

**The meaning and impact of supervision for experienced counsellors:
a relational narrative**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This research explores the meaning and impact of supervision for experienced counsellors. Eight experienced counsellors were interviewed twice, the interviews were transcribed and analysed using a dialogical narrative inquiry. Three narrative typologies were developed as a result: Relational; Support; and Career-long. This research suggests that experienced counsellors attribute meaning and impact in supervision primarily through the *relationship* they had with their supervisor. A particular type of relationship was articulated, and based on the core conditions: congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard. If the relationship felt safe, and was based on the core conditions, it appears possible to fulfil the ethical requirements inherent in career-long and mandated supervision. In particular, participants expressed a preference for egalitarian and non-hierarchical relationship in supervision. Safe supervision affords a space which can facilitate a range of important functions: self-care; restorative; therapeutic; personal development; compassion, and at times love; and, finally, can be free of unhelpful power dynamics. The narrative typologies of Support and Career-long relate to professional and ethical issues. Supervision for accredited members of BACP is an ethical requirement across the career life-span. And both typologies articulate stories about the impact of that on experienced counsellors. Furthermore, participant narratives, and the literature about supervision, raised questions such as: the efficacy of supervision; power in the supervisory relationship; whether what works for a trainee counsellor is fit for purpose for experienced counsellors; and the professionalisation of counselling.

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Introduction

My research arose out of a desire to explore supervision for experienced counsellors based on personal experience as a supervisee and supervisor. This was further informed by my role as a trainer on a British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) accredited counsellor training course. As a trainer I was, and remain, reasonably convinced of the value of supervision for those in training. It was possible to see from a developmental, and educative, perspective that 'good enough supervision' (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012) appeared to equate to more confident, effective and ethical counsellors as they moved towards qualified status. As an experienced counsellor however, my experience of supervision felt qualitatively different to that of a counsellor in training. In addition, it was difficult to articulate what constituted 'good enough' supervision from the perspective of experienced counsellors. Early questions included whether my supervision as an experienced counsellor helped me to withstand the impact of client work, as Hawkins and Shohet (2012) contend. Retrospectively there were other issues which at that time much less well formed in my thinking: finding a supervisor where there were no dual relationships; time and expense; and, increasingly, it was becoming difficult to find a supervisor who was more experienced than me. These challenges led to my interest in supervision for experienced counsellors, and the start of this research.

In this chapter I offer information about supervision for experienced counsellors to contextualise and situate my research question. To do this the chapter will be structured as follows: an overview of the history of supervision; a definition of supervision; and finally a positioning statement.

History of supervision

This section will give an overview of supervision from its inception as a facet of training psychoanalysts through to the present day. Furthermore, I will describe the evolution of counselling supervision, in particular as it applies to members of BACP and their codes of ethics. BACP are the largest membership body for counsellors (Aldridge, 2014). As a result, many – if not all – experienced counsellors hold at least membership of BACP, as did my participants. There are, of course, other membership bodies for counsellors, for example the British Association for Person-Centred Counselling (BAPCCA). However, it is an approach-specific Association, and, as a result has a self-limiting membership base. In contrast, BACP membership is not confined to a particular theoretical approach. Therefore, as Aldridge (2014) argues it is possible to use BACP as a 'proxy for counselling in the United Kingdom' (p. 161).

Bernard and Goodyear (2009) highlight the long history of supervision in psychotherapy, starting with Freud who they credit with being the 'first psychotherapy supervisor' (p. 81). Similarly, Dunnett, Jesper, O'Donnell and Vallance (2013) suggest that the history of supervision can be traced back to and originating as 'an element of psychoanalytical training' (p. 11) which was used alongside teaching. This is also picked up by Page and Wosket (2015) who again locate supervision as a function of training and as 'part of the process of preparing the fledgling practitioner' in psychotherapy (p. 1). In turn, Lambers (2013) and Bernard and Goodyear (2009) cite Carl Rogers, the founder of the person-centred approach (e.g., 1951) as being aware of the importance of supervision in the training of person-centred counsellors: 'supervision was a central and long-standing concern of Carl Rogers' (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009, p. 83). In addition, Page and Wosket (2015) and Wheeler and Richards (2007) acknowledge Kadushin's (1968) role in developing supervision within social work. In turn, aspects of Kadushin's work, often described as 'managerial supervision' (see Page & Wosket, 2015) have been incorporated into counselling supervision.

There is, therefore, a consensus that supervision began as a function of training psychoanalysts, and later was seen by Rogers as important in the training of person-centred counsellors. Indeed, Lambers (2013) contends most of the person-centred supervision literature originated 'in the USA' and 'centred on supervision with trainee therapists and students' (p. 455). Furthermore, Page and Wosket (2015) and Wheeler and Richards (2007) are among those who acknowledge that much of the supervision literature arose out of North America at that point.

In order to situate the emergence of counselling supervision, it is helpful to offer a very brief history of counselling. However, as Aldridge (2014) states, the history of counselling is contested and complex. Nevertheless, as a separate activity to psychoanalysis, counselling emerged and was developed in the United Kingdom in the third quarter of the twentieth century (see for example, Aldridge, 2014). Bondi (2004) attributes, in part at least, the emergence of counselling as a response to the 'medicalised practice of psychotherapy' (p. 320). Aldridge (2014) and Bondi (2004) both acknowledge that counselling was, at that time, an avowedly lay practice, and entirely undertaken on a voluntary basis and with no requirement for formal training or supervision. In fact, Aldridge (2014) observes that it was only in 1945 that the term 'counselling' started to be used, and became more common 'with the arrival of Rogers' client-centred therapy' (p. 8). As counselling services expanded, so did training courses for volunteers, and Bondi (2004)

locates an important point in the development of counselling in the forging of new networks amongst those providing counselling in the voluntary sector. This led to the creation of the Standing Council for the Advancement of Counselling in 1971. In 1976 this became the British Association for Counselling (BAC) in (e.g., Aldridge, 2014; Bondi, 2004). Ultimately the Association, in 2000, decided to include 'psychotherapy' and so became BACP. Counselling, as with psychotherapy, is not a state regulated occupation. However, ultimately abortive attempts were made to statutorily regulate therapeutic approaches, or 'talking therapies', in the early part of this century (see Aldridge, 2011). At the time of writing my thesis the government is again consulting with the public about statutory regulation of the talking therapies.

Over time, supervision began to emerge within counselling, though in the early days, as with other therapeutic approaches, it was confined to training. However, Lawton (2000) notes that the BAC made supervision for all members mandatory, regardless of either qualification or experience, commensurate with the publication of their first Codes of Ethics in 1984. This position has not changed in the intervening years. Barden (2001) argues that mandatory supervision, because of its roots as a function of training, assumes that the supervisor should normally be more experienced. Moreover 'there is an expectation that the supervisor will in some way take responsibility for monitoring the practice of the counsellor' (Barden, 2001, p. 45). In fact, BACP have further articulated and developed supervision as 'public protection', affording accountability and as gatekeeping for the profession (BACP, 2010; 2016). Mandatory supervision is presumed, therefore, to be an ethical safeguard (Bond, 2014) and forms part of a member's adherence to the Ethical Framework for the Helping Professions (BACP, 2010; 2016). I will discuss in more detail the precise requirements in the next section. However, in brief, the position in North America remains that supervision is confined to training, across all therapeutic approaches. On the other hand, in the United Kingdom, an accredited member of BACP must adhere to a minimum of one and a half hours of supervision each month, as a minimum requirement.

In turn, as Page and Wosket (2015) acknowledge, supervision as mandated created a sizable demand for counselling supervisors. It is therefore, interesting to note the related difficulty highlighted by Milne, Sheikh, Pattison and Wilkinson (2010). In a systematic review of the evidence base for supervision training they argue that there is a no consensus about what constitutes effective training for supervisors. As a result, they call for further research in order to clarify the underpinning theoretical frameworks for supervisor training. Ten years before Milne et al. (2010), Proctor and Inskipp (2000) had also commented on

the lack of agreement with regard to effective supervisor training. It was, for instance, only in the late 1980s that the then BAC started to review the training and accreditation of supervisors (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). There are currently estimated to be more than 400 approaches to counselling (Cooper 2008) and, as Speedy (2000) has argued, this proliferation seems to be increasingly mirrored in the supervisory context. Arguably therefore, Proctor and Inskipp's (2010) argument that supervision is still more 'tribal and sectarian than is suitable for most counsellors on the ground' (p. 210) has some veracity. Furthermore, Grauel (2002) is of the opinion that, given there is no uniform counsellor training, the potential for mismatches between supervisor-supervisee orientation may create 'insurmountable obstacles in supervisory relationships' (p.11).

Definition of supervision

Tudor and Worrall (2004) highlight the many definitions of supervision and, citing twelve, argue that within each definition there are certain underlying assumptions, particular perspectives and emphases. As Edwards (2010) argues, whilst at times similar wording might be used, underpinning the different definitions are diverse theoretical and philosophical positions in respect to therapy and supervision. Grauel (2002) contends that there are problems in defining supervision because of its diverse history and origins. Citing Hobart (1931), he makes a pertinent observation that there are as many viewpoints as there are supervisors and supervisees and, further, that models of supervision lack coherence and clarity. On reviewing the literature the diversity of views in respect of models was apparent to me and I examine them in detail in the Literature Review chapter that follows. Indeed, most 'definitions' are more accurately *descriptions* of supervision which comprise a range of different views. Arguably, as Grauel (2002) contends, descriptions of supervision are predicated on the equally diverse, and often competing, views on what constitutes therapy. Dunnett et al. (2013), for example, acknowledge that this is a debate 'which has preoccupied the profession for decades' (p. 4). In turn, perhaps, reflecting the lack of coherence and diversity of views about supervision as articulated by Edwards (2010) and Grauel (2002). In addition, Barden (2001), reflecting on the diverse nature of BACP's members, argues that ethical codes relating to supervision need to be 'inclusive but specific, clear but flexible, final but open to interpretation' (p.41). In common with Barden (2001) I would argue that one consequence is that the codes do seek to 'address every eventuality in a way that is becoming increasingly legislative' (p. 41). It is arguable, therefore, that the task of defining supervision, and the ethical codes inextricably linked with supervision, is difficult and complex. Nevertheless, it is important to offer some

definition, or to at least reflect the diversity of views about what might constitute supervision. Moreover, and further complicating what Grauel (2002) names as a plurality of voices, BACP made substantive revisions to their Ethical Framework in 2016.

Before defining supervision, I will state what the supervision requirements are for members of BACP for context. BACP have three membership categories: student member; individual member; and accredited member. Student members, once suitably qualified, can progress to being an individual member. In addition, accredited membership is possible subject to submitting a successful application (see:

<http://www.bacp.co.uk/accreditation/Individual%20Practitioners/>). Individual or accredited membership is predicated being on the voluntary Register which came into being in February 2013 (BACP, 2014). Individual members must have regular and on-going supervision (BACP, 2010; 2016) but the amount is not stipulated. Accredited members are required to have a minimum of one and a half hours a month (BACP, 2010; 2016). Registrants are required to have supervision which is appropriate to the amount of clients seen (BACP, 2014). However, again, an amount is not stipulated. Nevertheless, supervision as a member of BACP is an ethical requirement across the career life-span.

In seeking to offer a definition of supervision, I will present first the definition used by BACP in the Ethical Framework in use at the time I conducted the interviews analysis in my research (i.e., BACP, 2010). I will then turn to the revised Ethical Framework (BACP, 2016). Finally, I will outline the definition of supervision for Registrants (BACP, 2014).

Supervision as defined by BACP (2010) is viewed as a formal arrangement undertaken with an experienced supervisor. The task is clearly focussed on the client-counsellor (i.e., supervisee) relationship. It is seen as offering accountability to the public, client protection, and protection to the counsellor against burn out and stress (BACP, 2010; Bond, 2015). It is a place in which the counsellor can take time to reflect on their work with clients, organisational issues, and personal issues which might affect client work (BACP, 2010; Bond, 2015). In the revised Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (BACP, 2016) the following definition is offered:

Supervision is essential to how practitioners sustain good practice throughout their working life. Supervision provides practitioners with regular and ongoing opportunities to reflect in depth about all aspects of their practice in order to work as effectively, safely and ethically as possible. Supervision also sustains the personal resourcefulness require to undertake the work (p. 11).

BACP produced a range of Good Practice in Action (GPiA) resources designed to support the revisions to the Ethical Framework. In one of these, Stainsby (2015) - citing the Ethical Framework (BACP, 2016) - stipulates that supervision is an 'essential form of professional mentoring and accountability' (p. 5) which relies on roles such as gatekeeper, teacher, tutor, trainer, judge and mentor among others. Furthermore, Bager-Charleson (2015), in another GPiA, acknowledged the challenge in defining supervision but offered the following:

[Supervision is] a specialised form of mentoring provided for practitioners responsible for undertaking challenging work with people. Supervision is provided to: ensure standards; enhance quality and creativity; and enable the sustainability and resilience of the work being undertaken (p. 5).

Furthermore, the definition used by BACP for the Register (BACP, 2010) offers the following definition from Inskipp and Proctor (1993): a definition often cited in the supervision literature (e.g., Creaner, 2014):

A working alliance between the supervisor and counsellor in which the counsellor can offer an account or recording of her work; reflect on it; receive feedback and where appropriate, guidance. The object of this alliance is to enable the counsellor to gain in ethical competence, confidence, compassion and creativity in order to give her best possible service to the client. (BACP, 2014, p. 2)

Supervision is often described as fulfilling certain functions. Indeed, this is arguably one of the few areas where consensus can be found. The main functions – or tasks – of supervision are described as: normative; formative; and restorative (e.g., Proctor, 1987). Fuller definitions are as follows:

Normative: quality assurance, the supervisee ensuring that the needs of clients are met ethically and professionally, the establishment and protection of professional ethics and standards of practice. The supervisor is viewed here as upholding professional practice.

Formative: Developing and enhancing the skills, knowledge and aptitude of the counsellor, often described as a form of Continuous Professional Development (CPD). It is also seen as facilitating learning, problem solving, teaching, and developing a professional identity as a counsellor.

Restorative: Supporting the counsellor so that they are able to deal with the emotional effects of counselling. Offering affirmation, containing difficult emotional work, and as protection against burn-out and stress. This is seen as being based on a safe and supportive relationship in supervision.

Page and Wosket (2015) cite this list as originating from Kadushin (1985) who conceptualised the functions of supervision as respectively: managerial; educative; and supportive. These terms (normative; formative; and restorative) are often labelled differently which, arguably, adds to the lack of clarity in the supervision literature. For example, Dunnett et al. (2013) cite the functions as educative, supportive, and managerial.

In seeking to define, or describe, supervision I am in agreement with Grauel (2001) that there are many voices, and so many possible definitions. However, there are some commonalities: specifically that supervision is viewed by BACP as offering the client protection, as gatekeeping for the profession, and as an ethical requirement for counsellors across the career life-span.

Positioning statement

My thesis contains a Reflexive positioning chapter where I reflect on my personal engagement with, and potential impact on, this research. However, it is important to offer some contextualising, and situating, information about my background here. The Reflexive chapter also serves an important reflective process, whereas the information here is – to an extent – more objectively descriptive. My theoretical counselling orientation is best described as humanistic-integrative. This is a broad category. For instance, ‘humanistic’ in counselling terms is an overarching concept which captures a range of likeminded philosophical orientations. These can be described as comprising person-centred theory, gestalt, and existential approaches to counselling. This, as has already been suggested (e.g., Dunnett et al., 2013; Grauel, 2002) encompasses a diverse range of views, both within and across approaches. Person-centred theory for example has been described as ‘tribal’ (e.g., see Sanders 2012; Warner, 2000) and is undoubtedly a contested theoretical field. However, my initial training, which I completed in 1998, was humanistic-integrative and I have since undertaken training in an experiential person-centred therapy, Emotion Focused Therapy (e.g., Elliott, 2012). As a result, it is possible to argue that I am moving away from an integrative stance as a counsellor.

In respect of my professional roles, I have worked in education since 2003, and am currently Subject Director for Counselling at an HEI. Furthermore, I am a qualified

supervisor, and a trainer on a BACP accredited training course. I have been a member of BACP since 1998, an accredited member since 2006, and joined the BACP voluntary Register in 2013. Moreover, I am a trainer on a BACP project - Counselling for Depression (CfD) - which is delivered to experienced counsellors working within Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services (see Sanders & Hill, 2014). CfD is a manualised therapy which is recommended by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) and is approved by them for delivery within IAPT. BACP on their website describe CfD in the following way:

The CfD model of therapy is derived from the *Skills for Health* humanistic competence framework devised by Roth, Hill and Pilling (2009)[1] which provided the basis for the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for psychological therapists. This framework was developed using therapy manuals from randomised controlled trials and exemplar texts which have impacted significantly on practice, ensuring that the therapeutic competences are closely aligned to the evidence-base and hence predictive of good outcomes for patients.
(<https://www.bacp.co.uk/research/CfD/>)

Whilst I have discussed this in more detail in the Reflexive chapter, it is worth noting in advance that my involvement with CfD causes me disquiet, philosophically and politically. In essence, as a humanistic counsellor there is considerable tension involved in delivering training which is described as being 'manualised'.

In conclusion, I would like to offer some flavour of who I am, as a counsellor, supervisor and trainer, and so as a person. This is best exemplified by Sands (2000) who contends that:

Good therapy is a high-wire act, a balancing trick, and the trick is to get the balance right. The therapist must juggle between two positions of respecting his client as she is and yet working to bring about change. It is a process which needs to be approached with love, optimism, humility and humour – concepts whose power lies in their ability to make us feel connected with each other, which remind us we are two of a kind, humankind (p. 201-202).

Part of this quote is framed and sits on the wall in front of me as I type. It was given to me by a group of graduating trainee counsellors a few years ago because, as articulated by the group, it captured their experience of my values and beliefs. In particular, again based on feedback from the group, my belief in connectedness and so in the power of a dialogic relationship as a vehicle for change and healing. Sands (2000) writes about her experience of abusive therapy and in so doing delineates what might stop abuse in therapy.

In turn, this is another important value for me: that of listening to clients, and supervisees, about their experiences, doing this means the counsellor, supervisor – or trainer – does not seek to occupy an expert - or ‘one who knows’ - position. The relevance of my values will become apparent throughout this research.

To conclude, I have offered an overview of counselling supervision, including the history, definitions, and the development of supervision as mandatory for members of BACP. I have also included a positioning statement. My aim has been to contextualise and situate counselling supervision at the time of writing this thesis.

Literature review

A traditional literature review has been employed to identify literature from a variety of sources since the inception of this research. A University library has been used to source literature, York St John University. Inter library loans have been used to source literature not available directly from the library but identified as potentially relevant. Furthermore, an iterative process whereby one article or book has identified other sources of literature has proved fruitful in sourcing literature relevant to the study. This has been an ongoing process throughout the lifetime of my research, with final searches being conducted during the latter part of 2017.

Broad exclusion and inclusion criteria have been utilised in order not to exclude potentially relevant literature. Therefore, the term *counsellor*, *counsel*or*, and *psychotherapist* have been used alongside *supervision*. Research which relates *only* to the impact of supervision for trainee counsellors has been excluded. However, research which relates to both trainee and experienced counsellors has been included. There is a wealth of research about the impact of supervision for trainee counsellors, and in comparison a dearth of research on supervision for experienced counsellors. In addition, the literature suggests (e.g., Wheeler & Richards, 2007) there is need to undertake research with an explicit focus on experienced counsellors. Hence, the decision was taken to exclude research pertaining only to trainee counsellors on that basis. However, it has not been possible to make the same distinction in the generic literature about supervision, because the literature invariably refers to both groups. Indeed, this was expected given supervision in the British context is mandatory across the career lifespan.

The history of supervision has been reviewed in the Introduction; likewise a definition has also been included there. Hence, this review of the literature about supervision has been divided into the following sections: supervision models; the

relationship in supervision; the impact of supervision; and the context and culture of supervision. This section will conclude with the aims of my research as these arise out of the literature.

