, any counselling / psychotherapy research that has used this method.

Despite its potential richness there are several potential drawbacks to the 2:1 interview that have put people off this as a research method, for example:

The challenge of arranging mutually convenient interview times (Racher et al., 2000, p. 370);

a) The withdrawal of one person means that the data from both of those interviewed cannot be used (Racher et al., 2000, p. 370);

b) The challenge to the interviewer of interviewing two people together rather than one person, involving both people and giving them equal opportunity to participate (Allan, 1980);

c) They may be less likely to express negative and/or delicate thoughts and feelings (Baxter & West, 2003, p. 512) related to each other and the course;

d) Participants may have less control over what comes up in the interview and so have less 'informed consent'. (Larossa, Bennett, & Gelles, 1981, p. 307).

All research methodologies are imperfect: each is merely more or less useful for generating information relevant to a particular research problem. In some cases the joint interview, despite the difficulties inherent in it, will be a suitable technique; in others it will not (Allan, 1980, p. 209)

Rationale for the 2:1 interview

1. The presence of both people makes it easier to reflect on this specific relationship;
2. The presence of the other can evoke state dependent memories;
3. Opportunities arise for memory reminders and clarifications;
4. There is discussion and exploration in/of the here-and-now resulting in the emergence of new material;
5. There are times of surprise and reformulation of the past both intra- and inter-personally;
6. The power of the researcher is reduced by the joint engagement of interviewees where significant time is spent with them talking to each other with researcher in the periphery;
7. It is transparent, the main data used from the interviewees is from the interviews and both will know the content of this.

Reflecting together on their experience of their relationship during a counselling training course ex-student and ex-trainer 'mutually regulate' the content and process of the interview. Deep contact is made between the three co-researchers / co-participants in this semi-structured interview as memories are evoked and negotiated, similarities and differences are expressed and considered, their influence on each other are shared – often for the first time, and surprises pop up in unexpected areas.

It is important to note that this interview is expected to impact the interviewees and any ongoing relationship they may have. Due to this it was appropriate to interview student and trainer only after the professional level training course had completed.

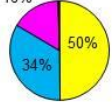
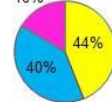
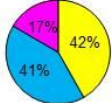
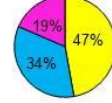
The interview is a "creative search for mutual understanding" (Douglas, 1985; p. 25)



Reflections

Early interviews have shown the potential richness of this type of interview with pairs of ex-student and ex-trainer reflecting on their mutual influence during counselling/psychotherapy professional level training. Whilst considering the content of the interviews is the primary concern of the researcher it is also important to consider the interviews in other ways to support reflecting on their effectiveness. Three particular aspects have initially been explored:

- the percentage of responses by each person;
- the percentage of words spoken by each person; and
- the pattern of flow in the responses between the three people.

Interview 1		Interview 2
<p>% of the 1155 responses</p>  <p>16% 50% 34%</p>	<p>The researcher was similar in both interviews with 16% of the responses and 17-19% of the words.</p> <p>In one interview the ex-student and ex-trainer had a similar percentage of words but markedly different number of responses while on the other interview the reverse was true.</p>	<p>% of the 743 responses</p>  <p>16% 44% 40%</p>
<p>% of the 20,473 words</p>  <p>42% 41% 17%</p>	<p>In both interviews the ex-student had both less responses and less words than the ex-trainer. It will be important to follow this up and an important element of this will be asking interviewees for their opinion on this as well as considering how the researcher facilitated the interview, issues of power, impact of the researcher being a trainer (though in the past also having been a student), etc.</p>	<p>% of the 13,077 words</p>  <p>47% 34% 19%</p>

The **pattern of flow** between ex-student, ex-trainer and researcher can be seen on the nearby long strips of coloured stripes.

- blue – ex-student
- yellow – ex-trainer
- pink – researcher
- red – mixed or unclear

You can see that there are chunks of time when the ex-student and ex-researcher are engaged in talking without the intervention of the researcher. This shows flow between them and would seem to be positive. This interview method enables the researcher to stay at the periphery while the interviewees engage with one another and then to come in when they go well off track or it seems appropriate to encourage them in another direction.

There are also times when the researcher is engaged with both, or one or the other.