Supervision theory and practice

It is commonly accepted that there are three phases in the development of the theory and practice (e.g., Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Dunnett et al., 2013; Page & Wosket, 2015) of supervision. The first phase is that of the same-school or approach specific supervision. Approach specific supervision, sometimes referred to as same-school supervision, refers to supervision which is grounded in and arises out of a particular theory. Page and Wosket (2015) describe this as supervision which took the 'theory and practices of a counselling or psychotherapy model' (p. 3) and applied those principles and processes of the approach to supervision. Furthermore, this approach to supervision was based on the supervisor communicating the principles of a particular approach to a trainee. The second phase saw the emergence of developmental models in supervision. Page and Wosket (2015) contend that developmental models of supervision describe a 'more-or-less linear process of growth in competence and awareness' (p. 4). Furthermore, developmental models are sometimes referred to as stage models (see for example, Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Dunnett et al., 2013; Page & Wosket, 2015). The underlying assumption is that the supervisee moves through clearly identifiable stages of development that is from 'novice' to 'master'. Finally, the third phase referred to models which are either 'integrative' (Dunnett et al., 2013 p. 14), or 'functional' (Page & Wosket, 2015, p.9). Page and Wosket (2015) define 'integrative' models as a movement away from approach-specific supervision towards a recognition that supervision needs to cross therapeutic orientations. Furthermore, integrative models are perceived as a movement away from supervision as developmental; there is less emphasis, therefore, on the counsellor as moving through stages, or levels. Moreover, in contrast with approach-specific supervision, the supervisor and supervisee do not need to share a theoretical orientation.

Whilst there are some commonalities, there is little in the way of consensus in the literature about supervision theory or approaches. One reason for this might be located in the origins of supervision theory and practice. Wheeler and Richards (2007), for example, observe that many of the original models and approaches to supervision arose out of the North American context. Furthermore, as Page and Wosket (2015) and Wheeler and Richards (2007), suggest most of this pertains to trainees rather than experienced counsellors. The relevant difference here is that in North America supervision is invariably

confined to the training of counsellors. In contrast, in Britain supervision for accredited members of BACP is a requirement across the career life-span (BACP, 2010; 2016). As a general point, Tudor and Worrall (2004) note therefore that developmental models are culturally specific to the North American context.

More recently, there is a body of literature which does not neatly fit into the phases described earlier. However, these can be conceptualised as texts about supervision which fit two categories: one has an aim of offering the supervisee a guide; and one which is offered as a 'guide' for the supervisor. Moreover, these texts could be described as the application of the theory of supervision into the practice of supervision. As such they offer insights into the current state of supervision in the British context.

Hence, I will begin with a review of the literature as it applies to the three phases, using the following headings: approach specific supervision; developmental models; and following Dunnett et al. (2013), integrative models of supervision. And, finally, I will review the supervision literature describing the application of theory into practice.

Approach specific supervision

Approach specific supervision has a long-history, dating back to Freud, who Bernard and Goodyear (2009) credit, perhaps unsurprisingly, as the 'first psychotherapy supervisor' (p. 81). It is generally accepted (e.g., Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Dunnett et al., 2013; Page & Wosket, 2015) that approach, or school, specific, supervision encompasses the major theoretical schools in counselling and psychotherapy: i.e., psychodynamic; person-centred; and cognitive-behavioural. However, given the humanistic orientation of my participants, this review will be confined to approach specific supervision within the humanistic traditions, and in particular person-centred supervision.

Bernard and Goodyear (2009) contend that for Carl Rogers there was little difference, in fact, between his work as a supervisor and his work as a counsellor. In some respects this is evident in the current literature about person-centred supervision. Tudor and Worrall (2004), for example, state that their aim is to develop the 'theory of supervision growing out of Rogers' theory of therapy' (p. 17). Bryant-Jefferies (2005) starts with a description of person-centred theory rather than a description of person-centred supervision. Tudor and Worrall (2004; 2007) have produced and edited two volumes describing and evaluating supervision from a person-centred perspective. Both volumes are grounded in the theory and practice of supervision as it applies to person-centred counsellors. Furthermore, Lambers (2013), picks up a central theme in person-centred

supervision, which was evident in Bryant-Jefferies (2005), and Tudor and Worrall (2004; 2007): specifically that the focus in supervision is on the experience of the counsellor and on the 'development of the therapeutic ability of the supervisee through the *supervision relationship*' (Lambers, 2013, p. 454). In particular, the focus for the person-centred supervisor will be in facilitating the core conditions and seeking to develop psychological contact with the supervisee (e.g., Bryant-Jefferies, 2005; Creaner, 2014; Lambers, 2013; Tudor & Worrall, 2004; 2007). In contrast, the generic literature on supervision presumes a primary focus in supervision to be on the work with the client. And, as a result, supervision is viewed as a separate and distinct activity from therapy (Dunnett et al., 2013; Page & Wosket, 2015) which focusses on tasks, skills and acquiring knowledge. In addition, there has been an 'on-going process of the incorporating of concepts and ideas taken from psychotherapy and counselling but made supervision specific' (Page & Wosket, 2015, p. 8).

Bryant-Jefferies (2005) acknowledges the lack of texts about person-centred approaches to supervision. Over a decade later this is still evident, Tudor and Worrall (2004; 2007) and Bryant-Jefferies (2005) being some exceptions. Lambers (2013), for instance, notes that most of the literature and research about supervision is now written from a generic perspective and seeks 'to define the purpose, function and practice of supervision in terms of models that are applicable to supervision across different therapeutic orientations' (p. 453). Whilst there is person-centred supervision literature it tends to be located in texts as discrete chapters, Lambers (2000; 2013) providing examples. Furthermore, Worrall (2001) writes about supervision and empathic understanding, again this in a chapter in a book about person-centred theory. This is in contrast to the growth of literature about integrative models of supervision, in particular. Perhaps, as Dunnett et al. (2013) argue, one reason for decline in approach-specific supervision is related to the 'recognition of the limitations of employing a therapeutic theory to engender professional growth' (p. 14). This, arguably, reflects the view of BACP in Information Sheets (e.g., Dispenser, 2002) produced to support the Ethical Framework (BACP, 2010) where the focus is located firmly on maintaining adequate standards of counselling. More recently BACP have produced a series of Good Practice in Action (GPiA) resources to support the new Ethical Framework (2016) which, arguably, further reinforce this stance. The supervisor is often, for instance, positioned as the gatekeeper, or as having responsibility to ensure good practice, as an ethical requirement (e.g., Bager-Charleson, 2015; Mitchels, 2015; Stainsby, 2015). From a person-centred perspective, Lambers (2013) locates the reason for the move away from approach-specific supervision as being found in the

‘emphasis on developing an overarching framework for understanding and describing the supervision process and the supervision relationship’ (p 454). Creaner (2014), moreover, marks the movement away from approach-specific supervision as one enabling greater focus on the educational aspects in supervision. In addition, Lambers (2013) and Tudor and Worrall (2004; 2007) argue that accountability, monitoring the work of the supervisee, and supervisor liability form part of the rationale for the move away from approach-specific supervision. Taken as a whole therefore, the move away from approach-specific towards supervision as a separate activity frames supervision as a distinct professional obligation.

Criticisms of approach-specific supervision tend to argue that the supervisor, because of the focus on the supervisee rather than the client, might ‘miss important information about their supervisees and about the range and impact of interventions they might use to help with those supervisees’ (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009, p. 80). Furthermore, Bernard and Goodyear (2009) suggest that the single lens of a particular approach might encourage supervisors to privilege a therapeutic approach rather than an educational one. Clearly there are echoes here of Creaner (2014) who argues that developmental and integrative models have greater scope to contain educative elements in supervision. Dunnett et al. (2013) argue that a further disadvantage of approach-specific supervision is that the supervisor might not ‘step outside the theory, say, to uphold responsibility for ethical practice’ (p. 12). This is also an argument put forward by Page and Wosket (2015). Moreover, it positions supervision as a professional activity, and introduces the notion that the supervisor is the gatekeeper for the profession, or at least upholding ethical practice.

In contrast, strengths of approach-specific supervision include the supervisor and supervisee sharing the same orientation. This is perhaps what Bryant-Jefferies (2005) refers to as being enabled to speak the same language. As Dunnett et al. (2013) suggest the supervisor is potentially able to act as a role model for the supervisee. Whilst arguably this description still positions the supervisor as the more experienced partner, it is possible to see this as arising out of the origins of approach-specific supervision, as a training tool. Page and Wosket (2015), for example, contend that there is a ‘compelling argument’ (p. 3) for trainees to be supervised by someone more experienced in the same theoretical framework. It is worth noting that the person-centred supervision literature tends not to make the same distinction between trainee and qualified counsellor. In fact, Thomson (2007), writing about working with trainee counsellors argues that the terms such as supervisor, supervisee, qualified and unqualified suggest a lack of mutuality, and are

misleading. This is because they suggest 'an expertise and lack of expertise when, in fact, what is present is difference' (Thomson, 2017, p. 141).

Developmental models of supervision

Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987) is often the most well-known, and most frequently cited, developmental model of supervision (e.g., Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Creaner, 2014; Dunnett et al., 2013; Henderson et al., 2014; Page & Wosket, 2015). As Dunnett et al. (2013), Page and Wosket (2015), and Tudor and Worrall (2004) note, this approach to supervision can be 'traced back to Hogan's (1964) paper on the four stages of development of the psychotherapist' (Tudor & Worrall, 2004, p. 52). Furthermore, Bernard and Goodyear (2009) acknowledge that it is possible to trace developmental models, for instance, back to the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, Tudor and Worrall (2004) contend that developmental models remain the most popular and influential.

An advantage of developmental models is that, as Dunnett et al. (2013) argue, it is possible to highlight 'the changing needs and anxieties of counsellors at different stages' (p. 15). As Page and Wosket (2015) observe, these models were based on a rationale that supervisors should have, or needed to acquire, a range of styles which could be adapted to the individual needs of the supervisee as they move through recognisable and definable stages. These stages clearly infer, inherent in the move from novice to master-craftsman, hierarchy in the supervisory relationship. For example, at Level 1 the supervisee is assumed to have limited knowledge of technique and theory; at Level 2 greater competence and understanding of theory is achieved; at Level 3 counselling competence is greater, and practice is seen as being more effective; and at Level 4 experience becomes fully integrated and the counsellor is seen as fully functioning (adapted from Page & Wosket, 2015, p. 5). Hawkins and Shohet (2012) describe the Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987) model as having five stages. However, the movement is again conceptualised in similar terms and, in particular, in the use of the word 'trainee' (p. 76) the movement from novice to master-craftsman is assumed.

Furthermore, as Tudor and Worrall (2004) argue, developmental models do not take account of the fact that a counsellor may already be an experienced counsellor. There is, therefore, an inherent tension for experienced counsellors in that, as Tudor and Worrall (2004) argue, developmental models 'propose an end stage of mastery' (p. 53). As Page and Wosket (2015) argue, the focus in developmental models is invariably on the trainee. As a result, the model becomes less useful the more experienced the counsellor becomes.

Though, Hawkins and Shohet (2012) argue, in order for developmental models to be of use, as the supervisee progresses through the stages, the nature of the supervision must change too. Grauel (2002), in fact, argues that the master practitioner stance inherent in the developmental models lack sufficient validity outside of training. Moreover, Hawkins and Shohet (2012) caution that the supervisor must recognise the individual needs of the particular supervisee, rather than using the model rigidly. As Chang and O'Hara (2010) argue, developmental models assume that the supervisee will grow and change over time. In addition, Page and Wosket (2015) state that further criticism of such models is that there is too much focus on the supervisee's development, and insufficient on the supervisor's development. They argue that any developmental model 'must allow that the supervisor is also in a process of learning in parallel with the supervisee' (Page & Wosket, 2015, p.7). In addition, it is possible to critique developmental models, based on the over-simplification of the process of becoming a counsellor, whereas in practice this is a complex process. Dunnett et al. (2013) argue, for example, that this can lead to the supervisee being 'treated more as a category than an individual' (p. 14). This is a concern echoed by Hawkins and Shohet (2012), and Page and Wosket (2015).

Finally, Tudor and Worrall (2004) contend that there is the potential to infantilise the counsellor because most developmental models are, in their view, based on models of child development. Certainly, Chang and O'Hara (2010) for example, use language suggesting this has some veracity: 'entry level supervisees, like children' (p. 146). It is, moreover, interesting to note their assertion that developmental models are 'sequential and hierarchical' (Chang & O'Hara, 2010, p. 147). Arguably, as Dunnett et al. (2013) suggest, this denotes within developmental models of supervision a hierarchy of power that favours the supervisor as the authority, or master.

Integrative models of supervision

There are generally accepted to be four integrative models in Britain at the current time. Dunnett et al. (2013) state that these are: a process model (e.g., Hawkins & Shohet, 2012); a cyclical model (e.g., Page & Wosket, 2015); a generic integrative model (e.g., Carroll, 2004); and an integrative relational model (Gilbert & Evans, 2000). According to Wheeler and Richards (2007), Hawkins and Shohet's model was the first to come out of the British context in 1989. Hawkins and Shohet's (2012) model is sometimes cited as developmental, and at others integrative. Certainly Tudor and Worrall (2004) firmly locate it as a developmental. In contrast, Bernard and Goodyear (2009) cite it as a social role

model rather than an integrative model. Page and Wosket (2015) cite it as functional model, and do not reference it in their overview of developmental models. Dunnett et al. (2013) include it in their table (p. 15) as a 'process model' but they include discussion of the model under the developmental heading. However, Tudor and Worrall (2004) contend that it is a hierarchical model where the supervisor is assumed to be the authority. With the concurrent assumption, of course, that the supervisee is less experienced. It is interesting to note that Grauel (2002) contends that both social role models to supervision and developmental models share a common understanding: namely that of an end point of master practitioner. Nevertheless, Hawkins and Shohet (2012) describe their model as 'relational and systemic' (p. 86) in that it considers both what is happening in the relationship with the client, and within the supervisory relationship. Arguably, as Grauel (2002) contends, this perhaps reflects the fact that defining supervision 'has been a perennial issue' and one where many have continued to 'vie for authoritative status' (p. 12). Moreover, his view is that, in fact, the literature about supervision is marked by a lack of clarity about its defining features, and purpose. Indeed, it is possible to argue that contradictions abound in the supervision literature. For example, 'process' is conceptualised quite differently in the person-centred literature to Hawkins and Shohet's (2012) conceptualisation of the same word. Tudor and Worrall (2004) describe process as phenomenological, concerned with observing the world rather than interpreting it, and moreover, as an 'ongoing movement rather than a sequence of more or less discrete events' (p. 23). In contrast, Hawkins and Shohet (2012) appear to conceptualise 'process' as more akin to describing a sequence of events.

Nevertheless, integrative models of supervision are described as supervision which crosses the boundaries between approach specific supervision and developmental models. Dunnett et al. (2013) argue that, as a result, integrative approaches build on the strengths of the other two whilst avoiding the limitations, though they are not specific about how this is achieved or what it means. Page and Wosket (2015) state that integrative, or what they call contemporary supervision models, place more emphasis on the tasks and functions of supervision. This includes, for example, tasks such as Proctor's (1987) normative, formative and restorative functions, or tasks (see the Introduction for a detailed description). Moreover, supervision is seen as enabling the supervisee to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and attributes required to work as a counsellor. Page and Wosket (2015) frame supervision as a 'learning alliance designed to enhance the development of autonomy in clinical practitioners' (p. 8). As a result, Dunnett et al. (2013)

and Page and Wosket (2015) contend that this marked the movement towards supervision as a separate and specific activity. It is possible to see this movement in the books written about supervision where supervision is, indeed, described as a discrete activity, and not linked to a particular counselling approach (e.g., Carroll, 2004; Creaner, 2014; Dunnett et al., 2013; Henderson, 2009; Henderson, Holloway & Millar, 2014). Furthermore, it is possible to make the argument that this is valuable for the supervisee. As Tudor and Worrall (2004) contend, it can be restorative for the supervisee to be encouraged to reflect on strategies and contemplate answers.

However, it is also possible to critique integrative supervision models. Page and Wosket (2015) acknowledge that it can encourage counsellors to uncritically adopt theories from other approaches that do not necessarily sit comfortably together. Transference and counter-transference are cited by Page and Wosket (2015) and Tudor and Worrall (2004) as problematic in this respect for humanistic counsellors in particular. There are, theoretically, and philosophically, tensions for a humanistic counsellor to incorporate psychodynamic concepts into their practice. In particular, humanistic approaches privilege phenomenology and the client as expert on themselves (see Rogers, 1951; Mearns & Thorne, 2013 for example). In particular, Tudor and Worrall (2004) note that Hawkins and Shohet (2012) appear to present the model as theoretically neutral, and generic. Indeed, Tudor and Worrall (2004) argue that the model is, in fact, theoretically biased towards psychodynamic theory.

Application of theory into practice – guides to supervision.

There is a small but growing body of literature which discusses the application of supervision theory as it applies to practice. It is conceivable that this group of texts arise out of the integrative supervision approaches described above. Nevertheless, this literature seeks to offer a guide to supervision practice, at times from the perspective of the supervisee, but more commonly written for supervisors. Furthermore, some texts offer advice about working with specific client groups (e.g. Carroll & Hollway, 1999) and two which are written as guides to supervision for the supervisee.

Those aimed primarily at the supervisor include Henderson (2009) and Henderson et al. (2014). Both books seek to offer advice to supervisors defining supervision, and, act as a guide to supervision in practice. Henderson et al. (2014) explicitly state that their book is akin to a manual about supervision, and furthermore has an overt focus on supervision as it applies to 'supervising and appraising trainees' (p. 11). In contrast, Henderson (2009) has

a different focus in that the book is aimed, as the title suggests, at offering reflections on supervision. Indeed, Henderson (2009) does reflect on, discuss and evaluate a wide range of issues pertaining to supervision. Nevertheless, because the emphasis is on the supervisor as the expert, or at least the one who is more resourced, the needs of experienced counsellors are, largely, absent. Carroll (2014) in contrast, adopts an integrative approach bringing together developments from 'neuroscience, business studies, organisational development, coaching, counselling and psychology' (p. 2). Nevertheless, he makes an interesting distinction between *functional* and *spiritual* supervision, where the former is largely about the administrative aspects of supervision, and described by Carroll (2014) as 'a technology of supervision where supervisor apply remedial process to supervisees' (p. 7). In turn, spiritual supervision is described as a process whereby supervision is more collaborative, so less hierarchical, with learning at the centre of that relationship. In some respects this latter might be more relevant to experienced counsellors, in part owing to the relationship being framed less hierarchically.

Where, to an extent at least, Carroll (2014) and Henderson et al. (2014) write about supervision as a space whereby the supervisee can receive care, their focus is often on how to offer, or use, supervision. In contrast, Shohet (2008) contends that supervision at its best offers a place where the carer – or counsellor – can take care of themselves. Moreover, I would argue that this book has more relevance for an experienced counsellor because of the overt focus throughout on the *process* of supervision. Put another way, rather than a 'how to deliver' or 'how to use' supervision manual (e.g., Carroll, 2014; Henderson, 2009; Henderson et al., 2014), Shohet (2008) invites authors to focus on *passionate* supervision as it applies to their practice. This is, to an extent, taken up in Creaner (2014), though this book also incorporates more of the 'how to deliver/use' supervision than found in Shohet's (2008) work. Nevertheless, Creaner (2014) does direct her work towards the supervisee rather than the supervisor, as do Dunnett et al. (2013). In both cases the authors offer: a definition of supervision; an overview of the history; explore why supervision is needed; what can be expected in supervision; and discuss ethical issues and dilemmas. Both offer a clear insight into how to use supervision, perhaps in response to Carroll's (1996; 2014) suggestion that supervisees do not, in fact, know how to use supervision.

However, my contention is that whilst these books (e.g., Carroll, 1994, 2014; Creaner, 2014; Dunnett et al., 2013;; Henderson, 2009 Henderson et al., 2014) are undoubtedly helpful for inexperienced counsellors, their usefulness for those with

experience is less well established. With the exception of Creaner (2014), who includes a chapter on career-long supervision, there is little discussion, or debate, about supervision for experienced counsellors. Frequently, for instance, research evidence relating to the efficacy of supervision, i.e. as ensuring good practice, which has been conducted only with trainee counsellors (e.g. Creaner, 2014; Page & Wosket, 2015) is cited *as if* it also applies to experienced counsellors. A concrete example is that of finding an appropriate supervisor, Dunnett et al. (2013) for instance, in choosing a supervisor suggest consideration of issues which will be familiar for all but the most novice supervisee. These include: checking where the supervisor prefers to sit; whether the supervisor expects pre-session preparation; whether there will be any expectation that the supervisee takes written or audio material for evaluation to the session. Hence, the supervision literature appears to assume a hierarchical supervisory relationship and one where the supervisee needs to learn to use supervision (Carroll, 2014). As a result, it is difficult to discern whether the needs of experienced counsellors are recognised, or acknowledged, as different to a trainee or newly qualified counsellor.