As would be expected, it is the researcher who talks mostly at the beginning and the end – giving an introduction and bringing the interview to an end.

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APPENDIX 13 - Keele paper presentation 2011

Intimate Interviews – Reflections on the process of ‘discussion interviews’ with my former students.

Sandra Taylor

Director of Relationship Counselling, Marriage Care

& PhD student at Manchester University

Paper presented at:

Intimate Encounters: Reflecting on Counselling Practice, Theory and Research

5th Annual Keele Counselling Conference

Keele University, 25-27 March 2011

Introduction

When we talk with people there is the potential for intimacy to emerge. If you change the usual format of interviews and instead of a meeting of strangers discussing the experience of one of them you have a meeting of previous counselling student and trainer discussing their experiences of each other, then intimacy is virtually certain.

This presentation is an exploration of participants’ responses to our experience of an intimate form of interview between myself, a counselling trainer, and some of my former students. This type of interview, for want of a better and not already used term, I call ‘discussion interviews’.

Why choose this method?

These interviews are part of a larger piece of research that explores the reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers.

To best understand this reciprocal influence talking together about it seemed to me the obvious method, though one that I soon discovered was very unusual.

Initially I interviewed pairs of former counselling student and trainer; these left me with a sense of great respect for those who had participated; discomfort in not having asked of myself what I had asked of them; but also a sense of being voyeuristic, and of missing out on something I could see was profound.

This led to an adjustment of my research methodology to something I call ‘relational heuristic research’ where ‘discussion interviews’ with some of my former students helped to deepen my connection with my own heuristic process and bring potential blind spots richly into my awareness (Moustakas, 1990; Sela-Smith, 2001).

These interviews supported myself and my former students to engage in “rethinking the familiar” (Reinharz, 1997); we were taken beyond the relative simplicity of us as individuals and into the complexity of ‘relational reciprocity’ (Gardner & Coombs, 2010). Alone we would have been unable to connect so richly with our mutual influence but together we mutually constructed a picture of its past and created a present (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009).

What did I do?

I invited twenty two former students to participate in these discussion interviews with me; these were all the students from two former Diploma in Counselling groups that I had taught on, who were not still my students on another course and hadn’t moved away in the eighteen months or so since their course ended. Eight took up the offer and were easily accessible for face-to-face interviews.

Prior to the interview each participant was emailed the areas that I wanted to include in the discussion, with an invitation for them to include areas that they wanted to explore.

The interviews lasted one to two hours each, ending naturally when we had completed our discussion or ending in keeping with a time constraint of the former student. Interviews were recorded and provided research data along with follow-up emails between us of our reflections on the interview.

This form of interview demands of the researcher-cum-interview participant a high level of reflexivity to, as Etherington (2007) describes it,:

'create transparency and dialogue that is required for forming and sustaining ethical research relationships, especially when prior relationships with participants already exist. ... Reflexivity, although enabling the conduct of ethical relational research, also requires researchers to come from behind the protective barriers of objectivity and invite others to join with us in our learning about being a researcher as well as remaining human in our research relationships.'

(Etherington, 2007, p. 599)

For this presentation responses from participants post-interview email reflections that were related to the process of the interview itself have been collated and analysed, key examples and overall themes will be shared with you.

Results

Let's start with an example of post-interview feedback, from the second participant, that encapsulates many of the points that were made:

'The session was really interesting – I love to explore relationship and have such a strong sense of not having done this with you before. But then haven't done it much with other tutors either....

I am not surprised about not standing out, although not easy to hear. I would say this was one of my struggles on the course about wanting to but being fearful of being attention seeking or seen as showing off...I would agree that I stood out more in home group, as I was more comfortable with a smaller group size.

Changing groups was important to me and [I'm] glad you understand why. I had never been sure if you had known it was me.

I think it is very interesting that maybe I was more demanding and maybe at times understanding of the running of the course due to my background in teaching & training. I can also see that those with less experience of formal learning may be more accepting of what they are offered.

Yes I see what you mean about sometimes meaning so much and sometimes meaning so little. This, along with the difficulty in perceiving which it is & the fact that it's different for each person is rather overwhelming. I was touched by you sharing with me, how this affects you. I feel there is a lot of courage in doing this work, as it's personal and you are putting yourself under the microscope.

I am so glad... that I had the opportunity to work with you. It has been a rich experience and I have learnt so much along the way. What you have offered me has been much more than good enough.

Anyway hope this is useful' (Post interview reflection from Participant 2)

Overall the reflections showed a need for participants to do some clarifying, reiterating, and adding new elements in relation to the interviews. In addition to this I have identified 6 main themes from their post-interview email reflections; you'll have heard most of them in that example I just read out.

Enjoyment

From the first participant:

'I found our meeting a great pleasure. It was friendly and relaxed, and as you remarked, in some ways cathartic - a very good rounding-off of the course.' 1

And the sixth participant:

'I really enjoyed our time together on Monday. It felt very positive to me to reflect on our time together and the way we related during the course.' 6

Experience of me

From the fourth participant:

'How I felt about you at the time of the course was confirmed by our meeting. You have always struck me as someone who doesn't feel the need to share your soul with the world but who has the capacity to relate at great depth when appropriate. My assessment (sorry - can't help assessing people!) may be totally wrong but, believing that this was you, was of great benefit to me during the course and remains with me as a strong role model of a counsellor and counsellor tutor.' 4

And from the fifth participant:

'When I met you I again saw that steady, reliable and always interested Sandra and I'd forgotten that, something I felt after when driving home and it instantly came to me when today reflecting on what I experienced. Also how openly you accepted and were genuinely interested in knowing more about how I felt about the course and the tutors.' 5

Feeling unsettled or caught out

The interviews were not always comfortable, as the first participant expresses here:

'One remark unsettled me somewhat; and this may be of use in your study. You said that you admired my perseverance? Hanging on 'when I didn't get it' (the person-centred way). My problem was that I thought I did 'get it', albeit imperfectly? At least some of the time? So how to bridge that misunderstanding? I couldn't ask for your help if I didn't feel I needed to?' 1

And more powerfully for the seventh participant:

'One thing that did linger were your words about how I spoke out quite strongly about my ex-partner, which was slightly difficult for you to hear at times. I was surprised by this comment. I don't remember discussing that so much in the main group. I thought it was something I shared more in my PD group (but I can't be sure). I felt caught out when you mentioned it. There was some shame or guilt kindled by your words. These feelings were fleeting last week but came back when writing the email. I know there was no judgement in your words but I became conscious of guilt and remorse for perhaps portraying my ex-partner unfairly.' 7

Appreciation

However, there was also a sense of appreciation from the experience of the discussion interview. This first example is from the seventh participant, the same person whom the last extract came from, and together they give a fuller perspective of the richness of the discussion interview:

'Your feedback about how you perceived me was particularly valuable. ... Also, your sense of me in the big group and my relationship with my [child]. The fact that this was clear to you and could see it as valuable and enriching to you personally and to the whole group was touching.' 7

And from the third participant:

'The thing I really appreciated was you saying you didn't know where I was coming from; I can so see how that would make it difficult to feel at ease with me. I would probably have felt the same if the situation was reversed.' 3

Personal value

Several of the participants found the discussion interviews personally helpful. The fifth participant:

'Another reason I am glad I came to see you ...[was] because my time at Uni was hard I had a lot of memories (mixed emotions) of the room, so many things I was going through and at times walking through the door... was hard, so I didn't know how I would feel after almost two years. I have to say it did me good and because you were so welcoming and 'you' my experience was good and so I left feeling nice, warm feelings for the first time there, so for me that was good.' 5

And the seventh participant:

'I think it is the first time I have been involved/invited in such an experience and it was valuable to me because of my past boundary issues/working relationships with my former teachers (going back to childhood).'' 7

Thanks

The discussion interviews were also an opportunity for participants to thank me. The first participant:

'I thank you once again for your part in my journey, and I wish you very well always. With warmest wishes.' 1

And the fifth participant:

'...wanting to help you in your research which I felt was giving something back to you as a tutor for what I had received.' 5

I was honoured to have more than one participant where we had not shared an easy relationship. This was so with the eighth participant who had talked with me early in the course about her difficulty with me, whilst also liking me, and her need for us to maintain a distance as she worked this through. This interview was particularly powerful and rich and her reflection would be greatly diminished by dividing it up into themes. I therefore share it as one piece. You may want to link it to the 6 themes as I read it:

'I respected you for holding the framework and boundaries right till the end.