In conclusion, I have reviewed the supervision literature as it applies to the development of supervision approaches, and models. This has included specific sub-sections which reviewed the movement from approach-specific supervision to developmental supervision, and finally the most recent conceptualisations of supervision as an integrative practice. This sub-section concluded with a review of the wider supervision literature, which I have argued might arise out of the movement towards integrative supervision.

The relationship in supervision

In this section I will review the literature as it applies to the relationship in supervision. It is widely reported, and well-established in the research, that for trainees the supervisory relationship is crucial. Bradley, Ladany, Hendricks, Whiting and Rhodes (2010) in North America, for instance, assert that this relationship is central to the supervisor in supporting the development of skills with trainees. However, there is substantially less research about the supervisory relationship and experienced counsellors. Indeed, as Wheeler and Richards (2007) scoping review identified, there is a lack of evidence supporting supervision for experienced counsellors, including research about the relationship in supervision. Nevertheless, the extant literature about supervision invariably cites the importance of the supervisory alliance, or relationship. Therefore, this

section will include a review of the literature: pertaining to research on the relationship in supervision; and the supervisory relationship.

Research on the relationship in supervision

There is a small amount of literature which explores at the impact of supervision for experienced counsellors. Nevertheless, despite the lack of research, the findings suggest support for the importance of the supervisory relationship. Weaks (2002) research is one of the few examples in which all those interviewed were experienced and, furthermore, aimed to explore what might constitute good supervision. Weaks (2002) reported that her interviewees consistently stated good supervision is predicated on a good supervisory relationship, the key components of which are viewed as *safety, equality* and *challenge*. Webb's (2000) research also aimed to explore the supervisory relationship, and, furthermore, her interest lay in 'very experienced supervisees' (p. 27). Recruitment yielded supervisees ranging from four to nine years, therefore less experienced than she had hoped for. Nevertheless, her participants expressed a preference for a relationship which primarily focused on support for the supervisee, rather than as affording client protection. Webb (2000) links this to the developmental stage of her participants (citing Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987) being that of having reached level four, that is master practitioner. In common with Feltham (2010), this is attributed to experienced counsellors having larger caseloads than those with less experience. Hence, with experience the impact was twofold: her participants needed to be selective about what was taken to supervision; and perhaps more importantly saw themselves as autonomous and confident practitioners 'as befitting their experience and status' (p. 33).

Supervision as affording client protection is, of necessity, predicated on the supervisee feeling sufficiently safe to disclose mistakes. Indeed, as Webb (2000) argues supervision 'relies upon counsellors having sufficient awareness, confidence and honesty to disclose pertinent issues of concern to their supervisors' (p.60). Webb and Wheeler's (1998) research explored the willingness of psychodynamic counsellors to disclose sensitive issues in supervision using a self-report questionnaire. As with Weaks (2002), they found that the relationship was the strongest determinant of a supervisee's willingness to disclose information: specifically, that greater rapport between supervisor and supervisee enabled a higher level of disclosure of sensitive issues. However, in this research of the 212 counsellors sampled, 116 were in training and the status of the remaining participants was reported as unknown. Lawton (2000) in reporting Webb and Wheeler's (1998) research

suggests that lack of rapport raises issues about the relationship, and in particular, as this applies to the ability to attend to the tasks of supervision. Indeed, should the supervisee feel unable to disclose sensitive issues, or mistakes, to the supervisor, the monitoring and gatekeeping elements of supervision become untenable. Moreover, and worryingly, Kaberry (2000) reports on abuse in supervision, and, furthermore, is the only person to do so. Kaberry (2000) sets out what she calls a 'typology of abusive supervision' (p. 54), citing: power; the attitude of the supervisor, including lack of respect; gratification of the supervisor's needs; lack of awareness on the part of the supervisor; and the role of the supervisor. As Kaberry (2000) argues it would be helpful to pay attention to the role of the supervisor, hierarchy in supervision, and in particular the way power might be used by the supervisor.

Some of the research undertaken about specific aspects of supervision practice also suggests that the relationship is an important factor. North (2013), for example, explored the impact on the supervisory dyad of listening to audio-recordings of a recent supervision session. The supervisory relationship is often framed as an alliance, and one of North's (2013) conclusions was that listening to audio-recordings had the effect of strengthening the supervisory alliance. Furthermore, Vallance (2005) states that her research explored counsellor perceptions of how counselling supervision might affect client outcomes. Concluding that it was possible to 'suggest that supervision does directly and indirectly impact upon client work' (Vallance, 2005, p. 110), and furthermore that this was linked to the supervisee having a high level of confidence in the supervisory relationship. In common with my research, all her participants were humanistic-integrative, and furthermore, some were very experienced.

The supervisory relationship

The generic literature in supervision assumes also assumes that the relationship is an important factor in supervision. Similarly the person-centred literature emphasises the importance of the relationship. However, the generic literature tends to describe the relationship in supervision as an alliance, and moreover, as a learning alliance (e.g., Creaner, 2014; Henderson, 2009; Henderson et al., 2014; Page & Wosket 2015). Moreover, the supervisor is overtly positioned as being more powerful, on the basis that supervision involves gatekeeping, evaluation, and monitoring. As a result, therefore this infers a hierarchical relationship in supervision. Starr, Ciclitira, Marzano, Brunswick and Costa (2013), citing Bordin (1983), offer the following definition of the supervisory alliance as a

characterised by 'mutual agreement on the goals and tasks of supervision and the emotional bond between supervisor and supervisee' (p. 336). Indeed, Bordin's working alliance is often cited in the generic supervision literature (e.g. Carroll, 1994; Creaner, 2014), and the relationship is at times described as a learning alliance (e.g., Henderson et al., 2014; Page & Wosket, 2015).

In contrast, the person-centred literature assumes that the relationship, in some respects, has more in common with the counselling relationship. Lambers (2013) contends that whilst there are differences between the counselling and supervision relationship, there are, nevertheless, some similarities. These include: congruence; empathy; the consistent valuing of the supervisor; the supervisor must ensure the supervisee feels professionally and personally supported. This conceptualisation of the relationship in supervision is also present in other person-centred literature (e.g. Spence, 2006; Tudor & Worrall, 2004; 2007; Worrall, 2001). In turn, Herwig (2007) argues that as a supervisee she needs to feel able to be congruent, moreover, this supports her in disclosing sensitive issues to her supervisor. The generic literature assumes the relationship is hierarchical, based on the premise that supervision ensures good practice and protects clients, and so the supervisor monitors practice and, in turn, has a gatekeeping role. However, the person-centred literature contests that supervision either can or should fulfil a monitoring or gatekeeping role. Spence (2006) argues that it is not possible to ensure that supervision protects clients, and that to do so is 'wishful thinking' (p. 3). This is a view supported by Tudor (2007), who also argues that supervision as a means of protecting clients might equate to defensive and fear driven supervisees. Feltham (2002) whilst not person-centred, nevertheless articulates this perspective well: 'how can supervision be simultaneously egalitarian, non-judgemental, support of and empowering for the supervisee *and* accountability-orientated, with a supervisory responsibility to uphold professional standards, possibly monitor and in some case assess, report on or even discipline the supervisee?' (329).

In conclusion, in this section I have reviewed the literature as it applies to the relationship in supervision. There is agreement across the literature reviewed that the relationship is central to supervision, for instance, a good relationship enables the supervisee to disclose sensitive issues. However, the literature suggests there are different perspectives on the type of relationship and the role of the supervisor.

Impact of supervision

It is well-reported in the literature that there is a lack of evidence about whether supervision is effective (e.g., Creaner, 2014; Dunnett et al., 2013; Feltham, 2000; 2002; 2010; Hawkins & Shohet, 2012; West, 2002; 2003; Wheeler & Richards, 2007). Hawkins and Shohet (2006; 2012) and Wheeler and Richards (2007), for example, both highlight the lack of research which examines the impact of supervision on clients, particularly from the perspective of the client. Furthermore, Watkins (2011) review of 30 years of research into psychotherapy outcomes concluded that 'after a century of psychotherapy supervision and over half a century of supervision research' (p. 252) it was not possible to empirically say whether supervision positively affected client outcomes. Vallance's (2005) study explores how supervision might impact on clients and was the only British-based study to do so. The findings suggested that supervisees believe that supervision has a direct impact on client work, both positive and negative. However, her research explored the impact on client work as perceived by the supervisee rather than that of the client. As Wheeler and Richards (2007) argue, research which examines the impact of supervision on client work, whilst methodologically and ethically difficult, would be welcome.

In New Zealand Crocket et al. (2009) posed the question of whether clients benefit from supervision and if so how? They interviewed six experienced counsellors using a narrative inquiry method. The purpose of the study was to explore tensions between the professional claims made regarding the benefit of supervision for clients and the available research evidence. This paper makes an important point that 'the knowledge of experienced practitioners would add a significant contribution in a professional context where career-long supervision is mandated' (Crocket et al., 2009, p.102). In terms of practice, they suggest that greater transparency and dialogue between supervisor, counsellor and client would be of benefit.

Wheeler and Richards (2007) systematic review of supervision research found that there was evidence to support supervision having consistently demonstrated a positive impact for the supervisee. However, much of the literature they include is about trainees rather than experienced counsellors. Wheeler, Aveline and Barkham (2011) further emphasise this, stating that there is weak but nonetheless positive support for supervision across the literature. The aim in their BACP funded project was to encourage practice-based supervision research, given how little is known about supervision and they report on a toolkit or common set of instruments that they hope will spur further research into supervision. In common with the research of Crocket et al. (2009) and West and Clark

(2004), Wheeler et al. (2011) seek to emphasise the practice-based, or functions and tasks, of supervision.

Wheeler et al. (2011) argue that supervision might need to change as counsellors gain experience. However, there is a lack of research evidence which supports the position of career-long supervision (Feltham 2000; Webb & Wheeler 1998; West & Clark 2004; Wheeler 2000) and some evidence to suggest that it is not always helpful for the mature counsellor and might even have a negative impact on the quality of counselling practice (Feltham, 2000). West and Clark (2004), for example, undertook a pilot study the three supervisor-supervisee dyads, exploring helpful and hindering events in supervision. They found that the supervisor and supervisee did not always agree to which events had been either hindering or helpful. Furthermore, and in common with Weaks (2002), Webb (2000), and Webb and Wheeler (1998), West and Clark (2004) discovered that some things were left unsaid by the counsellor including: unease about the supervisory relationship; and inability to disclose sensitive issues and feelings (such as erotic feelings about either the client or the supervisor) to the supervisor. Hence, this again raises questions about the veracity of supervision as a means of ensuring client protection.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed highlights the lack of research supporting supervision as offering the client protection, especially as this applies to experienced counsellors.

Context and culture of supervision

Grant and Schofield (2004) conducted research in Australia where supervision post-qualification was not, at that time, mandatory. Their study of 316 members of the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia explored the use of supervision on an on-going basis once qualified. They raise two questions regarding career-long, mandatory supervision: first, whether it is necessary for all irrespective of case-load or experience?; and second, whether or not supervision does offer client protection and accountability as claimed by the profession? Grauel (2002) argues that little evidence for the position of mandatory life-long supervision was presented prior to its inception in Britain. Grant and Schofield (2004) further highlight the lack of research and literature relating to experienced counsellors. However, Grant and Schofield (2004) report levels of satisfaction with supervision were very high with the supportive element of supervision being rated highly by the participants. This appears to support some of the literature

reviewed earlier, in particular, Wheeler and Richards (2007) who found weak but positive support for this aspect of supervision.

Furthermore, West (2003) argues that whilst good supervision can support and promote practice, it can also be damaging for the supervisee, and at times ineffective. Arguably, this supports arguments made by Weaks (2004) and Webb and Wheeler (1998), in that if difficult issues are not taken to supervision the client is either potentially damaged, or at least supervision is ineffective. In turn, this raises questions regarding whether supervision is an effective means of ensuring good practice and client protection. In particular, given that for members of the BACP, supervision is mandatory and career-long. Indeed, Feltham (2000) argues that there are problems which need to be addressed. One consideration is that mandatory supervision after training is not always the norm for allied professions in Britain. Wheeler (2000) argues that this implies, to other professions, that counselling is not trustworthy. Furthermore, Feltham (2002) argues that it can be an 'almost taboo activity to question the sacrosanct nature of supervision and its mandate' (p.335). This is an argument picked up by Grauel (2002), who invites debate about the necessity of life-long supervision regardless of experience or case load. Nevertheless, I would contend, based on the lack of debate and argument at the time of writing, debating the worth of mandatory supervision for counsellors remains a taboo activity.

Moreover, concerns have been raised about the culture produced as a result of mandatory supervision, particularly for experienced counsellors. West (2003), for instance, raises the notion of a potential surveillance culture in supervision based on his review of the literature. This is taken up by Crocket (2007) who discusses the culture of supervision and how it might be produced in both the individual supervision relationship and within a wider professional culture. Crocket (2007) considers there is a danger in the current professional context in which supervision is constructed. Specifically, and in common with Feltham (2002), that the process might be detrimental to the supervisee and that supervisors might 'join counsellors in pathologising their professional selves' (Crocket, 2007, p.24). This is a point supported by Grauel (2002) who argues that those found not to be following professionally imposed standards are 'deemed dangerous' and 'wild' (p.13). Furthermore, Feltham (2000) argues that if supervision is not perceived as helpful by the supervisee then the implication is that it is the supervisee who is wrong. Moreover, he contends that this is based on a paternalistic position inherent in the then BAC documentation on supervision, and the prescriptive nature of the requirement for supervision across the career life-span, which ignored the lack of evidence supporting

supervision as effective. This is a point also argued by Tudor (2007), and Tudor and Worrall (2007). In particular, and mirroring comments made by Tudor and Worrall (2004) regarding developmental models and the infantilisation of counsellors, Feltham (2002) argues that there are three potential disadvantages of life-long mandatory supervision: *expense*, *infantilisation* and *ritualisation*. Clarifying the latter, he contends that supervision as an activity that *must* be done irrespective of experience or case-load may be perceived negatively and, hence, engaged with as a ‘tick-box exercise’. This might be seen a challenge to professional claims about supervision increasing accountability and enhancing practice. Feltham (2002) argues strongly that the profession should be willing to engage with research which determines *whether* supervision for experienced counsellors is essential, and *what* supervision is for. The call for further research is made repeatedly across the literature (e.g., Bond, 2015; Creaner, 2014; Webb, 2001; Wheeler & Richards, 2007). However, there is still a dearth of research into whether supervision is effective, and in particular, very little research about the impact of supervision on experienced counsellors.

Moreover, and arguably particularly relevant for experienced counsellors, there is a debate in the literature regarding the word *supervision* with the central argument being that it implies a hierarchical relationship (Grauel, 2002; Speedy, 2000). Indeed, Carroll (1996) suggests that *supervision* implies a monitoring element which Grauel (2002) takes further, suggesting that in policing standards, supervision is not in keeping with the ethics of helping. Lambers (2013) argues that the dynamic in supervision is a comparatively unexplored area, and furthermore that the word *supervision* has connotations of *control* and *overseeing* both of which imply an imbalance of power. Moreover, she contends that this is ‘fundamentally incompatible with the philosophy of relationship in the person-centred approach’ (Lambers, 2013, p. 457). Indeed, Edwards (2010) argues that a preferable term might be ‘consultation’ because it infers a less hierarchical relationship in supervision.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed in this section suggests that there might be some unhelpful outcomes of supervision for experienced counsellors. Hence, the literature suggests that the culture of supervision is worthy of consideration.

General aims of the research and my specific research question

My experience as a trainer, supervisee, and supervisor was pivotal in arriving at my research question; however other factors also contributed towards my thinking. An important aspect of developing my research question was reading Wheeler and Richards' (2007) systematic review of the supervision literature. In my roles of trainer, of counsellors and supervisors, I was familiar with the body of literature relating to trainee counsellors. However, it was evident from the review conducted by Wheeler and Richards (2007) that there was a lack of research about supervision for experienced counsellors. My own initial review of the supervision literature confirmed this (e.g., Crocket, 2007; Feltham, 2000; 2002; West & Clark, 2004). Early in my research I was in agreement with Wheeler and Richards (2007) in that research might 'provide new insights that support the efficacy of supervision' (p. 36), but over the lifetime of my research some of my interests changed, some significantly. In particular, I started to question the received wisdom of mandatory supervision. This happened because of my reading about the topic but, in the main, I was influenced by what I learned from the interviews with my participants.

Furthermore, the literature I was reading suggested that there are professional issues that would merit attention: notably the lack of research evidence to support life-long supervision for experienced counsellors. Currently, there is little evidence to support claims made by professional bodies such as the BACP linking supervision to accountability, and so to client protection. Moreover, questions are raised by the literature about the purpose and function of supervision for experienced counsellors. Many models of supervision have an educational focus, and there is evidence that supports this focus as effective for trainee counsellors. However, there is a lack of similar evidence in respect of those with experience. As Feltham (2002) argues, if supervision is to be mandatory across the career-span, then it would be useful to know what type of supervision and why. The literature also raises questions about the dynamics of mandatory, career-long supervision. For instance, some authors argue that there is a 'surveillance' culture in supervision which infantilises experienced counsellors. Therefore, research which explores the meaning and impact of the experienced counsellor would, as Wheeler and Richards (2007) say be 'welcome' (p.36). Hence, in this thesis I ask: 'What is the meaning and impact of supervision for experienced counsellors?'

Methodology

In this chapter I will set out my rationale for the use of a qualitative methodology and, in particular, narrative inquiry as a method: why I believe this offers the best fit for my research, the topic, and my philosophical position as researcher. Denzin and Lincoln (2013) argue that any definition of qualitative research must be seen and work within a 'complex historic field' (p.6). Nevertheless, they offer an initial, generic definition in that qualitative research is a situated activity which locates the observer in the world and 'consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible' (p. 6).

It is also well understood that there are differences within qualitative research. Ellingson (2013) points out there are 'polarities' (p. 414) within the field and furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (2013) state that 'qualitative research is many things to many people' (p.16). Therefore it is important that I state clearly my epistemological and ontological position. Denzin and Lincoln (2013) articulate my philosophical position well. I do reject some of the prevailing criteria for evaluating research and, specifically, I seek alternative means of evaluating my study. Riessman (2008) states this means that I will have to persuade readers 'with a different rhetoric' and assess validity from within the 'situated perspective and traditions' which frame my research paradigm (p.185). Tracy (2010), and Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1999) offer such guidelines, articulating alternative criteria for evaluating qualitative research. As Elliott et al. (1999) argue the aim of qualitative research is to 'develop understandings of the phenomena under study' (p. 216). Moreover, as Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) add, in undertaking qualitative research I am interested in understanding my participants, rather than predicting outcomes.

Tracy (2010) proposes a model comprising eight items, which are intended to be used flexibly. Specifically these are: Worthy topic; Rich rigour; Sincerity; Credibility; Resonance; Significant contribution; Ethical; and Meaningful coherence (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). To return to Denzin and Lincoln (2013), these are some of the criteria by which I would wish my research to be evaluated. I will offer an evaluation of my research using the work of Tracy (2010) and Elliott et al. (1999) in the Final Discussion chapter.

This chapter will include the following sections: an overview of the research base for counselling and supervision; narrative inquiry; narrative ethics; narrative interviewing and the research relationship; researcher reflexivity; analysis within narrative inquiry; and finally an overview of the narrative typologies.

An overview of the research base for counselling and supervision

In this section my aim is to offer an overview of the research paradigm landscape in counselling at the time of writing. Furthermore, I will locate the role of BACP as part of the production of a particular type of evidence base as it applies to counselling and so to supervision. Riessman and Speedy (2007) best articulate, arguably, the climate of evidence-based, and largely quantitative, research which is 'sweeping across' (p.438) counselling in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, and allied to this, Bondi and Fretwell (2017) highlight the way in which counsellors can often hold a perception that there is a 'wide, inseparable gulf' (p. 113) between research and therapeutic practice: in particular, that those assumptions are based on research as generating knowledge which is objective, measurable and generalisable. This opinion is based on their interactions with students and matches my experience with both experienced counsellors and those in training. Furthermore, I concur with House (2011a) that there is a need to reflect on, and critically question, the current trend in counselling research towards a certain kind of evidence-based research.