I felt elated on leaving the interview, initially. Then an incredible sadness came over me – perhaps the missing out on the relationship is in itself the lesson and the chance to reflect on that is the learning...

I thoroughly enjoyed the relaxed and open exchange and was elated to share in a vision – a metaphor for the process – this came about because at some level there was understanding...

THE BIGGEST SHOCK WAS MY INABILITY TO REMEMBER THE KEY INCIDENT AROUND OUR RELATIONSHIP WHICH WAS MY DOING – THE CIRCLING GOT WIDER AND THE AVOIDANCE AND LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT LESS.

I approached you during the difference module and expressed that I needed space and would not be choosing your smaller group – I can hardly believe it was me. Which part of me was that? You said it was courageous of me at the time. Your regret is that you didn't follow it up – check it out with me.

Yes, I regret that I didn't redress it too and feel perhaps it was up to me to do that? Somewhere I couldn't trust the situation – on some level.

As I said in the discussion interview, I really wanted to honour you by meeting with you to further your research. I'm really grateful for having the opportunity to speak with you so frankly about the difficulties I had communicating with you and my limited ability to approach you in certain areas of the course.

I am sorry that I didn't remember having had that talk with you or indeed remembering to talk to you again to remove the red light or explore what it was all about....My sense of loss is still sweeping through me (Wed). I now understand why my tentative attempts at informal contact with you during the [other course] either went unnoticed or were extremely awkward.

Coming to meet with you is part of a massive shifting in me and I'm thankful to you for agreeing to include me in your research.

Although we cleared the air there is still a lot of processing occurring.'

(Post-interview reflection from Participant 8)

While this paper focuses on the experience of those former students who undertook discussion interviews with me, of course, I, as a participant, whilst also being the researcher.

My experience of these interviews was that they were intimate, delicate, fascinating, emotionally powerful, humbling, refreshing and challenging; their relational immediacy gave me

what I most sought – a deeper access to my own process through a deeper understanding of our process.

Discussion/Conclusion

These interviews were not comfortable throughout but the common consensus was that they were rewarding for all. Their intimacy moved all of us out of our comfort zones, supporting and challenging us to face ourselves and each other. We were not able to, as Bolton describes it, *'merely tuck... ourselves securely under a quilt patchworked out of safe and self affirming accounts'* (Bolton, 2010, p. 7).

In themselves these interviews are rich and valuable with most, if not all of us, developing a much deeper awareness of ourselves and each other. In provoking my heuristic journey these discussion interviews have been invaluable.

For me, Heaney's (1980) words encapsulate this process:

'Usually you begin by dropping the bucket half way down the shaft and winding up a taking of air. You are missing the real thing until one day the chain draws unexpectedly tight and you have dipped into water that will continue to entice you back. You'll have broken the skin of the pool of yourself. (Heaney 1980a, p. 47)'

(Bolton, 2010, p. 91)

This paper, I hope, has demonstrated the intimacy and richness of carefully set up 'discussion interviews'.

Like any research mine does have limitations, it was conducted with a small group of participants from two cohorts of the same course with the same former trainer and it would have to be seen how this form of interview worked with a wider number of participants and courses. As the former trainer was also the researcher it is inevitable that there is some bias in the results, further research could usefully be carried out by a researcher, or group of researchers on recordings of discussion interviews between a range of former trainers and students.

This intimate form of interview, between former counselling students and trainers, when managed with care, is a rich source for gaining a deeper understanding of our reciprocal influence and, I propose, could potentially be used with other pairs, for example supervisee and supervisor.

APPENDIX 14 - BACP paper presentation 2011

Favourites and Favouritism in Counselling Training

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Paper presented at: "Research and practice"

17th Annual BACP Research Conference Co-hosted by Society for Psychotherapy Research UK, 6-7 May 2011, Liverpool Marriott Hotel City Centre.

Introduction

Let's talk about favourites and favouritism, preferences, connections, and nourishing relationships between trainers and students. Just saying those words, and listening to them, can feel uncomfortable and taboo yet, as we all know, we do not view all people the same. MacFarlane (2001) states that: 'Avoiding favouritism is a classic dilemma faced by lecturers' (p. 146).