Arguably some of these perceptions can be attributed to the types of research promoted by BACP in a range of literature supported by those who work for the organisation and in other published literature. Laurie Clark (who was at the time the Chief Executive of BACP), for example, wrote the Foreword to Cooper's (2008) book on research findings in counselling. In this he stated that it was timely to review the research because of the 'the evidence-based revolution' (Cooper, 2008, p. x). Clark clearly positions this as being about the survival of counselling in the face of the impact of the Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT). In particular, the argument is made that, as a result, Commissioners will need to know 'the monetar value of counselling services' (Clark in Cooper, 2008, p. x). The drive, by BACP, for a certain kind of evidence-based research is reflected more recently by Davies (2016) who, based on similar arguments about health settings, argues that supervision researchers must banish any 'uneasy relationships with the medical/scientist practitioner-clinician' (p. 11). Indeed, this had been previously written about by Bower (2010) in a BACP information sheet about the advantages of evidence-based practice for counsellors.

Cooper (2008) draws his definition of evidence-based research from the American Psychological Association (APA) as 'the integration of the best available research with clinical expertise in the context of patient characteristics, culture and preferences' (p. 5). However, as Clark (2011) observes, evidence-based practice has its roots in a positivist view

of what constitutes knowledge. Embedded in the choice of definition used by Cooper (2008) are some interesting assumptions pointed to by the words 'patient' and 'clinical', which imply the adoption of a medical model in counselling (King & Wheeler, 1999). Moreover, Bower (2010) and Davies (2016) demonstrate overt focus on a positivist and medical view of what constitutes evidence. For example, Bower (2010) in a BACP Information Sheet, states that evidence based practice 'involves the translation of research evidence into clinical practice' (p. 11) and he firmly locates evidence-based practice and research as an important 'driver of clinical practice' (p. 12).

House (2011a), albeit from a different perspective, picks up on the concerns articulated by both Clark (in Cooper 2008) and Davies (2016). However, for House (2011a), the concern is more about the fear which might underlie the move towards evidence-based research. In part, House (2011a) argues, this fear is about other approaches, in particular Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), and is based on a perception that counselling is less evidence-based. In turn, therefore, humanistic counselling is not as well-represented in therapeutic services offered in IAPT. There is often, therefore, a call for counsellors to undertake more research, and of a particular type. In a recent article in *Therapy Today* by Brown (2017), Professor Robert Elliott states that it is important counsellors are able to offer an outside perspective 'using standardised measures that brings in another kind of knowledge. It's not to discredit our experience, but we may be better at understanding our clients than gauging if they are getting better' (p. 18). Furthermore, it is interesting to note that this article tends to focus on the National Health Service (NHS), IAPT, Randomised Control Trials (RCT), and views evidence-based research as the less expensive complement to large scale RCTs. In the interests of transparency, it is important to state I am involved in one of the RCTs named in the same article (the PRaCTICED trial led by Professor Michael Barkham at the University of Sheffield), and will say more about this in the chapter titled *Reflexive positioning, My voice, My Stories*.

Politically, BACP's position on research can be seen as encompassing, as House (2011a) argues, a position based on the fear that, without evidence based on what is acceptable to the NHS - and evaluated via RCTs - counselling will not survive. As he suggests 'if our very survival is at stake, then the pull to embrace what may feel like an alien set of values may be irresistible' (House, 2011, p. 63). This is reminiscent of Laurie Clark's (Cooper, 2008) concern about evidencing the financial effectiveness of counselling in a healthcare setting. It is, as House (2011) contends, difficult to dismiss arguments about the survival of counselling. As a counselling trainer on a BACP accredited course, I am

acutely aware, for example, about the lack of jobs post-qualification. Nevertheless, I would agree with House (2011a) that we must resist the 'Zeitgeist of 'cost-effectiveness, audit, 'objective' evaluation' (p. 71) in research. Therefore, as mentioned above, I am – somewhat uncomfortably – involved in research such as House (2011a) describes as part of the PRaCTICED trial. However, my aim in the current research is to engage in relational, qualitative methodology and I am seeking to 'generate richly descriptive, context-specific forms of knowledge' (Bondi & Fretwell, 2017, p. 114).

To turn specifically to supervision research, in the conclusion to their systemic review of supervision research, Wheeler and Richards (2007) state that there is 'inevitably scope for more randomised control trials' (p.35). The final recommendation however is that there is 'also scope for well-designed and rigorously conducted qualitative research' (p.35). However, there is an assumption that generalisability is to be desired, and the lack of this is cited by Wheeler and Richards (2007) as one problem with qualitative research. This, arguably, presumes that *all* research, qualitative and quantitative, should conform to a 'set of shared criteria' (Denzin, 2013, p.520), of which generalisability is one. Whilst I am not arguing against quantitative research per se, what I argue for is resistance to 'the pressures for a single gold standard' (Denzin, 2013, p.535). I have no wish to add to the dichotomous or binary thinking which is 'pervasive in the methodological debates' (Ellingson, 2013, p.414).

Narrative inquiry

The aim from the inception of my study was to use a narrative inquiry though, as much as it is apparent that there are polarities in qualitative research, the same is evidently true of narrative inquiry. Common, for instance, in most of the literature pertaining to narrative is the inclusion of a paragraph which attests to this. Riessman (2008) contends that those who undertake narrative analysis are 'a diverse bunch; we draw insights from many traditions and have disagreements' (p13) and Smith and Sparkes (2009) contend that it is difficult 'give a single and clear-cut definition of narrative' (p. 2). Not only is the definition of 'narrative' in dispute, there lacks a well-defined debate on those conflicts and there are no 'overall rules' regarding what constitutes the 'material' of narrative analysis or 'what epistemological or ontological significance to attach to narratives' (Squire et al., 2013, p.1). It has proved a difficult field to navigate and was, therefore, helpful to read Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) who state that 'what narrative researchers hold in common is the study of stories or narratives or descriptions of a series of events (p. 4). In addition,

another useful starting point was Riessman (2008), who proffered what she called a simplified definition of narrative as:

a speaker connects events into a sequence that is consequential for later action and for the meanings that the speaker wants listeners to take away from the story. Events perceived by the speaker as important are selected, organised, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience (p.3)

I came to understand the importance of being clear that, as Riessman (2008) says, 'narrative is everywhere, but not everything is narrative' (p.4) and Riley and Hawe (2005), following Frank (1995), make a useful distinction between 'narrative' and 'story': people tell stories, however narratives arise out of the analysis of those stories. Further, I started to understand some key features such as that of the importance of contingent sequences which unfold over time, are meaningful, contain a plot, characters and events which are constructed and used to tell a story (Smith & Sparkes, 2009; Squire, 2008). Temporality is another key feature (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008, 2011; Smith & Sparkes, 2009; Squire, 2008) and so it is important to bear in mind how experience happens over time and, as such, has a past, present and implied future and includes social and historical components (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

At my early ideas developed, I was convinced that my broad methodological choice was appropriate, but recognised the need to be more specific within the field of narrative inquiry. Moreover, I recognised the need to be clear about my ideas concerning 'knowledge' and what constitutes evidence (Barbour, 2014) - my epistemology - within a contested field. Briefly stated this is a phenomenological-existential epistemology. Finlay (2003) defines the method of this as:

'the researcher, the world and the researcher's experience of the world are seen to be intertwined and the focus needs to be on identifying that intersubjective lived experience which resides in the space between subject and object' (p. 107)

Furthermore, immediately prior to commencing this study I had begun to read the work of Arthur Frank and, in particular, the Wounded Storyteller (1995). This text had first roused my interest in narrative as a method of inquiry. As I read more widely it was apparent that dialogical narrative analysis (in particular the work of Frank [2010, 2012] and Riessman [2008]) offered the best fit. This was, not least in part, because of what I began to recognise was the synchronicity between this form of narrative analysis as a method and my theoretical and philosophical stance as counsellor. At a straightforward level, as Riessman and Speedy (2007) contend, central to narrative is 'human interaction in

relationships' which is the 'daily stuff' of counselling (p.427). Further, in my professional life, what I listen out for are the ways in which broader social discourse shape the stories of clients and trainees.

Riessman (2008) writes that 'stories don't fall from the sky' (p.105) nor, she argues, do they come from an inner self. Rather, they arise out of a particular context, or contexts. Supervision forms part of a wider professional context and discourse, and in interaction with a range of professional influences. As a trainer of counsellors, I am acutely aware of the development of a particular language of supervision and counselling as one way in which we learn to become part of a professional community. Hence, it might be argued that we perform our professional selves, or learn to perform those in order to become part of a professional community – a process I recognise in myself and a community in which I am ensconced. In summary, Frank (2012) puts it eloquently when he describes *dialogical* narrative analysis, in particular, as understanding stories to be:

artful representations of lives; stories reshape the past and imaginatively project the future. Stories revise people's sense of self, and they situate people in groups (Frank 2006). Stories are always told within dialogues: Storytelling responds to others – whether actually present or imagined – and anticipates future responses, including the retelling of the story, with variations (p.33).

It is likely that, in telling the story of our own experience of supervision, it is necessarily also to draw on stories about supervision which circulate within the profession and central to dialogical narrative analysis is to hear the multiple voices within each story. As Frank (2012) states, 'no story is ever entirely anyone's own. Stories are composed from fragments of previous stories, artfully arranged but never one's own' (p.35). Hence, using a dialogical narrative analysis also enables me to draw on and include what I bring to the research. As Riessman (2007) says, I can become 'an active presence in the text' (p.105).

Married with this, the supervision literature, and my experience, seemed to suggest that it was timely to discuss the cultural and professional aspects of supervision. Therefore the writing of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) regarding the 'social narrative of professionalism' and the way in which this 'shaped the professional knowledge landscape' (p.132) was of interest to me, as was their contention that narrative may be the 'best way of representing and understanding experience' (p.18). Smith and Sparkes' (2009) view that we make active attempts to understand and make the world meaningful through telling stories was another helpful perspective. Further Polkinghorne's (1988) belief that practitioners work with narrative knowledge had, and still has, resonance for me. Finally, a

common theme in the literature is narrative as a way in which human beings make sense of experiences. For example, Squire (2008) describes experienced-centred narrative research in which narrative is a study of experiences, rather than of events, within a social and cultural research framework. All of this made sense to me as a humanistic counsellor, supervisor, and trainer, particularly my understanding that what is worked with is the client's story. That is, in telling, re-telling and re-presenting stories of their experiences clients make sense of those experiences, feelings and emotions.

Narrative ethics

Ethical approval was sought and granted through the University of Leeds School of Healthcare (see Method chapter). Here, I will discuss ethics more generally as they apply to a narrative inquiry. As a counsellor and trainer I have a thorough understanding of ethical issues as they apply to my working life. In both areas I adhere to the BACP Ethical Framework for the Helping Professions (BACP, 2010; 2016). I am also familiar with the BACP's ethical guidelines for research (BACP, 2009). All of this has undoubtedly proved invaluable throughout the lifetime of my research. I have, for example, a solid understanding of some important ethical issues such as autonomy, beneficence, and non-maleficence. Furthermore, I was familiar with negotiating – with clients and trainee counsellors – informed consent. These were important starting points, and my existing and intimate understanding of ethics therefore proved useful.

Congruent with my position as a counsellor, I understood the need to see ethical issues as embedded in and arising out of an ethics of the relationship (Josselson, 2007). Furthermore, citing Gilligan (1982), Josselson makes a pertinent point that 'consent has to be construed as an aspect of a relational process, deriving from an ethics of care rather than rights' (p. 540). An ethics of care is at the heart of my ethical framework therefore this was familiar to me. However, over the lifetime of my research I came to understand more fully Josselson's (2007), statement that, after reviewing what has been written about narrative ethics; she is 'struck by how thorny these dilemmas are' (p. 538). I was not naïve about ethical issues; however it is arguable that I did not fully understand what might arise out of the interviews, the analysis and eventual representation of those interviews. Hence, I came to understand the complexity of informed consent as it applied to narrative ethics and research.

As Hastings (2010) had done, I had an '*ah ha* moment' during the analysis of the interviews, and in particular 'employed a different analytic lens' (p. 311) to the one I had

envisaged at the start of the study. Josselson (2007) suggests that the researcher's interest may change as the research develops, which was certainly true for me. My Information Sheet (Appendix 1) states that I wanted to look at helpful and hindering factors in supervision. As a general point this remains correct. However, what emerged has been more complicated, in part because of my focus on the cultural, professional and political discourses in counselling. In common with Hastings (2010), I have therefore, 'created an abrasion' (p. 313) between my initial desire to look at supervision which was *good enough* and what is represented in the narrative typologies which follow. Whilst this is in keeping with my methodology, nevertheless it raised an ethical dilemma related to the fact that I changed my mind about sharing their transcripts with each participant and removing any information with which they were uncomfortable.

My ethical dilemma is articulated well by Sullivan (2012) who reviews the procedure often used in qualitative research of taking analyses back to participants and raises the dilemma of what to do if the analysis risks 'hurting their feelings' (p. 176). My dilemma related to returning transcripts rather than analyses, but it became clearer to me that reading over what one has said after a period of time has elapsed may have a similar impact to reading an analysis and, moreover, the more ubiquitous issue of my analysis, ultimately being in the public domain. Sullivan (2012) advises discussing potential difficulties with participants at an early stage, while recognising that this is not a problem free solution. Part of my difficulty lay, as Josselson (2007) suggests, in the fact that it became increasingly evident that the nature of my interest in the material generated changed as my research progressed and that I started to understand my participants as storytellers rather than 'information givers' (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, p.29). And that, as Frank (2010) argues, participants might well be surprised to 'hear his or her story discussed as a shape-shifted variant of another story' (p. 102). Therefore, in future I intend to review Sullivan's (2012) suggestion of discussing this with participants before any interview takes place. I am also mindful, however, of Josselson (2007) who argues that because of the complexities in considering ethical issues it is not possible to offer a 'cookbook approach' (p. 538). Rather it is about holding an ethical attitude and considering often competing ethical issues, which is familiar to me.

To explain my dilemma fully, I need to discuss the issue of participant vulnerability. From the start my assumption was that my participants were not likely to be vulnerable. This was based on the understanding that my participants were not drawn from a traditionally identified 'vulnerable group' and, furthermore, were being interviewed about

their professional experiences. Therefore the likelihood that participants would become distressed was minimal and, in fact, the interviews did not appear to cause my participants distress. Understandably, there is little written on the ethics of interviewing less apparently vulnerable participants, although Chase (2013) has called for more research to be carried out into more 'mundane environments of everyday life' (p.76).

Over time I have come to understand that vulnerability for my participants might be perceived differently. Relatively quickly, I saw that the stories told by my participants often did not fit the current dominant narrative of supervision, and the ethical guidelines, for experienced counsellors. This will be discussed in detail in the narrative typologies which follow. However, to offer an example, Lucy evidently did not use her private supervisor according to the BACP ethical guidelines (BACP, 2010; 2016), and this caused her discomfort. Other participants, Wendy, Alice and Angela, also told stories which feasibly positioned them as not using supervision as prescribed by BACP. Therefore, it is possible to argue that some of my participants exposed their practice to scrutiny in ways which might be construed as leaving them professionally vulnerable. It is therefore, important that I consider in greater detail than might be usual how their accounts are anonymised. In some respects this is straightforward and involves the use of pseudonyms, removal of references to workplace settings, and supervisor's names etc. Moreover, as Squire (2013) suggests, I removed other specific material which might identify participants, at times at the 'expense' of the 'data's richness' (p. 58). This is important because counselling is a small community, however, as Josselson (2007) argues, no matter how well I 'disguise' (p. 554) them, it is possible that they might be recognised in professional circles and I will need to consider very carefully how to manage this potential in any publications resulting from this research.

A further ethical issue is that of the dual relationship. Before commencing the research, I considered some of the more obvious dual relationships, in particular those which arose out of my working life (see Method for more information). Hence, I did not interview anyone with whom I had an existing professional relationship at my place of employment. However, I utilised my networks to find participants, and my first participant was purposely chosen because of our prior relationship. As a result, it is inevitable that I have, and will continue, to see some of my participants. However, with the exception of Jane, these remain professional relationships, with infrequent contact. It was clear that being known by participants had a positive effect on the degree to which I was experienced as trustworthy. Wendy, for example, stated that she was able to trust me because of a

mutual contact. James, on the other hand was more reticent, and, at that point, we were unknown to each other.

The BACP (2009) research guidelines state that trustworthiness requires ‘careful consideration of ethical issues’ (p. 5). Furthermore, that this requires the researcher to be open and accountable throughout the research process. As stated earlier, my intention at the start was to share their interview transcripts with my participants, as part of being open and accountable, and included in this was the offer to remove any information they were uncomfortable, or otherwise unhappy with. My methodology involves two interviews with each participant and, interestingly, participants did not want a transcript of the second interview. Nor did any ask for information to be removed or amended. Hence, some of my fear – as discussed above – that reading a transcript might give some participants pause for thought, seems unfounded. However, this also, possibly, provides evidence that the counter-narratives I report in my analysis – including those challenging the position of BACP – were not evident to my participants on reading their transcripts. However, it felt important to be mindful that seeking further comments, whilst potentially useful from my perspective, might add to what was being asked of participants. Hence, discontinuing the practice after three interviews, felt to be an ethical matter regarding autonomy (BACP, 2009) and furthermore, respectful of the time already given to the study. Josselson (2007) argues that narrative research should be conducted inductively, in that procedures will be modified and strategies will shift as understanding grows. My modified practice was to send out the transcript after the first interview, and then to check with participants at the end of the second interview whether they wanted a transcript. None of the remaining participants wished to have a copy of the second interview, thus supporting the decision. Nevertheless, there I experienced a tension here between respecting autonomy versus the desire to do research which was co-constructed with participants.

Narrative interviewing and the research relationship

I will begin this section with an overview of the relationships held with my participants. This is done by way of offering some contextualising information. (Recruitment of participants will be discussed in the Method chapter which follows.) With the exception of Jane and Angela, none of the participants were known to me personally prior to the interview. However, many of the remaining participants either knew of me through mutual contacts, or were people I had met briefly through shared networks. I would concur with Garton and Copland (2010) that that it is, in fact, not unusual to

interview those with whom we are familiar, or who are known through mutual contacts. They propose reflexivity as a means of being clear about the 'baggage' brought to the interview, and this will be discussed in the Reflexive chapter. Furthermore, they suggest that 'acquaintance interviews' might enable researchers to 'access to resources that are not always available in more traditional social sciences interviews' (Garton & Copland, 2010, p. 546). Indeed, participants appeared to trust me more, for instance, when they knew of me through mutual relationships. In contrast, James for example, appeared to find it more difficult to trust me because he did not know me in the same way.

As someone familiar with a dialogic and relational philosophy, as a humanistic counsellor, supervisor and trainer, the literature pertaining to narrative interviewing felt familiar. Hollway and Jefferson (2007) contend that the responsibility of the researcher is to be a good listener, and Frank (2012) argues that we tell stories 'in order to revise [...] self-understanding and any story stands to be revised in subsequent stories' (p. 37). Furthermore, Riessman's (2008) conceptualisation of research interviewing as a discursive event, with two active participants who are jointly engaged in constructing a narrative, made sense to me. Moreover, Riessman (2011) frames the research interview as a 'collaborative conversation' (p. 316). As a result, she contends it is difficult to justify the exclusion of the interviewer in any consideration of the findings. There are, of course, differences between a research interview and therapy, but a relational stance in counselling necessitates consideration of the counsellor's position and contribution. As Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) contend, narrative researchers do not seek an objective distance between themselves and their research participants: rather, a relational stance is preferred. Josselson (2007) also points to the need for the narrative interviewer to hold and contain emotions and hence, although mindful of some important differences, as a counsellor, I felt sufficiently resourced to undertake narrative interviewing.

For the first interview - with Jane - I conceptualised a semi-structured interview informed by narrative inquiry (Etherington, 2004) where the schedule was intended to be used more as a flexible guide than as a list of questions to be asked. However, as Etherington (2004) suggests, I did not ask any of those questions directly. It quickly became evident as the interviews progressed that having a list of questions, however flexibly used, did not fit with narrative interviewing, my participants, or me as a researcher. This was further reinforced by my increasing familiarity with narrative methods and, specifically, the by the choice of *dialogic* narrative analysis as a method. In common with Hollway and Jefferson (2013), it was apparent that at the start I had adopted the 'conventional

assumption of social-science research that the researcher asks questions' (p29) rather than, as Josselson (2007) argues, viewing narrative inquiry, and in this respect the interview process, as relational. I still see therapy and research interviews as different in many important respects, not least ethically: I am not there to counsel my participants. However, arguably, prior to the first interview I lost sight of some key skills I hold, in particular my capacity to be relational. Judith Fretwell (Bondi & Fretwell, 2017) writes in a similar vein about drawing on her counselling skills as an interviewer. Indeed, my capacity to build a relationship, and pay attention to the inherent dynamics, was useful in the interview process. In the first interview with Jane, for example, she is clearly reluctant to acknowledge that her experience of supervision was not positive. At the time my sense was that she wanted to be a 'good participant' and only disclose factors which she thought were relevant to my research. Therefore, I was able, to utilise my understanding of the counselling relationship, and that what is not said but alluded to is often as important as what is said, and invite her to say more about her less positive experiences of supervision. Hence, I am in agreement with Josselson (2007) who states that 'narrative research is founded in an encounter embedded in a relationship' (p.539).