Today we will be considering reflections by former counselling and psychotherapy students and their trainers on their perceptions, experiences and ideals about favouritism and its impact on student-trainer relationships.

This paper arose as part of a larger piece of qualitative research on the reciprocal influence of counselling students and trainers and explores material from 6 dyad interviews of pairs of former student and trainer, and 8 discussion interviews between myself and some of my former students. The interviews were lightly structured, lasted 1-2 hours and were recorded. They were all followed up by reflective emails from the researcher to participants and from them back to the researcher. The issues of favourites and favouritism initially emerged organically and were subsequently prompted in later interviews as a growing area of interest.

Responses related to favourites and favouritism were collated and divided into three main areas:

Students' reflections on favouritism by trainers

Trainers' reflections on 'favourite' students

Students' reflections on 'favourite' trainers.

The first challenge concerns what we are talking about when we refer to 'favourites' and 'favouritism' and while I could easily share with you definitions of these terms I think that distracts us from the meaning given them by the former students and trainers. By not giving us one definition to share together I am also leaving us all with our own individual understandings of these terms, just as the interview participants were.

Talking about favourites and favouritism wasn't easy for former students or trainers and it was easy to get tangled, an example from one of the former students:

'If I had thought that you had favoured anybody I would have said Peter, but only because I felt that he needed to be encouraged and I, in my, my sense was that you encouraged him but I didn't see it as a favouritism because I think that's not a word I would have used but I think I would, it's not that you gave more time to him deliberately in any sense but Peter asked for the help and you were willing to offer it and you didn't, you didn't stunt it and I think, I think that's wonderful. umm so, he would get more 'cos he asked for it.' (1:1 05)

Students' reflections on favouritism by trainers

Let's look first at students' reflections on 'favouritism' by trainers. Some students were straightforward and clear in their feedback with several saying: 'I never viewed you as having favourites' (1:1 04) while another experienced favouritism as 'blatant' giving an example of a

trainer telling a student: *'Say, if my daughter needed counselling, I would definitely come to you'* she goes on to say: *'and this is in front of the group and you're thinking 'Oh, well we're all crap then, are we?'* (1:1 03). Between these two extremes were many more complex comments.

For some the concept of favouritism seemed alien, one linked it with being an only child: *'so I never had that comparison it was almost as though I knew you liked me and I was happy with that'* (2:1 02) while another wasn't 'tuned in' to that way of thinking: *'You know it's like if you kind of look around for that kind of stuff you'll find it you know. If you look around, if you're the kind of person who looks around and says 'hang on that person's a favourite and looking for that, is in some way tuned in to look for that, you'll find it, you'll find it. But I'm not tuned in for that kind of thing'* (1:1 08)

Trainers spending more time with some students was often brought up and created some confusion about whether this was favouritism or not:

'it's interesting, because at times it felt like there was favouritism. Then how do you... how do you interpret favouritism? When I think of two people in particular, I don't know if it was favouritism, or they demanded more time.' (1:1 03) They saw their fellow students as the instigators of the extra contact and didn't assume that it meant it would lead to the trainers favouring them, unlike Swee-Choo's findings with Malaysian students (Swee-Choo, 2008).

Some former students spoke of knowing that their trainer liked them and them experiencing this in subtle ways: *'just in small ways like umm, I can just remember agreeing a diary date and umm just the warmth there, I know it's the small fleeting moments'* (2:1 03). This 'liking' was not usually spoken about and one student saw this as an important part of not turning 'liking' into 'favouritism': *'well surely it's a good thing that you didn't directly acknowledge that because then that would have been favouritism'* (2:1 02).

A distinction between a student being liked and a trainer having favourites was important to the research participants and one that was recognised as open to different interpretations by different people: *'I could banter with you and make a remark and I wondered if somebody watching us would think... oh does that look as if she favours her? 'cos I didn't think you did, it was just we got on and it was nice.'* (1:1 01)

Smith (2011), in her study of counselling students, found that this kind of rapport was frowned on by students who felt the trainer was therefore less interested in others. This is in keeping with one of this studies former students who felt that she was not valued as much as another student; in this example she is talking three years later of the different way that I seemed to mark an essay of hers compared with another student:

S *I'd been sitting on that from the first year, and I guess there was a part of me thinking you were more open to being positive towards Mary than me, that's how I suppose if I stepped back a bit – you know, that you valued her contribution and therefore you were far more umm this is how I interpreted it,*

T/R *yes*

S *that you were more, that you could more easily say positive things to Mary but with me you were more likely to criticise and so I thought 'what's that about?'. That's how I sort of interpreted it.*

T/R *so it felt very personal*

S *yes,*

T/R *about the ways I was relating to both of you*

S *yeah ...*

T/R *and was it just that particular essay or did it follow through?*

S *it was that particular, but I was always looking out for it!...it was never massive but it was always there in the background.*

An extension of not feeling as valued as another student is a student's own sense of not being worthy of special attention and so not conceiving they might be a favourite:

'... well it's like umm... I don't know... probably in these last four years that I've actually felt I'm worthy, so I'm hardly going to want to expect any kind of attention...from anybody like that... I

don't know what would have made me more important or a favourite over other people. I don't know... I don't see myself like that' (1:1 03)

On the other hand there was also a student who needed to feel they were a favourite, that they were 'teacher's pet' and who ensured they were with the trainer that they felt offered that to them rather than the trainer they felt was offering it to another student:

S *the person that I thought that you really favoured was in that group and was really strong.. and I felt that you really got on with Frances and really had a good laugh with her and she really like backed you up 100%. She was in that group and I thought she was pretty good, I thought she was, you know with skills I thought mmm she's good so it was like, I couldn't do it, it's like 'no can't be the favourite, can't be the teacher's pet here actually I'm looking more of a fool; actually they don't like what I do anyway? I'm out.' So I went back to where I could develop, which was in the other group I felt that I could be teacher's pet with her and in the first year that was what I needed, I needed to feel shiny so she gave me that, I felt connected to her enough, maybe not too much on a personal level but there was something there*

T/R *so you knew you were favoured*

S *oh yeah!*

T/R *and you would have compared yourself with how I was getting on with Frances*

S *Oh yeah... and I didn't even work with her and she commented on it at the end*

T/R *that you'd never worked together*

S *that we'd never worked together, and that would be why, I'd probably be jealous*

T/R *oh right*

S *probably.. because I was jealous of the relationship that she had with you – simple as that (1:1 06)*

And now let's move to trainers' reflections on 'favourite' students.

Trainers' reflections on 'favourite' students

MacFarlane (2001) considers that '*Students, like all individuals, will consist of a mix of personality types some of whom will seek more help than others. Also, inevitably, lecturers will find some students will possess more likeable personalities than others!*' (p. 146). He regards the appropriate response to this to be for lecturers to suppress any potential bias in themselves. With clear and simple guidance such as this it is no surprise that counselling trainers are uneasy with the word 'favourite'.

Only one of the trainers interviewed used the word 'favourite' and this was with a sense of saying something that was taboo: '*tutors are not supposed to say that, these things, are we? But I remember clearly you were one of my favourites... we're not supposed to have favourites but there was something I really liked about you and sort of valued in you and, and partly felt protective towards.*' (2:1 02)

There was though a general recognition that trainers did like some students more than others, as Rogers and Freiberg noted (1994), along with agreement with the differentiation that the students had made between 'liking more' and 'favourites': '*I mean I do have those strong connections, I don't want to call them favourites*' (2:1 01). All could identify with not wanting their liking of some students more than others to result in favouritism: '*yeah, there was, I was, was talking to somebody the other day and... trying to... differentiate between - I've always worked hard not to have favourites; not to favouritise anybody and I know that there are some people that I like more than others*' (2:1 03)

Some of the trainers expressed a particular dislike of favouritism and linked this with their personal histories:

'I remember with, getting really angry at, at a co-tutor of mine once who had absolutely demonstrated what I felt was crass favouritism in the middle of a meeting and I got really angry,

and I suddenly realized why I got so angry with her, you know I was really having a barney with her saying 'what about the effect on the rest of the group?' There's something about coming from a very large family myself, and I was one of the favourites,' (2:1 02)

'I think it's ... I mean it does relate to a bit of my own history, for my mother, I am the only one of her.. children that she loves... and so I have suffered the, all the cruelty that that brings with it, of being Mum's favourite and her telling my.. other siblings.... That's, that's a life history, so I'm really anti-favouritism... really anti-favouritism, I fight it and at the same time I do like some people more than others' (2:1 03).