My understanding of narrative interviewing has grown over the lifetime of my research. I began to understand, for example, that, as Riessman (2011) argues, narrators position themselves in the interview: 'narratives are not simply a record of experience; they are composed for the listener/questioner and perhaps other audiences to accomplish something – to have an effect' (p. 315). Later in the research process and, in particular, during the analytic stages, the significance of attending to the research relationship, and how the narrator positions the story within that, became evident. Understanding the way in which James and Angela, for example, might have positioned me in the research relationship as 'agents of BACP' (see Reflexive chapter for a detailed discussion of this) was instrumental in understanding their narratives. As Riessman (2011) suggests, neglecting these factors runs the risk of stripping 'context from a piece of research' (p. 315).

Researcher reflexivity

Reflexivity has been central to the research process, culminating in the decision to include a reflective and auto-biographical chapter: Reflexive positioning: My Voice, My Stories. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) contend, my history intersects with the research topic. Further, narrative is always autobiographical and arises out of the experience of the researcher: here, directly out of my experience as counsellor, trainer, supervisor and supervisee. Hence, undoubtedly, I brought to the study assumptions about research and

about the subject of the research. Andrews (2008) writes that our understanding as researchers is informed by the life experiences we have, so how we interpret and make sense of the research will be informed by these. Furthermore, in narrative inquiry it is possible to conceptualise multiple interpretations of the material, which can include the reflexive contribution made by the researcher (Squire, 2008). As a humanistic counsellor, supervisor and trainer, the ability to work reflexively is pivotal and Finlay (2003a) states that: *'the project of examining how the researcher and intersubjective elements impact on and transform research'* (original in italics, p. 5) is an important aspect of qualitative research. Moreover, in my use of reflexivity I hope to 'close the illusory gap between researcher and researched' (Etherington, 2004, p.30). In common with my participants I am an experienced counsellor, and use supervision. Therefore, reflexivity will also enable me to, as Etherington (2017) suggests, be transparent – as far as this is possible - about the impact I have had on the research process and its outcomes.

Hence, I have kept a research journal since the start of the study which has had multiple, and to an extent unexpected, uses. Early on I made the decision not to censor entries, or myself, which has retrospectively proved invaluable. As a result, the journal charts my story as researcher, my relationship to supervision, my response to reading and theory, and became an important aspect of working through analytic decision-making and choices. Therefore, in common with Speedy (2008), I have used my journal as an aid to make sense of my world. Moreover, in my journal I have written myself 'in and out of corners and I write until I've written myself some spaces in which to find a place to stand' (Speedy, 2008, p.34). One example of this is around my relationship with BACP and my inability at times to find a space in which to stand. I have also used my journal to try and make sense of my struggle to find my identity as a writer. In that respect, my journals are, as Speedy (2008) suggests, 'the writings in which I, at least in part, have emerged as the field of study' (p. 35). Keeping a journal was one way in which I could explore and reflect on, for instance, what contribution I made to the research relationship and any potential impact of that on the interview process and the Reflexive chapter has enabled me to present my subjective involvement and underlying motivations, as far as I can be aware of them (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). That is, reflexivity can be used to understand the dynamics of the researcher-participant relationship, how the research is constituted socially, and as a way of exploring the personal and perhaps unconscious motivations of the researcher (Finlay, 2003; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). As Etherington (2017) argues, reflexivity 'creates transparency by providing information about the contexts in which data

are created and located, and the researcher's part in the co-construction of new knowledge, allowing the reader to judge its trustworthiness' (p. 90). In the explicit inclusion of my story the aim is to provide information of this nature in an attempt to be transparent about my impact on this research.

Reflexivity and keeping a journal was also central in developing the typologies of supervision which will be discussed later. Frank (2008) argues that in order to develop typologies it is important to have told your own story. For Frank (2008) his story was about illness and he told his story in a more public sphere. Whilst my engagement was private at this stage, I nonetheless did tell my story of supervision on the pages of my journal. This facilitated my understanding of the stories of my participants, not only for their content, but also, as Frank (2008) states, 'for how storytellers dealt with the problems of narration that I had worked through myself' (p.120). Journal keeping, therefore, enabled me to go beyond content and to engage with a range of issues.

Analysis within narrative inquiry

Most of the literature on narrative inquiry starts from the premise that there are a range of approaches, multiple methodologies, and no unifying method (Chase, 2005; Etherington, 2004; Riley & Hawe, 2005; Speedy, 2008). Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2008) make the point that narrative analysis is difficult and has little in the way of starting or finishing points. Frank (2010), drawing on Riessman (2008), contends that narrative analysis is more a heuristic guide than a prescribed set of methods and argues that there is not and should not be any method of analysis if 'method is understood as a prescribed set of steps that the analysis should follow' (p.72). The lack of clearly defined steps and stages proved extremely difficult: perhaps in truth the most difficult aspect of the process. What I experienced was in keeping with Myfanwy Maple in that, whilst I was committed to using narrative and so narrative analysis, I concurred with her sense of feeling 'overwhelmed by how this was done and underwhelmed by my ability to do it' (Maple & Edwards, 2010, p.39).

Nevertheless, it was important to find some starting point. Therefore, for the first interview with Jane, I utilised a thematic form of narrative analytic procedure because it was a familiar process. Squire (2008) suggests that beginning with a thematic analysis is perhaps the simplest starting point; however a problem here is that a thematic analysis tends to focus on *content*. As Riessman (2008) suggests, the difficulty with this is that, whilst all narrative inquiry is concerned with content, it is not the exclusive focus. A key

feature of narrative analysis, and an important departure point from a thematic analysis, is the inclusion of time and temporal elements, including the development and progression of the identified themes (Riley & Hawe, 2005). A further problem is that narrative analysis commences from the perspective of the storyteller (Riley & Hawe, 2005) and, as such, the focus needs to be on the participant rather than on the themes.

Hence, for first interview with Mary I endeavoured to develop an analysis which focused on narrative features such as time, audience, plot and characters. However, I used a coding system and therefore, perhaps unsurprisingly, this also resulted in a more thematic than fully narrative analysis. Nevertheless, this was an important step in developing an analytic strategy. Around this time I read Riessman's (2008) writing about 'scene' analysis based on Gee's concept of stanza (p.112). In turn, I began to read Frank (2010), and started to understand that 'each narrative analysis needs to discover its own singular way to proceed' (p. 112) and the difference between an analysis based on narratives, and a dialogic narrative analysis, particularly, the way in which in the former the story can get lost in 'sound bites' (p.118) from a range of stories. As a result, I started to understand that the analysis of Mary's and of Jane's narrative had focused too much extracts and I began to focus more on *stories*.

Furthermore, I began to recognise that some of my therapeutic listening skills might be useful. As Speedy (2008) suggests these involve the 'practice of multiple listening: a practice of listening to what is being said, to what is not being said, and to what is being referred and deferred to' (p. 32). Moreover, Sullivan (2012) differentiates between a 'bureaucratic'¹ and a 'charismatic'² analysis, and this proved helpful. In particular, another way of conceptualising my previous analysis, of Jane's and Mary's transcripts, was as a 'bureaucratic' analysis. Viewed this way, what I had done was to identify plot types and overall narratives, for example. This was, for example, useful in enabling me to understand the first narrative type: that of the relationship in supervision. However, the concept of a 'charismatic' analysis allowed me to start to decide what was important. The concept of a

¹ Sullivan (2012) describes a 'bureaucratic' analysis as one which can be marked out by following processes and procedures. This form of analysis can be described as, for instance, including an 'audit-trail', or a systematic setting out of the procedures followed. However, Sullivan (2012) suggests that it is, in fact, only possible to conceive of an arbitrary divide between 'bureaucratic' and 'charismatic' analysis. It can be argued, for example, that the personal style of the researcher influences the analysis undertaken, even when a system or process is followed.

² A 'charismatic' analysis when linked to a narrative analysis might include the researcher deciding which narratives hold significance, decisions about which stories will be included or excluded (Sullivan (2012). In particular, Sullivan (2012) suggests that for phenomenological analysis the 'charismatic elements' might involve linking the data to other theories and deciding on a 'take home' message (p.67).

'charismatic' analysis facilitated my understanding, for instance, that my personal interest in the supervisory relationship as more similar to the relationship in counselling could be reflected in the analysis of the narratives. In turn, therefore, I was able to begin to understand the importance of a particular type of relationship and this provided the foundation of the Relational Narrative typology.

In turn, I began to incorporate – into my understanding of the analysis – the ways in which my experience as a supervisee might enable me to understand the stories my participants had told me. Frank (2012) writes about being a 'conscript' (p. 39) and how this can enable the researcher to more completely understand the stories told. For Frank (2012) this was about being a patient without which he 'would never have heard ill people's stories as I have' (p. 39). Arguably, therefore, in respect of supervision I have, as he contends, an embodied experience of supervision which proved useful in the analysis. This was evident in the interviews, in that I often understood partial references to what Wendy called 'counselling speak', or jargon. As a result, this enabled me to locate, for example, my anger at Lucy's bad experience with her private supervisor. However, the analytic process was not confined to identifying the three narrative types, which will be discussed in the following section. As Sullivan (2012) states, the process of writing up those narrative types involved more analysis and enabled a more detailed understanding of what stories do.

In turn, and as a result of the analytic strategies outlined above, the decision was taken not to seek feedback from participants regarding the analysis. Tracy (2010) argues that one means of demonstrating credibility in qualitative research is that of 'member reflections' (p. 16). Certainly it is possible to argue that employing this as part of my analytic process might have been an 'opportunity for *collaboration* and reflexive *elaboration*' (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). Furthermore, member reflections might have enabled me to seek feedback, and learn whether the typologies made sense to my participants, as Tracy (2010) suggests. However, the method of analysis employed also required that as researcher I make some analytic and interpretive 'leaps.' This included, for example, the use of both a *bureaucratic* and *charismatic* analysis (Sullivan, 2012). In using a charismatic analysis I sought at times to go beyond and challenge the meanings as presented in the interviews by participants. Furthermore, I am in agreement with Hollway and Jefferson (2013) who argue that doing 'justice to the complexity of our subjects' (p. 3) necessitates an interpretative approach. As Hollway and Jefferson (2013) contend, however, there must

be 'no special objective status' (p. 3) for the researcher, hence the inclusion of my voice in the Reflexive chapter.

Overview of narrative typologies

There are three narrative types arising out of my analysis of the interview transcripts. These are: Relational; Support and Development; and Career-Long Narrative Typologies. Here I follow Frank (1995) and take narrative type to be 'the most general story line that can be recognised underlying the plot and tensions of particular stories' (p. 75). In keeping with narrative analysis, I do not propose that these three narrative types are only ones which might be identified. Moreover, other readings might be provided by different methods and, in common with Frank (2010), I concur that dialogical narrative analysis 'has little interest in excluding' (p. 75) other possibilities. However, these are the narrative types which, for me, made good sense of the material generated in my research. These particular readings arise out of my personal engagement with the topic and I am aware I may privilege some stories over others. However, there is no objective standpoint and as Riessman (2011) suggests, I invite the reader to question my role as 'omniscient narrator' (p.312) and to be aware at all times with regard to how I have generated the narrative typologies, their 'effects, the positioning of characters and other aspects of narrative construction' (Riessman, 2011, p. 312).

Frank (1995) argues participants do not fall exclusively into one narrative type and, with regard to his own analysis, states that 'actual tellings combine all three, each perpetually interrupting the other two' (p. 76). And, in the writing- up of my three narrative typologies, this was also the case. Nevertheless, in common with Frank (1995; 2010) I have chosen to limit myself to three typologies and offer them as 'guides to listening' (Frank, 2010, p. 119) rather than seeking to reduce or limit any participant, or their narrative, to one narrative type. This is in keeping with a desire throughout this research, and in particular the analysis, not to 'finalise' participants (Frank 2010; 2012) or their narratives. Moreover, as Squire (2013) suggests, there has been no expectation that a single interpretation would emerge. Indeed, there is an expectation that 'there are multiple, valid interpretations' and so 'multiple narrative truths' (p. 57) are possible. Furthermore, Sullivan (2012) argues that, not only is it not possible to uncover a single meaning, or interpretation, it is necessary to try to make sense of the ambiguous and different ways in which meaning may be experienced. Indeed, this was a feature of the analysis of my participant narratives. In seeking to make sense of the different, and at

times ambiguous, ways my participants experienced supervision it was important to hold that there might be more than one interpretation.

Finally, there is a distinction to be made between narrative and story: namely, that the specific narrative typology - *relational*, *support*, and *career-long* in this instance - is viewed here as the template participants used as a resource. As Frank (2010) states, 'narratives, in contrast to stories, are templates that people use as resources to construct and understand stories' (p.121).

In conclusion, in this chapter I have set out my understanding of narrative inquiry as it applies to my research. This includes a discussion of narrative inquiry as it relates to ethics, the research relationship; researcher reflexivity; my analysis of the data collected; and finally offered an overview of the resulting narrative typologies.

Method

In this chapter I will outline the methods and procedures utilised in order to undertake this research. In particular, I will consider: how ethical approval was sought for my research, and how relevant ethical issues considered; recruitment; participants; the procedures for the interviews; and, finally, analytical procedures.

Ethics

The key ethical concerns in seeking ethical approval for this research were: informed consent; anonymity; and dual relationships (BACP 2009; 2010; 2016). Ethical approval was granted for the research by the University of Leeds, School of Healthcare Research Ethics Committee on the 15.10.2010 (SHREC/RP/191), (Appendix 2). I have discussed narrative ethics at length in the Methodology chapter. In this section, therefore, I will review the procedure followed, with particular relevance to the BACP (2009) ethical guidelines for research. My Information Sheet (Appendix 1) cited both the BACP (2009) ethical guidelines for research, and also BACP's Ethical Framework (BACP, 2010; 2016). Hence, these will be the primary ethical resources cited in this section. This section will therefore discuss the key ethical concerns of: informed consent; anonymity; and dual relationships.

Informed Consent

My participants were all experienced and qualified counsellors, therefore it was anticipated that all would have a thorough understanding of ethical issues. There was no intention at the outset of this research to recruit only members of BACP; nevertheless all participants did hold, at least, membership of BACP. The process of exploring ethical issues has been informed by my familiarity with the ethical guidelines of the BACP (2009), and the Ethical Framework for the Helping Professions (2010; 2106). My participants were all members of this body and so were familiar with this framework. In order to establish informed consent potential participants were given an information sheet (Appendix 1) and initial discussions took place by telephone or email. Before the research interview began the Consent Form (Appendix 3) was discussed with each participant and their signature obtained.

I followed the BACP research guidelines (2009) in that I carefully considered issues of consent such as the right to 'modify or withdraw their consent at any point during the research, including following the completion of data collection and analysis' (p. 6). Furthermore, as part of the process of considering informed consent I reflected on issues such as trustworthiness. BACP (2009) describe this as the need to take account of issues which might feel remote to the participant at the time of giving consent. Moreover, that consent should be viewed as a process which is reviewed periodically with participants. This formed part of the decision to routinely return transcripts to participants after both interviews. Furthermore, the right to withdraw was discussed prior to both interviews, and again at the start of both interviews, and was included in the Information Sheet. Hence, in respect of the BACP (2009) ethical guidelines for research, it is possible to argue that informed consent was sought. Nevertheless, as I have discussed in the narrative ethics section in the Methodology, informed consent was, in practice, more complex and nuanced than this (e.g., Frank, 2010; Hastings, 2010; Josselson, 2007; Sullivan, 2012). In particular as this applied to representing participant narratives, and whether they had been, in fact, able to give informed consent before agreeing to the interviews.

Anonymity

The Information Sheet provided details of how anonymity was to be maintained for instance, through the use of pseudonyms, disguising locations and not identifying place of work. In representing participant narratives this has, of course, been adhered to in full. Information was also included regarding dissemination of information in respect of any

work published. Furthermore, in the clarity was offered regarding what information would be shared with my research supervisors, specifically that any identifying information would be removed. BACP (2009) stipulate that any personally sensitive information should be, as far as possible, protected. Moreover, they state that this is a 'major ethical concern' (BACP, 2009, p. 7), and I contend that, in this respect I have been able to offer my participants a degree of anonymity.

BACP (2009) state that researchers should carefully consider the collection, storage and dissemination of data collected. In both the Information Sheet and Consent Form participants were offered information about storage, the length of time information would be kept and the potential for anonymised information to be published. All audio-recorded information has subsequently been stored securely, and in keeping with University requirements. Furthermore, I will ensure that I destroy any information held within the prescribed time limits; five years post the last publication of my research. Once the interview cycle was underway the decision was taken to have audio-recordings transcribed by a transcription service. Therefore, a confidentially statement was produced (see Appendix 4) for the transcription service.

In respect of anonymity as perceived by BACP (2009) I was, therefore, able to demonstrate adherence to the ethical principle of autonomy. Not least because, as BACP (2009) argue honouring promises made about this carries special ethical weight because this is central to practitioner and researcher trustworthiness in this field of work' (p. 7). However, and again in practice, anonymity has in other respects been more complicated. Counselling is a small community and, as Josselson (2007) suggests, it is possible as a result that participants might either recognise themselves, or be recognised. (See Methodology chapter for a detailed discussion).

Dual Relationships

BACP (2009) include dual relationships as part of the guidance about research undertaken with clients, and so with potentially vulnerable groups. In contrast, my research was not concerned with interviewing clients, or particularly vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, from the outset I was aware that participants would be drawn from what is a relatively small counselling community. Hence, it was important to pay attention to the potential for dual relationships, and to minimise risk of harm. Specifically, my role at York St John University necessitated the exclusion of: ex-students for whom I was one of the tutors; and supervisors who were the Approved supervisors list at my place of work. It was

decided to exclude students for whom I had been a tutor because of the desire to minimise potential power issues. In particular, this concerned my role as trainer which necessitates assessment, evaluation and ultimately my role as a gatekeeper. In addition, many students live and work in the same geographical location, using the same networks and resources. There is the potential, for instance, that I know their supervisors, often personally. My intention, therefore, was to minimise power differentials for any ex-student.

Furthermore, the decision to exclude supervisors on the Approved supervisor list also related to geographical location, shared networks and resources, and my personal and professional relationships with supervisors on the list. In addition, some are also ex-students as I have worked at my place of employment for 15 years at the time of writing. Furthermore, whilst at present I train counsellors, in the recent past my role included training supervisors, some of whom are on this list. My employment is, therefore, inextricably tied into training and associated duties. Hence, the decision to exclude supervisors on the Approved supervisor list was twofold: seeking to minimise power differentials; and also to ensure that I could attend to my ethical responsibility to care for myself as researcher. BACP (2009) argue that there is an ethical responsibility to attend to the researcher's responsibility for self-respect (see also BACP, 2010; 2016). The exclusions were stated on the Information Sheet so that people were able to self-exclude at a very early stage in the process of recruitment.

In conclusion, this section has reviewed the ethical decisions taken prior to the commencement of my research. In particular, with respect to the BACP (2009) ethical research guidelines and to an extent my ethical framework (BACP 2010; 2016). A detailed discussion of narrative ethics can be found in the Methodology chapter. Taken in combination, I would argue that this demonstrates my commitment to, and understanding, of research integrity. BACP (2009) describes this as a 'robust ethical commitment to fairness, honest and competence in all aspects of the work' (p. 9). My aim, in this section and the Methodology, has been to evidence my commitment to these principles and to conducting research with integrity.

Design

In this section I will provide information about the recruitment procedures undertaken, information about participants, and the interview procedure. This section will follow the same principles as the section on ethics in that the focus is on procedural issues, and in particular as this applies to: recruitment; participants; the interview procedure; and the analytic procedure used.

Recruitment

As stated previously my exclusion criteria concerned any ex-student, and any supervisor on the Approved supervisor list at my place of employment. A further inclusion criterion was that all participants must be four years post-qualification, or have a minimum of 800 practice hours (see Information Sheet, Appendix 2). My aim was to recruit up to eight participants, and interview each twice. In part this number relates to the decision to interview each participant twice, and so this doubles the amount of interview data collected. However, the second interview was undertaken in order to check my understanding, and in common with Hollway and Jefferson (2013) it also 'gave the interviewees chance to reflect' (p.40). Moreover, the second interview also afforded me the opportunity to undertake some initial analysis of the first interview. And, furthermore, it enabled me to test my 'emergent hunches' (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, p. 40).

In order to recruit participants I utilised existing networks and emailed contacts requesting that they disseminate my Information Sheet to interested parties. Potential participants were invited to email me with any questions or queries they might have in the first instance. As a result of this five female participants were recruited to the main study. There were two exceptions to this procedure. Jane was specifically asked to take part because of our pre-existing relationship; James and Peter were purposively recruited in order to recruit male participants. The rationale for recruiting Jane was that it was an opportunity to 'test out' the interview questions, and this is discussed in more detail in the Methodology chapter). No substantive issues were experienced with recruiting participants; indeed, people seemed to welcome the opportunity to discuss supervision. Peter, for instance, said in his email to me that it was 'timely' as he was facing an enforced change of supervisor.

With the exception of Jane, all participants contacted me by email to express an interest. On receipt of that email an Information Sheet was returned, again by email. In this email I offered an invitation for any discussion as appropriate to the individual. In all instances this first contact translated into an interview. Once participants confirmed consent to the interview a mutually convenient location was identified. Angela chose to travel to my place of work for both interviews. Whereas, Jane; Wendy; Lucy; and Peter all chose to be interviewed in the location for their private practice, Mary; Alice; and James chose to be interviewed in their organisational settings.

Participants

Ultimately eight participants were recruited between 2010 and 2014, chronologically these were: Jane; Mary; Wendy; Alice; Lucy; Angela; Peter; and James. All participants were experienced counsellors, most had either a humanistic-integrative or person-centred orientation. Mary was the least experienced, at four years post-qualification at the time of the first interview. Angela had the most experience and had been working as a counsellor for approximately 30 years. The remaining participants had at least twelve to fifteen years' experience post-qualification. As a result, with the exception of Mary all were also experienced supervisors. With the exception of Jane and Lucy all participants worked within counsellor training, all were part-time in that role. At the time of the interviews not all participants had a case-load of clients, nor was this specified by me as a requirement. In particular, Mary and Wendy were taking a break from client work for 'personal reasons'. It was difficult to discern whether either Angela or James was, at the time of the interviews, undertaking any client work. In contrast, Jane; Alice; Lucy and Peter all undertook consistent client work, most were in private practice as opposed to being employed by an agency, or organisation. Lucy and Mary were undertaking doctoral research; Angela and Peter held doctoral level qualifications; the remaining participants were educated to Masters Level. All held a formal qualification in counselling.

Interview procedure

The first interview took place in November 2010, with the last interview in June 2014. All participants, with the exception of James, were interviewed twice. (Please see the Reflexive chapter for a discussion about the decision taken not to conduct a second interview with James). There was a three month interval between first and second interviews. This was with the exception of Mary, and was due to my inability to meet the three month timeframe. A three month timeframe between interviews related to a range of factors, including: the importance of allowing participants time to reflect (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013); allowing time for the audio-tape to be transcribed and returned; and in recognition that my participants had busy working lives. All participants were aware that the anticipated length of time for the first interview was one hour, and the second approximately 45 minutes. In practice, both interviews took an hour; the exception to this was Angela and James where both interviews were approximately 45 minutes.

All interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, and sent to the same transcription service which had been identified prior to the start of the interviews. Once the transcription was returned to me it was sent to the participant by email. This was to check that the participant was happy to remain in the study, in order to reflect on the first interview in preparation for the second, and to check whether there was anything the participant wished to be omitted at this stage. No participant asked any questions, or made a request for any information to be either omitted or amended at any stage. On receiving confirmation from the participant that they were happy to take part in the second interview, a mutually agreed date, time and location was arranged. Without exception all second interviews took place in the same location as the first.

Prior to the second interview I listened to the audio-recording, editing and correcting the interview transcript for errors. This also served to familiarise me with the contents. Subsequently, I continued to read the transcript, and listen to the audio-recording, for any areas which stood out to me as potentially noteworthy, relevant or interesting. For example, reading the transcript of the first interview with Wendy (who was the third participant) her hesitant use of the word 'love' was of interest. I took those notes from the first interview with me to the second. The direction of the second interview was determined by the participant, however, that did not preclude me following up on areas of interest – such as Wendy's use of the word love. Therefore, whilst I privileged the participant as narrator, but also, as Hollway and Jefferson (2013) suggest, held that meaning was created 'within the research pair' (p. 29). As with the first interview the audio-recording was sent to the transcription service. Once returned to me, I followed the same procedure of listening to the audio-recording whilst editing and correcting.

After the first three interviews, Jane, Mary and Wendy, the decision was taken to stop routinely sending a transcript of the second interview to participants. This has been discussed in the section on narrative ethics in the Methodology. However, in brief I had envisaged, or hoped, that participants might offer comments on the transcript of the second interview on the basis that we were jointly creating meaning (e.g., Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). It became evident, however, that participants did not want to offer further comments. Therefore, in order to respect participant autonomy, and from a position of respecting the time already given, a modified procedure was developed. Hence, at the end of the second interview I asked participants if they wished to receive a transcript, and no participant expressed a desire for this to happen, thus supporting the decision to desist.

Analytic procedure

The process of analysing the data developed over time, in tandem with my understanding of narrative analysis. For the first participant - Jane - themes were identified using a thematic content analysis which, as Squire (2013) posits, is perhaps the 'simplest approach' (p.57) from which to build many different kinds of qualitative analyses. Riessman (2007) argues that the narrative analyst keeps the story intact, and will then theorise from the individual participant rather than looking for themes or categories across a range of participants. Whilst this was my endeavour at the time, even at this stage a thematic content analysis of 'what' (Riessman, 2007) was being said felt not to capture the nuances. Looking back on the notes I made, there is some evidence to be found of the process which was to develop. For instance, reference is made throughout my notes to the relational, dialogically-constructed aspects of the second interview with Jane where I question, and am curious about, the impact of some of my questions. I was aware also of wanting to consider how the story might be shaped by our shared professional background (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). This brought into focus the need to pay attention to the dynamic between researcher and participant, the intended or imagined audience, and how this might affect the direction of the interview (Riessman, 2011; Smith & Sparkes, 2009; Squire, 2008). Therefore, when commencing the analysis of the second participant, I was mindful of the need to develop an analytic strategy which might offer more opportunity to consider these factors. As Riessman (2007) states, I was aware of wanting to consider not only the 'what', but 'how', 'to whom' and 'for what purposes' (p. 54).

Analysis of the first interview with the second participant - Mary - in retrospect was a bridge to the use of a 'hermeneutic circle' proper whereby I used a combination of 'top-down' and 'bottom up' interpretative processes (Squire, 2013). However, retrospectively, the coding system I employed resulted, perhaps unsurprisingly, in the identification of themes. In common with Hollway and Jefferson (2013), I found that it was a process of trial and error in that discovering what did not work spurred me on to try another analytic strategy. Reading Riessman (2008), who wrote about 'scene' analysis based on Gee's concept of stanza, was helpful in trying another strategy. Hence, I developed a form of stanza analysis involving the use of three columns with the entire transcript in the first column (with my words in bold), and the participant narrative extracted in the second, with a third column in which I sought to make sense of the 'scene' being enacted (see Appendix 5 for an example). A 'scene' analysis was conducted on each of the interview transcripts; therefore, by the end of this process I had 15 annotated transcripts. Ultimately, however,

this also resulted in a thematic analysis with themes such as: support; ethics; supervisor as expert; the importance of the relationship. However, as Squire (2008) contends, this still elicited a focus on *content* which, whilst helpful, is not, as Riessman (2008) suggests, the exclusive focus of a narrative analysis. Nevertheless, this proved helpful for immersing myself in the interview data and also enabled me to understand that my focus had been, as Frank (2010) argues, on 'sound bites' (p. 112).

In turn, I started to understand the way in which I could build a more reflexive analysis which made use of my therapeutic listening skills and my understanding of what it means to be a supervisee from my own experience. Hence, this formed part of the process of moving away from the sound bites into focusing on stories. Alongside the 'scene' analysis I had also been writing my reflexive thoughts about the interview, in which I also sought to make sense of my emerging understanding of narrative analysis (see Appendices 6 & 7). Hence, I began to more fully locate myself as part of the interview process. I began, for example, to reflect on the researcher-interviewee dynamic, and the similarities or differences in our understanding of supervision, and counselling. I write about Alice, for instance, that 'I feel moved by her modesty and shyness about acknowledging her impact on her supervisees' (Appendix 6). Furthermore, after concluding the 'scene' analysis of the second interview with Alice I began to reflect on the 'professional voices', the impact of those on Alice and my response. Moreover, I began to look to the wider professional discourses which Alice, and I, might be drawing on. That is, in keeping with a phenomenological- existential epistemology, I began to understand that I could not help but bring my 'own involvement into the research' (Finlay, 2003b, p. 108). As a result, I began to utilise a hermeneutic cycle and, in particular, a process of reflecting continually on my understandings and interpretations of the data. In turn, and reading Frank (1995), I started to conceptualise three narrative typologies: relational, ethical, and professional.

As Sullivan (2012) notes, the writing up process involved further analysis, which, in turn, led to a modified understanding of the stories told to me. Stories about the supervisor-supervisee relationship were told by all my participants and proved the most straightforward to write. A particular kind of relationship is theoretically and personally preferred for humanistic counsellors and, in my reflexive notes on my 'scene' analysis (see for example, Appendices 6 & 7), it was an issue on which I reflected a lot. It was also a topic about which I was particularly animated in the interviews and, as I analysed the transcripts, I noted how my responses and probes were often informed by my own relationships with supervisors. The relationship, therefore, emerged as a narrative

typology early in the analytic process and remained constant over time. Frank (2012) writes about the researcher as a 'conscript' which enables greater understanding of a particular story and, undoubtedly, this was true in this instance, particularly the way in which, through emotional resonances with my own experiences, I recognised the centrality of the Relational narrative for addressing my research question.

However, the early labels of 'ethical' and 'professional' proved much more difficult to articulate as typologies and this became evident in early attempts to write these up. Whilst I could identify stories told by my participants as belonging to these categories, my attempt to explicate these as narrative typologies resulted in a more thematic-type analysis. That is, I could categorise stories into those told about 'ethics' and those told about 'professional' issues but I lost the sense of these being coherent stories with a beginning, middle and end which informed my research question. An important analytic turning point was the recognition that I had focused too much on 'content' and had lost sight of the role of reflexivity. Specifically, I had side-lined my emotional response to what my participants were telling me and, in particular, my response to their stories about the impact on them of mandatory supervision. In this respect my journal was a useful space to reflect on and understand my emotional response and to read back over the notes I had made immediately after doing interviews. I started to understand, for example that my embodied response of anger about the impact of mandatory supervision as it affected Lucy, for instance, and offered important information about the meaning of what my participants had told me. This allowed me to move from a focus on content, to a focus on narrative as the way in which my participants conveyed a complex constellation of information about the meaning and impact of supervision on them which I had appreciated in an immediate sense at an emotional level. For example, recognising my anger at how Lucy had been treated enabled me to identify some of her descriptions as a *story* about abuse in supervision and to become more sensitive to this nuance in interviews with my other participants. I was able, then, to rewrite my final two typologies as rich stories and the narrative typologies in their final form are: Relational; Support, transparency and development; and Career-long.

In conclusion, this section of the Method chapter has offered a description of the procedures followed in order to collect and then analyse the interview data. I have reviewed procedural decisions taken with respect to ethical issues, and the design, or methods utilised in order to do this.

Reflexive positioning: My Voice, My Stories

Chase (2013), writing about autoethnography in narrative, posits that some narrative researchers treat their stories as 'a significant and necessary focus of narrative enquiry' (p. 59). I concur with her view and, whilst this chapter is not explicitly Autoethnographic, my aim nevertheless is to explore supervision for experienced counsellors more fully by the inclusion of my own experience. Hence, here I will as Chase (2013) suggests 'turn the analytic lens fully and specifically' (p. 60) on myself and the ways in which I will inevitably have affected this research. However, my aim in this chapter is to offer a reflexive account, and this will include reflections on my relationship with my professional body, BACP; supervision; and counselling. Moreover, I will reflect on my personal involvement with this research. I am in agreement with Bondi and Fretwell (2017) who argue that it is important to employ a methodological approach 'in which the personal is central' (p. 118). As Etherington (2004) suggests, being transparent about my stories about supervision as researcher will enable me to highlight the differences between my voice and those of my participants. This is commensurate with the methodological choice of using lengthy participant extracts which include my voice. Moreover, by involving all these different voices I hope that 'differences and problems in encounters are discussed rather than ignored' (Etherington, 2017, p. 83). And Etherington (2017) argues that reflexivity enables us to co-create layered stories which 'honour the messiness and complexity of human experience' (p. 86).

Speedy (2008) reflects on the process of constructing herself as a writer, whilst many other identity claims clamour for attention. In order to finish this thesis, I have needed to try and construct myself as a writer in the midst of many other demands, including my identities as mother, wife and teacher. Related to this, a pervading tension throughout this research has been that of finding my 'voice'. Reflections on the myriad ways in which this has affected the process, from start to finish, will inform the first section. I will then turn, in the second section, to offer some reflections about my history, specifically my motivations to train as a counsellor, through to the motivation to undertake a PhD. In the third section, I will reflect on the interview process and the ways in which both finding my voice, and my own personal history, intersected with the interviews *and* the analytic choices made. Finally, I will look at my evolving response to my membership body, BACP, and the professionalisation and medicalisation of counselling.

This chapter is, to a degree at least, a 'messy text' (Speedy, 2008, p. xiv) in that the following sections are incomplete stories. However, this brings to the forefront some

central issues, for me, in writing this chapter. The first is that philosophically I do not believe it is possible to claim that I can ever fully know myself and, in turn, I can therefore only offer subjective reflections. As a result, what is included in this chapter must be seen in that light. The second point is that this 'messy text' is being submitted as part of an academic process. It must also, therefore, conform to the necessary academic requirements whilst, at the same time, being intensely personal and revealing. In writing this I have battled with the desire to sanitise my experiences vs. the need to offer reflections which might contextualise decisions taken - some of which might be outside of my current awareness. Nevertheless, I am in agreement with Bondi and Fretwell (2017) in that 'personally engaged, embodied research is always messy' (p. 119). Moreover, I agree with Finlay (2003a) who suggests it is helpful to 'favour less authoritative and more self-critical texts which explicitly acknowledge that research findings are partial, partisan and fundamentally anchored in the social context' (p. 5). In common with Meekums (2008), my aim is to highlight 'stories of relationships and emotions affected by social and cultural frameworks' (p. 287). My findings are inevitably anchored in the current social context, both for counselling (and counsellors) but also in an increasingly medicalised, and technical, framework for offering therapeutic help.

This chapter comprises the following sub-sections: finding my voice; reflections on my history; the interview process; and counselling as a profession; regulation and professionalisation.

Finding my voice

The title suggests, perhaps, that I have found my voice. However, this is not quite accurate: perhaps more that it is a work in progress. The central issue has been, since the start, the feeling that I am an imposter and not good enough. The roots of this can be found in my upbringing, my lack of a formal education, my age and gender, and my experiences as a female – and now older – academic. The ways in which these interact, and intersect, with each other have, at times, impacted the research process in multiple ways. One pivotal feature has been to doubt that I can write, or that I have anything worth saying. Etherington (2017) writes that she found it hard to allow her voice to be heard. Furthermore, that she has juggled with 'old programmes' she has carried as a woman: 'maybe I do not have anything important to say; that there are things I should not tell, and that people do not want to hear' (Etherington, 2017, p. 92). This feels very close to my experience, and has affected two elements of this research in particular: representing

participant narratives; and the writing up process. It has perhaps had most impact on the latter. On the one hand I can articulate verbally what it is that I want to say; on the other hand I doubt that it has either validity or is written in the 'right way'. Part of this can be located in my early experiences of education - specifically my 'secondary modern' educational experience - which did not privilege formal teaching of, for example, grammar. As a result it took me some time to return to education, and only did so in my early 30's after the birth of my first son.

By the time I began this research in 2009, I thought that my lack of belief in my academic ability no longer contained the power to silence me. In part this was because, by then, I had gathered a variety of academic qualifications and had achieved 'good' marks along the way. I was also, by this time, a Senior Lecturer and being encouraged by my then line-manager to embark on a PhD. At the time a PhD appeared to be the logical next step in my academic career and was something I had always wanted to do. My motivations, at that time, felt clear and reasonable. Retrospectively, however, I am aware that part of my motivation for doing such a high level qualification was to prove to myself, and arguably others, that I was good enough. An early journal entry at the start of 2010 attests to this: 'perhaps if I ever manage to finish this it will finally give me enough evidence to counter the 'not good enough' feelings.' Reflections on whether I am 'good enough' to complete this research, at the level required, have been a recurrent theme throughout the volumes of my reflexive journals. In turn, this lack of self-belief has resulted in me questioning decisions made, in particular in respect of the analysis of participant narratives, but also doubting I can write a thesis. I have, as a result, at times struggled to find my voice and write from that position. One consequence of this has been the desire to privilege the words of others above my own, and regular feedback from my supervisors has been about my overreliance on quotes. This happens more when I lose confidence in my ability and it is, therefore, easier to use other more 'worthy' voices.

One identity claim (Speedy, 2008) I might make is that of Senior Lecturer, and this has been challenged by the research process. This identity has clashed with that of PhD student and, at times, the tension between the two has left me doubting my competence, in both realms. Liz Bondi (Bondi & Fretwell, 2017) writes about the 'gulf between the academically successful performance I presented outwardly and my well-hidden inner life, which was often pervaded by feelings of fraudulences, desperation, chronic depression and emptiness' (p. 115). Whilst not all of that is true for me, I certainly understand the feeling of being a fraud, and depression. Moreover, my route into becoming a counsellor came

after a period of therapy because of my own psychological distress, which could be labelled as depression. I am resistant, as someone who is anti the medical model of distress, to use labels such as depression. One feature of that therapy, and subsequent therapy, was my chronically low self-esteem. However, my sense of being a fraud or imposter is also found in my gender, and perhaps latterly my age. Regular feedback from students is that I am confident and, as with Liz Bondi, this exterior does not always match what is inside.

The fact that I am a counsellor, supervisor, and train counsellors in an academic setting, warrants reflection. Bondi (2005) highlights the predominantly female base of counselling: 80% in 2005 in Scotland. As a counsellor trainer, and counsellor, this picture is familiar to me and, I would argue, reflects the prevailing picture of counsellor training at the time of writing. In my HEI, I currently, for instance, have 4 out of 20 students who are male, and my colleague has 1 male trainee in a group of 16. Counselling courses struggle to recruit male students, perhaps because it has traditionally had its roots in the voluntary or third sector often associated with 'women's' work' (e.g., see Bondi, 2005). The University I work in is also predominantly female, in terms of both staff and students. This is arguably because the courses offered have tended to lean towards traditionally female occupations such as teacher training, psychology, counselling, and occupational therapy for example. As Bondi (2011) observes, whilst entry to some of these (e.g., teaching and psychology) is becoming more balanced, there are still a greater proportion of women entering counselling courses. My research participants reflect this balance and, in fact, I had to purposively recruit the two men. In particular, counselling, arguably, has at its heart more feminine than masculine values. As Bondi (2011) articulates, counselling, in common with nursing and teaching, is commonly known as a caring profession because 'many of the core skills, aptitudes and attitudes they require continue to be associated with femininity' (p. 129).

In my story, I see links here to my personal history. I have two younger brothers and my parents are traditional, in the sense of assigned gender roles at least. Importantly, my parents – and in particular my father – hold strong values around social justice, parity and fairness. Therefore, I was schooled by my early upbringing to offer others care, and in that sense at least I am arguably traditionally female. Furthermore, in common with Meekums (2008), I do not 'always see myself as powerful within the 'masculine' world of action, whereas I feel comfortable in the more 'feminine' world of feelings and bodies' (p. 288). As a result, I am always surprised when feedback is offered about how 'powerful' I am. I trust the feedback, it is given often enough to merit attention, but it does not accord

with how I feel. On reflection I wonder to what extent this has affected the research process, from interviews through to supervision.