While some of the students had queried if trainers spending more time with some students meant that they were their favourites, trainers struggled with this common misperception:

'I was thinking that actually sometimes I get a sense that people can perceive favouritism where it's nothing to do with favouritism. Or I get shocked sometimes when students tell me it is X, you get hints 'is X your favourite?' and I'm thinking 'I had to struggle like hell with them' you know so I don't know what the match is or in fact if someone is really really wanting loads of support people see that... person as a favourite because you're giving them time' (2:1 02).

Several of the trainers talked of some students standing out more for them from very early on: *'there was probably 4 or 5 people who I instantly noticed, like the names you get off first and I guess you were one of them' (2:1 02)*

In one of the discussion interviews with one of my former students I unpick my own response to this instant noticing of some students:

'I think for me, if there's a particular interest or connection, so being lesbian or gay is one of those, umm then there is that initial pull towards of you know, attention, interest, and then, then I think I know that that's there so I kind of step back but that step back is still more forward than another person who hasn't prompted it 'cos it's still there, it's still a kind of, a little more awareness of when that person's saying something or doing something than some of the other people who haven't kind of sparked an interest... So the intrigue is still there with the step back so for me...it feels like a 'and now let's see who they are'... because I don't want to just see this person as 'a muslim' or 'a black person' or 'a lesbian' I want to see, you know, who is the person that that is part of them.. noticing if it is a person who I naturally connect with, is it someone I don't really connect with ... I've grown out of the 'because that person is a lesbian I'll like them' but it's almost a physiological pull that says that to start with' (1:1 06)

Trainers did tend to know what they liked in particular students:

'there was something about you, you came over like someone with a lot of spirit. So vulnerable and with spirit, to tell you the truth... I remember thinking 'actually I really like you'... there was something very likeable about you and I liked your gutsiness, I liked your vulnerability and that sort of fragility that, that it felt like you, you trying to look after in yourself' (2:1 02)

'there would be things I guess there in terms of, if you like similarities, he's articulate, he's a nice looking bloke; he, you know, he dresses clean and smart, casual usually, but you know all the things I like in, I like to do myself. Umm he puzzles about things, umm he wants to get the understanding, he wants to really work it out, sometimes to a kind of excessively irritating way [laughs] yeah, but yeah it's those kind of things that, that kind of, and there were never any kind of thoughts about having a social relationship at that time although we have become more friends since then umm but just something about his attitude set, and also something about 'this is someone I'm going to enjoy'' (2:1 03)

While those examples are more about enjoying something in the student themselves others were about the way that they related with the trainer: *'for me that relationship with Sarah also had an element of safety so I could say things about me and my life and my beliefs that some people might find less easy to hold and again I never felt that judgement from that way, so I didn't feel judged by Sarah for being the wacky person that I am.'* (2:1 01)

Liking and having a strong connection with a student didn't always lead to closeness, one trainer described how *'there are students that I really feel a lot of connection to but I know I'm probably going to keep them at a bigger distance 'cos, 'cos they want more of me than I can give.'* (2:1 01)

Usually though it was concern for the whole group that led to trainers' conscious holding back of showing greater liking of some students: *'I do have stronger connections than other connections. But I'm also really aware as a tutor that I'm the resource for every single person there so I don't want to play it out, I don't want to act it out much umm because that's not appropriate or fair umm so someone on the other end of that may not get a lot of signals because in a way I'm not gonna do that'* (2:1 01)

But for some there was a recognition that, at some level, those who were liked more did get something extra from the trainer, something that was hard to grasp clearly:

'it's like counselling those clients I really love yet sometimes I've always felt really guilty about it because it's like well I don't love these other clients but it's a bit like I can't stop loving that one and it doesn't make it, you know there is something about if some people get that bit more it's just how it is... and that's what's really interesting me in your research 'cos I sometimes feel really like bad, not bad, but I think there's some tutees, like your clients, who just get that bit more and I think it's that level of engagement, that level of care, that level of really prizing, that I can't make happen for everyone but sometimes it's a bit like that sense of 'I will go that extra mile' or... and I can feel quite guilty about that but in equalizing out I think that's crazy because you can't, but you know as long as I.. I don't really know quite what I'm saying here' (2:1 02)