With an anxious mother, I also learnt that it was my role within the family to pay attention to her emotions, and consequentially that of my brothers and father. As Bondi (2011) states, this attention to emotion is often 'strongly associated with femininity and feminisation' (p. 132). This does not, however, tell the whole story. In his own way my father was ambitious for all of his children. Being stereotypically 'female', caring for those in the family, and acquiescent (to my brothers in particular), did not serve me well in a large, almost exclusively male, extended family and I learned also to access more masculine characteristics such as the capacity to be assertive. This reflects, to some extent, what Etherington (2017) articulates as my programming to become a woman. Moreover, it formed part of my early programming to become a counsellor. The expectation to care for others during my formative years was one factor which eventually led to me undertaking counsellor training in 1998. Moreover, my primary supervisor, in reviewing a draft of this chapter, offered feedback about parts of myself which I might not be acknowledging. In particular, her sense that I was 'powerful and self-assertive' but that I may not own this part of me. I have asked her permission to include this feedback and attribute it to her because it is extremely accurate. I am extremely uncomfortable acknowledging my power and assertiveness. Moreover, I would agree that there is a discrepancy between how I present – confident, competent, assertive and (as feedback suggests but I find difficult to own), powerful – and how I can, at times feel. My supervisor wondered whether this was a hidden narrative trying to push through, and I would agree. Though it is also familiar, and perhaps time I started listening to my own counter-narrative. Reading for counter-narrative was an important analytic skill I utilised in analysing my participants' accounts – for example, Angela's apparent discomfort with BACP's position on supervision for experienced counsellors within her dominant narrative of support – and it can take another person, sometimes, to see these more clearly.

The impact of this on my research has been complex, and multi-faceted. Care, and caring for my participants, was evident in the interviews. This carried through into the analysis and representation of participant narratives. It was of course ethically and methodologically important to take care to represent participants' stories and narratives sensitively. However, the transition from 'bureaucratic' to 'charismatic' (Sullivan, 2012) analysis of the narratives was complex. Frank (2010) describes this process as moving from analysing narratives, to narrative analysis. In practice this required that I find my voice,

offer more interpretation of the narratives, and to trust in what was emerging from the analytic process. Perhaps more importantly, in this respect at least, to trust that what I thought was emerging had some validity. To return to Etherington (2017), this was compounded when I started to realise that what I wanted to say might be something I should not tell, or that people did not, or might not, want to hear. This coalesced around my enduring sense of myself as not good enough. Finding my voice has necessitated that I draw on values which are important to me, in this instance that of justice and fairness. Stories which affected me at an embodied level, a strong and felt sense of anger, are examples of being able to harness my desire for justice and parity on behalf of my participants. In turn, I was then able to find my own voice.

Perhaps more difficult to report, at the time of analysing the narratives, and at the start of the writing up process, I was bullied at work by a female colleague. Whilst this person was not my line-manager she did hold a position of power. My journal during this time reflects the impact on my working life, and the research process. Ultimately the rationale for including this story is threefold: first, this was one reason for a significant extension to the submission date; second, outside of the practical aspect (of taking time out of work), the emotional aspect in terms of my self-confidence cannot be understated; third as Meekums (2008) articulates, I am now more sensitised to issues of power, and disempowerment as they relate to being oppressed by members of the same sex. At least two of my participants, Jane and Lucy, told stories about the misuse of female power in supervision, and I have no doubt that, perhaps not at the time always consciously available to me, this also sensitised me to this form of oppression. Moreover, this alerted me to the use of power-over rather than power-with (Postle. 2007), especially as this related to other women. The bully and the supervisors were female and counsellors. This stood in opposition to the ethic of caring, and perhaps solidarity, I had naively expected from members of my community – both as counsellors and women. Retrospectively this sensitivity was useful in respect of making the leap from analysing a narrative to narrative analysis (Frank, 2010).

Bondi and Fretwell (2017) write that reflexivity, from a feminist perspective, is a 'way of bearing witness and contributing to conversations about the world within which we are embedded' (p. 115). As a counsellor, a trainer, and a supervisor I am most definitely embedded in the world of counselling, and supervision. Furthermore, Bondi and Fretwell (2017) argue that it must always be acknowledged that research is personal. Evidently in my choice of topic, and methodology, I must acknowledge not only that I am

embedded but also I am invested. That I am both embedded *and* invested in counselling and supervision has inevitably affected the analytic process. Bearing witness to and starting conversations about, supervision obviously began before this research commenced. As a counsellor who had experienced the abortive attempt to regulate counselling and psychotherapy (see Introduction), I was also aware that this was not something that I welcomed, for example. Furthermore, my view of supervision for experienced counsellors was largely positive, though not without tension. I held a similar view regarding my engagement with BACP. However, both the interview process and wider reading for this research marked a significant change in my engagement with all of those. My engagement with BACP and supervision for experienced counsellors will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. However, it is worth noting in advance that I now hold, in part as a result of my participant narratives, a largely negative view of both.

Moreover, I will discuss the impact of my evolving stance on the professionalisation of counselling in the final section of this chapter. However, pertinent here is the difficulty this has caused me in respect of feeling increasingly out of step with my membership body, and others in my community. It has been difficult at times to speak out against BACP, and to challenge the 'sacred cow' of supervision as offering client protection and public accountability. A relevant early experience at a BACP research conference presenting a poster of my research for the first time is very telling. A BACP member looked at my poster and questioned why I was researching supervision, as we all just know it is a good thing. It has become apparent that the dominant narrative of 'supervision for all is a good thing' has become difficult to challenge. Over time I have found my voice, and my confidence, to challenge this in conversations with other counsellors. I have also found my voice to challenge BACP directly about some of their decisions. Moreover, I now encourage my students to adopt a more critical engagement with BACP, and counselling in a wider sense, rather than an unquestioning position that either is unequivocally 'good' – or 'bad'. I have endeavoured to strike a balance between being overly critical of BACP's stance on supervision, and not being critical enough. Across the three narrative typology chapters this was most evident, to me, in the Career-long narrative typology. At times when writing this chapter I felt angry regarding BACP's stance on career-long supervision, in particular the impact of this on my participants. Moreover, this reflects an on-going and personal tension for me: specifically whether I remain a member of BACP and, ironically perhaps, I am presently discussing this in supervision.

A pervading aspect of my life to date is that of feeling, or being, on the outside. Leaving BACP would simply, therefore, confirm a life-long position. Feedback, from friends, family, students, colleagues and others, also attests to me being fiercely independent. The roots of my independence and outsider position can be found in my upbringing. In respect of the research process both have been both helpful, but also unhelpful. Helpful aspects include, but are not limited to: a capacity to work independently; carrying on when my working life was extremely challenging; that PhD study, per se, requires one to work independently. Unhelpful aspects have taken more unpicking. Reading Bondi and Fretwell (2017), and in particular Liz Bondi's words about finding a network of women who gave her confidence to integrate her 'feminist leanings into my subsequent academic work' (p. 114), connected me to the depth of the loneliness of this research process for me. I felt sad reading her words and sadness in writing this here. Two things arise out of this. One is personal in that this process has perhaps felt unduly lonely, though I am aware that this is familiar to many PhD students. The second is more difficult to be certain about. However, it is conceivable that the absence of a similar network in my academic and research environment has affected the analytic process. It might be that, as Sparkes and Smith (2012) contend, my embodied response of sadness is useful for exploring aspects of my conscious self. However, I agree that it is less useful 'for reflecting on issues related to our unconscious selves' (Sparkes & Smith, 2012, p. 67) as this might require the help of others. Specifically in not having those networks I was unable to extend the self-dialogue and reflections and 'tease out the embodied issues' (Sparkes & Smith, 2012, p. 68) and the impact of that on the analysis, and perhaps on me.

It must be said that as much as those networks are not readily available, I have not sought them out. It would be easy to say that this is because I work full-time, and am a part-time PhD student, and there is truth in that statement. However, I am also sensitised to rejection, made worse by recent experiences of bullying. I am also, because of my early experiences of care giving, more comfortable giving than receiving care. Furthermore, I have been a Lecturer since 2003, and a Senior Lecturer since 2007, and am now Subject Director for Counselling. I reached a milestone birthday in September 2017. All of this also marks me out as 'different': I do not fit neatly the category of early career researcher, and am older, considerably in some cases, than my PhD peers. This has no doubt compounded the felt sense of isolation, I cannot, for instance, avail myself of any of the activities put on by the University where I am studying because I work full-time. Moreover, this also means I am different, in this respect, within the academic environment in which I work. Whilst I

have long been aware of most of this, the impact is perhaps only becoming apparent in the writing up stage. Specifically, that during the writing up process, which is of necessity intensive, I did not have pre-existing networks on which to draw. It is, again, difficult to be precise about the impact of this. However, I wonder whether I might have arrived at a different interpretation of the stories my participants told me. Perhaps I am overly sensitised to the 'outsider' position, which could, of course, be read two ways. My outsider position might, for instance, have enabled me to discern those narratives which ran counter to the dominant discourse around mandatory supervision. Conversely I might have seen what was not there. As I type this I would argue that the former holds more veracity. Nevertheless, in including lengthy extracts which include both voices, I hope, as Etherington (2004) argues, that any differences are highlighted rather than ignored.

It is, of course, also important to acknowledge my 'insider' position. In common with my participants I am an experienced counsellor and supervisor. I discuss the potential impact of this on both the interviews and the analysis later in this chapter. However, worthy of note here is the broader tension of being both a *researcher* and a *counsellor*. In particular, my response to power might also be mediated by my understanding of that within a therapeutic relationship. For a humanistic counsellor the aim is to minimise, and seek to equalise power within the relationship, whilst accepting that power will inevitably sit with the counsellor. This is both a theoretical and an ethical understanding of the importance of paying attention to the power dynamics in a therapeutic relationship. This, of course, intersects with my personal responses to power discussed earlier in this chapter. As a result it is reasonable to suggest that I am sensitised to issues of power, and that this will inevitably have had an impact on this research. It is possible to argue that my sensitivity to power dynamics within a relationship had a positive impact on the interview process and also the analysis. It was evident, for example, that participants felt comfortable with me. However, it is possible to argue that conversely during the analysis I tended to look for, or be sensitised to, the negative effect of power on the supervisory relationship.

It is inevitable that I also utilise and draw on dominant narratives in respect of a range of issues discussed in the foregoing. For example, it is likely that I am drawing on dominant narratives about what it means to be an older female and, allied to both, an academic. I also need to sit this alongside my sense of myself as not good enough, my programming to be a woman, and experiences at work. In any event, I feel an immense pressure to conform to some ideal of an 'older female' who is preparing to retire. My

response when friends who have taken early retirement suggest I might like it too is not positive and testament to my desire to keep working and keep learning. I am still disentangling the impact of this on my research.

Reflections on my history

I have made an active choice to include this as the second, rather than first section. The rationale is that finding my voice has arguably had the bigger influence on the research process. In the writing it feels difficult to know whether that is the right decision. Perhaps the truth is more that both hold equal weight, so the order is less important. Nevertheless, it feels important to offer some information about my history and in particular my underlying motivations – as far as it is possible to do so – leading to the decision to undertake this research. Clearly this also links to decisions made from choice of topic, the methodology and method used, analytic decisions taken and writing up my thesis.

I have already reflected on the way my early life schooled me to be tuned into others' emotions. However, this is a partial truth in that there were additional factors which ultimately led to me training as a counsellor and, in particular, later in my career to focus on the importance of the emotional world of the client. In my twenties it was apparent that I was experiencing psychological distress. As a result, my doctor referred me for my first foray into counselling, which was not very successful. In my mid-thirties I was again referred for counselling, and this time it was a more positive experience, largely because of the differences between the two people. The first had been an 'expert' who told me what to do. The second, though not a trained counsellor, focused on the relationship between us and was one of the first people I allowed to care for me. This experience also instilled in me at an embodied level the power of the therapeutic relationship to heal. At the same time I had started a part-time degree in psychology with the Open University. My aim had been to become a Clinical Psychologist but I became more interested in becoming a counsellor. No doubt this was fuelled by a variety of factors, including that psychology is arguably more mainstream than counselling, and that I did not believe at an unconscious level I was good enough to do the doctorate required. However, some of it was that counselling attracted me more. Counsellor training was very much a 'coming home' process for me at an intellectual, emotional and embodied level. I also had, for the first and perhaps last time, a sense of what Bondi and Fretwell (2017) describe as a network of (largely) supportive women who enabled me to understand and extend my practice as a counsellor. One important understanding was that I knew, for the

first time, that I was good at something. It is interesting to note that whilst I achieved a good degree, and attained decent marks whilst training, it was the actual work with the client where I felt confident and sure footed. I understood my capacity to build and maintain a solid therapeutic relationship. That the relationship is central to outcomes for clients has been demonstrated consistently (e.g., Cooper, 2008; Norcross & Wampold, 2011). This capacity for relationship building was also evident in the interview process for the current research, with some exceptions which will be discussed in the following section.

In 2003 I started working at the university where I am now Subject Director, and in 2009 I started this research. During those years I also began my engagement with Counselling for Depression (CfD). This entails delivering training in a National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) compliant modality to experienced counsellors working in Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT). IAPT arose out of the Layard report (Layard et al., 2006) which identified a need for an evidence-based therapy to support people experiencing depression and anxiety. As Goldman et al. (2016) state, this triggered 'an investment in CBT as the main therapeutic approach, as it had the largest evidence base' (p. 288). In comparison to CBT, humanistic therapy has a relative lack of a particular kind of evidence base: the Randomised Control Trial (RCT). As a result, humanistic counselling, which had previously had a solid base in primary care was in danger of being left behind. Therefore, CfD was BACP's 'attempt to redress the balance' (Hill, 2012, p.225) and gain parity with CBT within IAPT, particularly because primary care counselling and counsellors were being subsumed within IAPT.

CfD is a blend of classic person-centred theory, such as that espoused by Rogers (1951) and Emotion-Focused Therapy (e.g., Elliott, 2012). However, it is also based on a competence framework, and is often criticised because of this. One common criticism is that competence frameworks are 'mechanistic and reduce complex activities to a series of rote operations' (Hill, 2012, p. 226). In addition, the counsellors we train invariably work within medical, and outcomes driven, settings. There is often, therefore, a tension between the philosophy that underpins humanistic and person-centred working and the rationale for IAPT, and the setting in which it is offered. One important point of departure is that humanistic counselling philosophy holds that it is important to view people holistically: that we are more than the sum of our parts. One consequence of this is an aversion to labels, such as depression. As Hill (2012) notes, the extent to which CfD can be seen as part of the 'tribes' of the person-centred 'nation' will continue to be debated. It is, in my experience as one of the original and core trainers, hotly debated, both among the

trainers and in the wider counselling context. One of the tensions that I live with in terms of my connection to CfD is nicely articulated by Hills (2012):

The phenomenological nature of some person-centred tribes view the notion of distress as a 'disorder' with suspicion on the grounds that human experience should not be medicalised and that to use such labels can lead to the iatrogenesis and the stigmatisation of clients' (p. 229).

Philosophical tensions notwithstanding, CfD also marked the start of my engagement with an experiential branch of person-centred therapy - EFT - also known as process-experiential therapy. My original training contained elements of person-centred theory, though outside of the core conditions as articulated by Rogers (1951), I was never particularly drawn to it as an approach. For many years I described myself vaguely as working 'relationally' whilst never feeling a sense of belonging to a particular 'tribe'. However, with EFT I had an embodied and felt sense of belonging. As a result, in 2015 I undertook the level 1 EFT training and, once this research is completed, will continue that training to levels 2 and 3. Elliott (2012) describes EFT as a 'process-experiential therapy' which 'integrates active therapeutic methods from gestalt and other humanistic therapies within the frame of a person-centred relationship' (p. 103). This integration of the core conditions, the value placed on the therapeutic relationship, and the overt focus on emotions as opposed to cognitions has a high degree of personal resonance for me. EFT does not seek to label distress as medical and, as a result, the person is viewed phenomenologically and holistically. It is worth noting, however, that, despite my sense of belonging, EFT does not sit easily with the person-centred tribes. Elliott (2012) notes the controversy surrounding the emergence of the process-experiential approach which I would argue exists to the current day. Arguably this is more evidence of my familiarity with the 'outsider' position.

My approach to supervision is underpinned by my philosophy as a counsellor. I undertook supervision training, and chose an experiential as opposed to academic training, qualifying in 2006. As a counselling trainer part of my remit is to facilitate group supervision and, since 2006, I have seen a small number of private supervisees. Increasingly I find this latter role uncomfortable, and discuss this with my last remaining supervisee. I have always tried to be sensitive to issues of power in supervision and, in keeping with my theoretical base as counsellor, would never propose, as supervisor, that I am the expert. Further, as a direct consequence of this research, and, in particular the interviews, my view that an experienced counsellor does not need to be monitored, and

should be trusted, has been confirmed. As a consequence, I approached another supervisee of mine and discussed the possibility that we stop that relationship and become peer-supervisors. This relationship is as free as possible of hierarchy, and no monies change hands, and it works for both of us. Nevertheless, as with stories told by Wendy and Alice, we do meet for dinner and exchange Christmas cards, for example. I also manage an approved supervisor list for the BACP accredited training course I run and she is a supervisor on that list. We manage that by ensuring she has somewhere else to take supervision issues with regard to trainees on that course. However, in contrast to authors such as Henderson (2009), I would argue that the relationship is challenging and neither cosy or collusive. In fact, I would argue my peer supervisor is more able to challenge me because of the depth of relationship. In common with the experience of some of my participants, I feel this to be a safe relationship and founded on the core conditions. Furthermore, it is a relationship which is therapeutic, and I actively use supervision as therapy when needed. I am in agreement with Feltham's (2002) argument that mandatory supervision potentially precludes considering other possibilities. These might include intermittent supervision, and periods of continuing personal or professional development.

In many ways my current view of supervision is based on my early experiences of supervision, in particular whilst I was in training. That was a safe relationship, in the manner described by my participants. Further, it was a lengthy relationship spanning some twelve years. Moreover, in the last few years we worked together and so socialised at times. Ultimately it proved too complicated to continue both relationships, and, as a result, I decided to end the supervisory relationship. Our working relationship continued until she left in 2016. However, we still see each other socially on occasion. Likewise, my current sole supervisee and I work at the same institution, though not together, and we also exchange Christmas cards. It is worth noting that my experience of being a supervisee has largely been positive. I can only recount one relationship which did not feel safe, and so I left after 3 sessions. At the time I left because of an emerging dual relationship, however, with hindsight, it was the relationship which did not feel safe enough to contain the dual roles. One other supervisor relationship, whilst not satisfactory, was not unsafe.

As with EFT, encountering narrative as a methodology elicited a visceral response in me. It feels difficult to describe accurately and, never having discussed this with anyone, I am reminded of Sparkes and Smith (2012) suggestion that discussing our embodied responses with others can be helpful in the teasing out process. Nevertheless, reading the literature and in particular Frank (1995; 2010) and Riessman (2008) there was a felt sense

of coming home, or finding literature which at some level made sense to me. With hindsight I realise that my work as a counsellor predisposed me, for example, to hearing stories. Furthermore, as Frank (2010) argues, narrative is 'also about dialogue' (p. 1), which is central to the way I work as a counsellor. Moreover, I am in agreement with Sullivan (2012) that dialogue is an epistemology in that 'true knowledge of the most important issues – is there a God, what does it mean to live authentically – only comes from a personal participation' (p. 4). I will end this section with Meekums (2008) who writes that autoethnography and narrative are similar to the process of therapy in that both are similarly growthful, but also difficult. I would add to this that the research process itself has been a period of intense personal learning, but also a period of great personal challenge. Furthermore, Grafanaki (1996) argues research can change the researcher, and I would wholeheartedly agree. Citing Hill

(1984) she offers the view that in doing qualitative research, particularly in counselling, it is possible for the researcher to feel that what has been learnt 'at a personal and profession level is much greater' than that which has been 'contributed to the field' (Grafanaki, 1996, p. 336).