And sometimes what they get more includes extra challenge: *'so there's a, you know there's a balance there and I guess what, what will tend to happen is that sometimes the ones that I like more than others get challenged a bit more strongly I think; ... yes, so there's extra investment but there's extra challenge as well'* (2:1 03)

Having favourite students, or those that were liked more, might well have carried some discomfort for the trainers but it was also nourishing: *'It isn't just that I'm more important to them, it is that sense of they're the nourishing relationships for me, they're the, they're the relationships that I find more textured, umm more rewarding'* (2:1 01). This fits with Palmer's experience as a teacher: *'My gift as a teacher is the ability to "dance" with my students, to teach and learn with them through dialogue and interaction. When my students are willing to dance with me the result can be a thing of beauty.'* (Palmer, 2000, p. 52)

This nourishment was experienced by Palmer and by some of these trainers not only personally but also as nourishing them in their role as trainer and so enhancing the whole group's experience. In the absence of nourishing relationships in a group: *'I find those groups much harder to work with, I find them drier and less rewarding umm, I'll do it and I'll do it with as good a heart as I can, umm but in terms of my nourishment I find that, it, it's drier, you know it's err, it's a water biscuit as opposed to ..'* (2:1 01).

In discussing favourites it would be no surprise that non-favourites would also come up, concern about these students was expressed by one of the trainers in her post-interview reflective email to me: *'A final point that's coming up for me as I write is the basis of the reactions we have to students which it feels now clear that they perceive! I am getting a horrible sense that the qualities that I would say that endeared me to Sue are ones that have been attached to me or ones I aspire to - courage, honesty, cleverness, funny. Now I don't know of any research that says these are the qualities of a good counsellor but I think I at some level equate them as such. Oh, I am so not liking this. What about the poor buggers who are not funny, not courageous, not bright sparks - where's their attention and liking and rating from me? I very much hope that I have ended on a note of undue self-criticism, otherwise I'll get my coat.'* (2:1 02)

And now turning to the third section – students and their 'favourite' trainers.

Students' reflections on 'favourite' trainers.

While the former students didn't tend to use the word 'favourites' when comparing their trainers they did seem comfortable in making comparisons and expressing preferences. While the trainers were constrained by theirs, and others, views of what their professional role entailed the students had a great deal more freedom.

Some students actively worked out how they would benefit from elements of each trainer and ensured that they got this:

'I can remember there were times when I needed tutorials where I deliberately picked you because I felt, and again it's to do with this cognitive thing, I felt that Chris and I were very cognitive but there was something about you that could kind of reach in under that and tweak at something else in me that I wanted to be tweaked and if I had a conversation with Chris we could ... that didn't happen as much.... But it's, it's very, you were very different I think, very different characters, almost kind of coming from different places and I suppose there's been times when I've sought out what I felt I needed from either you or Chris' (2:1 01).

From the distance of hindsight former students were able to see that, while they had a preferred trainer, different trainers would have given them different types of learning:

'I was with Pat, and then you came in, I thought 'wow' and what I can, how I feel about that... what it was about you was I felt at peace and you were solid whereas Pat, I think Pat must have been fantastic and if I had been in a different place he'd have been great but he was so all over the place and where I was at that time, I needed, well I probably actually needed him but I wasn't ready to see that at the time. ... but I think it was better for me that I had that, I wouldn't call you an anchor but you were always solid.' (1:1 05)

Conclusion

So, to conclude, there seems to be an overall rejection of trainers showing favouritism to some students. Alongside this there is an acceptance of each of us liking and connecting with some people more than others, but how this is perceived by others and how it is played out can be areas of tension leading back to accusations of favouritism.

While students actively engage with trainers they prefer, without apparent qualms, trainers guard against favouritism while being nourished by particular connections with some of their students. This is a complex balancing act and with each person bringing their own history and perspective it is one where we are all bound to fail, or be perceived to have failed, at times.

The sample is very small and so it is not possible to make generalisations from the result; this is especially so as the themes of favourites and favouritism emerged as part of a larger piece of research rather than being themes in their own right. However, it is hoped that the issues discussed here will promote interest in this theme by trainers and students and give a starting point for reflection and discussion.