The interview process

Judith Fretwell (Bondi & Fretwell, 2017) writes about drawing on her counselling skills in order to elicit participant stories, and this was true for me. She also notes her surprise that the 'relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is inevitably one of power' (Bondi & Fretwell, 2017, p. 117). In contrast to more traditional concepts of where power is located in interviews, here power for Fretwell (2017) sat with the intensity and at times intimacy, which she experienced as similar to the therapy process. The intensity and intimacy of the interview process was at times evident and powerful. My response on listening to the tapes, editing post-transcription, and when doing the analysis surprised me. My embodied response to participants has been apparent: for example, I felt anger on Lucy's behalf, sadness when Jane reflected on never having left supervision 'with a spring in her step', and had a familiar not good enough response to Peter. When interviewing Alice and Wendy my response was one of feeling relaxed, because we shared similar values. Nevertheless, my responses to these participants were relatively straightforward to unpick, at least in terms of the impact on the analytic process. It has been possible, for instance, to understand both my anger on Lucy's behalf, and sadness for Jane as part of a response to the position in which BACP places experienced counsellors

with regard to the mandatory nature of supervision. Both participants had poor, Lucy abusive, experiences of supervision because both wanted to work with integrity, and ethically.

In contrast, my response to James and Angela was more intense, and proved more difficult to understand. Angela was known to me, but the interview was the first time James and I met. I had a visceral response to James, for example, that resulted in my decision not to return to conduct the usual second interview because I left the first feeling quite physically unwell and scared. In the field notes I made immediately after the interview I wrote that it was 'one of the least contained interviews', and 'there was a sense that I had of really being checked out.' Later, once home, I reflected on how 'very tired and actually not very well' I felt, though no subsequent physical illness materialised. Furthermore, I wrote that it felt like a test of trust, but at the time I was not sure whether this sat with me, or James. For some time after the interview my response proved hard to make sense of. However, analysing the narratives I began to understand that his position was, in fact, quite close to my own. In some important respects it became apparent that we shared similar values: the importance of love in the counselling and supervision process, for example. Moreover, understanding has arisen out of getting to know him a little more: coincidentally our paths crossed in an academic setting subsequently. Greater familiarity enabled me to understand his position regarding BACP and to realise further his alignment with my own position. Salmon and Riessman (2003) argue that the 'audience, whether psychically present or not, exerts a crucial influence on what can and cannot be said' (p. 199). I have wondered since whether some of my embodied response was attributable to the way James might have positioned me, potentially, as an 'agent' of BACP. This might have arisen because of some of the roles I hold.

I am a trainer on a BACP accredited course, and one of the original trainers for CfD, for example. Both of these roles might conceivably position me as an 'insider' of BACP. Arguably the lack of trust was located in his unfamiliarity with and, hence, assumptions about me. What I am also beginning to appreciate is the fear I feel when challenging the dominant narrative espoused by BACP about supervision for experienced counsellors. Moreover, and allied to this, the response from other members of BACP when I challenge this and wider issues around the direction of counselling can leave me feeling reluctant to speak, for fear of the consequences. My employment is in large part predicated on continued membership of BACP.

There were other participants whom I had not met before interview: Peter, Alice and Wendy. My only contact with Peter prior to the interviews had been by email when he responded to my request for participants. In contrast, Alice and Wendy both had knowledge of me through a mutual, and trusted, colleague. All worked in the same setting, and we had all attended conferences together. It is a setting which privileges person-centred therapy, and humanistic principles. Alice names our mutual contact, and in particular how she has seen me when with this person, as the reason why she can discuss love in a research interview. Furthermore, Alice and Wendy were both aware that we shared a similar humanistic philosophy. Perhaps equally as important we were all, to some degree or another, involved in training humanistic counsellors, and CfD. Arguably, therefore we had, as Phoenix (2013) contends, established membership of a particular group based on an 'expert knowledge or privileged experience about the topic being discussed' (p. 79).

All of my participants had an initial training which was humanistic, and this was evident at times in the interviews. We shared a common and familiar language, as observed by Wendy when she tells me UPR is 'counselling speak.' There was, as Hyden (2013) states, a sense of stories being told in collaboration between us. Moreover, as Hyden (2013) argues, stories are 'designed for the specific audience, especially in relation to their knowledge about the events depicted in the story' (p. 129). In my own case, I am highly invested in relational ways of being and I have long known that this is what drew me to humanistic approaches, and to narrative analysis. Frank (2010) describes narrative habitus as a 'disposition to recognise something as familiar' and furthermore to find it comfortable or uncomfortable either doing something or in the presence of another' (p. 52). In particular, Frank (2010) argues that people are disposed to hear certain stories, and hear them at an embodied level. Arguably, this means that I have heard and then analysed the stories told to me through a particular lens. It is possible therefore, that another researcher would have taken different analytic decisions, or asked different questions in the interviews.

Whilst the immediate aftermath of the interview with James left me feeling ill and scared, the second interview with Angela left me feeling confused. Immediately after the interview I wrote: 'Angela said after [the interview] that it had been stimulating. At times I had a sense we could have wrapped up about 15 mins in. Wonder why? Not sure what I'm sat with.' I also wondered whether it might be something to do with the 'dynamics between us.' This surprised me as I knew her professionally in academic settings, and

trusted her. We also had mutual connections across research conferences and BACP. I had not asked her, because of our existing connections, to take part in the interviews. However, she was by far the most experienced participant, and I trusted we could hold the boundaries and so I took up her offer. I now understand that her experience affected me in that I saw myself as the less experienced partner in the interview. Furthermore, this opened up my understanding that I needed Angela to affirm my research (and me), and perhaps validate me as a new researcher. Retrospectively, I am aware that my need for her validation sat in two related areas; my knowledge of Angela as a very experienced and well-respected researcher; and my lack of self-belief. Whereas I am, inwardly at least, not confident, and uncomfortable with power, Angela, in contrast, is both outwardly confident, and comfortable with power, and named this in the second interview. However, I mistook her ambivalence about mandatory supervision for ambivalence about the interviews with me.

As a result, the interviews with Angela have been the most complicated, and difficult, to analyse. My embodied response has been equally complicated, at times I felt angry, at times confused, and at times unsure of the resulting analysis of both interviews. Writing this section has mirrored the process of the analysis, and writing up, of Angela's narrative. I am unsure, even now, that I fully understand the dynamic between us. However, on reflection, some of this coalesces around our shared engagement with BACP, and my respect for Angela. Perhaps, and this is an uncomfortable but important acknowledgement, I wanted Angela to affirm my more critical stance regarding BACP. In particular, I wanted her to come back for the second interview and build on the 'rebel' position of mandatory supervision as flawed. In truth, therefore, when Angela opened the second interview stating that her ambivalence remained, and, in fact, during the interview my sense was that she was trying to find reasons why supervision as mandatory was valuable. I was, therefore, disappointed and now understand that part of the dynamic was my need for external validation was not met. Whilst this has been uncomfortable, both as a realisation and to include here, ultimately the analysis of both interviews would have been incomplete without it.

Altheide and Johnson (2011) contend that participants 'always know more than they can tell us, usually even more than they allow us to see; likewise, we often know far more than we can articulate' (p. 592). Arguably, participants such as James and Angela knew more than they felt able to tell me, and clearly this also applies to me. I would also add that I knew at an embodied level more than I could articulate intellectually. It is

important to add here that, over the lifetime of the interviews, my response to BACP was changing, in large part in response to my participant's stories. Stories told by Jane and Lucy awoke in me an anger that is easily re-invoked when reading some of the supervision literature, particularly in respect of the lack of an evidence base for mandatory supervision, and also the professionalisation agenda. And in turn, therefore, the impact of that on experienced counsellors, as evidenced in the stories told to me. I often find myself in agreement with authors such as Feltham (2002) when he argues that supervision infantilises experienced counsellors. I have no doubt that this affected subsequent interviews and, ultimately, my analysis of them. In contrast, interviews with those such as Alice and Wendy – in retrospect – affirmed my use of supervision because of the similarities. Whilst I had not hidden my use of supervision as therapy, for instance, I had not either been fully open about it. With hindsight I realised that this, in common with Alice, was my internal sense of what was right vs. the external injunctions not to use supervision in this way.

Etherington (2017) writes about the balance between expressing her voice whilst, at the same time, representing the voices of her participants. Methodologically and personally it remains important to me that this balance is sought. The interview with Peter, for example, left me feeling as if I was not professional enough. And yet, it was evident that he trusted me with sensitive areas of his practice, for instance, stating that he could tell me because 'like you haven't sort of freaked out'. I now understand that this was, to an extent, because we held different views on issues such as whether counselling should be a profession and with regard to mandatory supervision. I have endeavoured to represent his voice accurately whilst, at the same time, not losing my own voice as the researcher. Bondi (2011) writes about the feminisation of professional practice, suggesting that, as much as men are 'able to enter the newer caring professions', they are also 'called on to adopt and conform with norms, attributes and forms of wisdom associated with the opposite gender' (p. 130). It was evident that Peter had adopted some of the norms and attributes which might be viewed as feminine, for instance, as Bondi (2011) observes, the strong association between attending to emotions. Nevertheless, it could be argued that the focus on professionalisation was perhaps connected to a more masculine view of caring. The other participant whose stories were similar to Peter's was Angela. Bondi (2011) also writes about the 'honorary man' and it might be that Angela is a woman who is 'viewed as capable of performing in ways that might be viewed as 'masculine', but is clearly also still recognised to be a woman' (p. 126). In contrast, other participants, including James, told

stories which were arguably more feminine in respect of the more overt focus on emotions. I have had cause during the analysis to reflect on my position about this, and in particular my use of the word 'profession' when interviewing Jane, who was my first participant. Whilst I understand that my stance on professionalisation is now much more informed, it is nevertheless uncomfortable to note the extent to which I was drawing on a dominant narrative about professionalisation in an unexamined way.

However, in truth I was drawn most to those stories which privileged the relationship and, in particular, stories told about a relationship based on the core conditions. Perhaps, as Frank (2010) argues, it is the story about relationships which 'gets under my skin'. It is therefore important, as Etherington (2017) argues, to be transparent about my part in that process:

If we can be aware of how our thoughts, feelings, culture, environment and social and personal history inform us as we dialogue with participants, transcribe and interpret their conversations with us, and write our representations of the work, then perhaps we can come close to the rigour that is required of good qualitative research (p. 86).

My aim, therefore, has been to offer my reflections in respect of this, not least because, as Frank (2010) argues, stories do not leave people alone and, moreover, those stories 'call individuals into groups and they call on groups to assert common identities' (p. 60). I would contend that the stories about the relationship in supervision comprise one such story. In fact, this can also be traced back to our shared identity as humanistic counsellors. Furthermore, I am in agreement with Squire et al. (2013) who argue that as narrative researchers we are part of the stories collected, and that 'our presence, our very bodies, are imprinted upon all that we do. It is left to us, therefore, to determine how we account for ourselves in the work that we do, to consider the impact of our own positioning and that of others' (Squire et al., 2013, p. 22).

Counselling as a profession, regulation and professionalisation

One way of accounting for my part in this research is to make clear my position on a range of issues, about both supervision and the wider counselling arena. This position is, furthermore, one which has been crystallised over the years since the inception of this research. Moreover, this position is still evolving, and causes me some discomfort at times, particularly in respect of finding an appropriately critical voice. Nevertheless, I am clear about my position about mandatory supervision. I am in complete agreement Feltham

(2002) who states that supervision does not need to be mandatory and, furthermore, it does not need to become 'a cog in the machine of professionalisation' (p. 328). This is based on the stories told by my participants indicating the complexity of supervision for experienced counsellors, the lack of research to support such a position, and finally my experience as a counsellor.

My position is also informed by my reading of the wider supervision literature and my response to both counselling as a profession and the professionalisation of counselling. In this respect, my position most closely aligns to Bondi (2004) who names her ambivalence to professionalisation. Furthermore, I am in agreement with House (2011b) who states that it is not counselling as a profession per se which troubles me, rather it is 'about the *form* that moves towards professionalisation are taking in the counselling field' (p. 61). Moreover, and in common with House (2011b) I can see some positive aspects of counselling as a profession. He names one as an increase in credibility in a range of settings, and building on that arguably this might improve access to paid work post-qualification. As Bondi (2004) highlights, since its inception as a voluntary activity, counsellors increasingly expect payment in return for services offered. This is, I would argue, not an unreasonable expectation given the high cost of training. Indeed, there are on-going expenses such as payment for supervision for all BACP accredited counsellors.

Aldridge (2011) argues that the terms 'profession' and 'professionalisation' are often conflated or at least used interchangeably in the literature. Furthermore, Bondi (2004) found that counsellors she interviewed tended to respond to questions about the debate on professionalisation with answers 'expressing a range of meanings with the term "professional" rather than direct engagement with the debates' (p. 323) about professionalisation. It is, therefore, entirely possible that the two terms are often conflated, and perhaps confused, by both counsellors and in the literature. Perhaps this reflects Bondi's (2011) statement that for the caring professions their status as professions remains both insecure and contested. Moreover, as Bondi (2011) argues, one reason for this is that a 'professional' in a caring profession, such as counselling, cannot conform to the traditional view of a professional as 'autonomous, detached and impersonal' (p. 130). Certainly, this is one argument often put forward by those who are either in opposition to, or critical of, the professionalisation of counselling (e.g., House, 2011a; House & Musgrave, 2013; Murphy, 2011; Postle, 2007; Tudor, 2007; Totton, 2011b). Indeed, one reason for my ambivalence about counselling as a profession, and in particular professionalisation, is just this. I find it hard to align the traditional view of a professional with a humanistic

counselling relationship which privileges engagement at a relational and personally engaged manner. BAC (as it was then, now BACP) adopted the use of the word 'profession' in 1998 (see Aldridge, 2011 p. 286). However, as she notes BAC was also ambivalent about the professionalisation of counselling:

However, the ambivalence within the association about the implications of professionalisation continued. One expression of this was the conflation of the non-judgemental accepting stance taken by counsellors towards clients, with opposition to the process of professionalisation. Professionalisation, through the implementation of standards, would involve making judgements about individual members and as such, was perceived as antithetical to counselling (Aldridge, 2011, p. 287).

Nevertheless, concurrent with the progress of my research, counselling, driven by BACP, in my view, have continued to move further in the direction of the professionalisation of counselling. Arguably this has been done with the aim of statutory regulation for counselling as an outcome for the future. Aldridge (2015), for example, who was Head of Accreditation for BACP, clearly states her preference for counselling as a profession. The accreditation process itself is often cited as problematic because of the role it plays in accountability, and so professionalisation. Shohet (2011), for example, writes about the dynamics of the accreditation process as one which instils fear and so leads to defensive practice. Thorne (2011) puts forward a similar argument about accountability and the accreditation process. His discomfort is well-articulated as: 'could it be that all this, instead of improving the quality of therapy and enhancing the well-being of both therapists and clients, has led instead to the creation of an exclusive professionalism' (Thorne, 2011, p. 167).

Most who are in opposition to, or who have concerns (e.g., Shohet, 2011; Thorne, 2011) about professionalisation argue that there are risks to the counselling relationship. Bondi's (2004), for example, argues that the professionalisation of counselling 'inevitably undermines the possibility of establishing' (p. 325) relationships which aim to share power with the client, are egalitarian and based on the client as expert (Rogers, 1951). Moreover, House and Musgrave (2013) contend that many counsellors perceive their work with clients to be 'more an art than a science – an activity that cannot be captured by a list of 'competences' and 'standards', however elaborate; for at best, such a list can only offer a parody of real therapeutic practice' (p. 28). Some of these concerns might be seen as arising out of counselling as 'an avowedly lay practice, constituted as something wholly different from a profession, and taking particular care to avoid positioning practitioners as

experts' (Bondi, 2004, p. 321). Moreover, as Bondi (2004) argues at its inception counselling was positioned to offer an alternative to the medicalisation implicit in psychiatry and some forms of psychotherapy.

Jenkins (2015) chronicles BACP's movement from 'an association of well-meaning volunteers to a rule-based and performance-driven modern entity' (p. 2). One of the reasons he cites for this is the 'collapse of the project to achieve statutory regulation' (Jenkins, 2015, p. 2). There is, instead, a voluntary register, rather than a statutory one which would have brought with it the requirement to adhere to a binding and rule-based set of ethical codes Jenkins (2015; 2016). This is apparent in the recent revisions to the Ethical Framework (BACP, 2016). It is also most clearly articulated in the GPiA resources which have been developed to support the framework. This range of resources, which were developed by BACP to support the 2016 ethical framework, are where it is possible to see the movement towards a rule-based set of ethical codes. Nevertheless, Jenkins (2016) has questioned the veracity of the claims made by BACP about counselling and the law, for example, reviewing the argument made by BACP about contract law and supervisor third party liability. With the latter he concludes that the traditional perspective in counselling of the supervisor having limited liability towards their supervisee's clients 'is being reframed, on the basis on limited practice evidence and a very particular reading of the available case law' (Jenkins, 2016, p. 7). As a result, I am in complete agreement with him that it is difficult to see where is the 'fire that all this guidance is designed to put out, or is it just smoke from the hearth?' (Jenkins, 2016, p. 7).

Many of those who have been opposed the statutory regulation of counselling, and psychotherapy, are now on the outside of the professional bodies such as BACP and the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP). In particular, as House and Totton (2011) articulate, the move towards statutory regulation is often described by professional bodies as 'natural and evolutionary' rather than, as they contend 'a thoroughly deliberate strategy' (p. 10) which is promoted by those bodies is the circular implication that, as a profession it must be regulated (House & Totton, 2011). It appears as if we are moving towards a rule-based, legalistic view of counselling, for reasons other than purely ethical ones. As Jenkins (2016) argues, 'we need to retain our tolerance for uncertainty, ambiguity and a plurality of means and interpretation, even when it comes to understanding the law, as applied to our work with clients' (p. 7).

As a trainer for well over a decade now, I am increasingly exercised by students who want me to provide the 'right' answer to a given problem. In addition, as Shohet

(2011) and Thorne (2011) highlight, those questions are based on fear. As Alice's stories suggest (see Career-long Narrative chapter), and in common with my students, it is often difficult for students to employ their own sense of what is right and wrong, and to take personal responsibility for making decisions. Moreover, I agree with Tudor and Worrall (2004) who argue that it is important as trainers to encourage free-thinking and independence, and therefore not to instil fear and defensive practice. Furthermore, they highlight the importance of trust in the training, and supervision, process stating that: 'if we do not encourage reflective practice or reflective practitioners, we encourage students and supervisees to look for external authority' (Tudor & Worrall, 2004, p. 93). Whilst I am in agreement with them, I am also concerned as a trainer that this is proving increasingly difficult to do because of the literature produced by BACP, and others, promoting a rule and, by implication, fear-based culture.

Hence, I am considering leaving BACP; however, this has not been an easy position to arrive at. One factor is that as a trainer on a BACP accredited course a number of us are required to hold BACP membership, and some must be accredited. My decision would potentially, therefore, affect my colleagues. I would need to consider carefully the impact of that on the student body who we encourage to become student members – this forms part of the requirement of our accredited course status. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, I have felt fear at the thought of being considered 'unethical'. Arguably, one dominant narrative in the counselling sphere is that supervision demonstrates you have integrity and work ethically: that you are prepared to confess your mistakes in supervision is evidence of this ethical 'badge' as a BACP member. Moreover, should I want to secure paid work as a counsellor most organisations now require at least BACP membership, and many require accredited member status. Moreover, I am in agreement with Wheeler (2000) that experienced counsellors might not feel trusted by their membership body as a result of mandatory supervision. As a member I do not feel trusted, as Angela suggested BACP appear to take the position of 'guilty until presumed innocent' (see Career-long Chapter). I have also felt fear, and shame, at the thought of speaking out. However, and not without trepidation, as I approach the end of writing this thesis my position is encapsulated in the following quote:

It appears, to us at least, that they 'psy' professions, as they garner ever greater public adoration and corporate support, have become entangled in a net of smug self-satisfaction. This is a dangerous moment for all of us. Our clarion call here is to disturb that equilibrium – To disturb, unsettle, educate, inform and perhaps also to annoy – in order to create a fresh voice on our experience in the world (Itten & Roberts 2014, page xiv).

Whilst I consider and further reflect on my position about professionalisation, and BACP's role in that, I do seek to unsettle and educate students. Hence, I introduce students to those critical voices who sit outside the mainstream, or BACP, perspective on counselling. In particular, I now include writers such as Totton (2011) who criticises psychotherapy and counselling for the extent to which they are ensconced in 'a safety obsessed culture' (p. 69). I position myself overtly now with Totton (2012b) when he says that 'if therapy is going to be good, it can't also be safe' (p. 69). By 'safe' what he means is that therapy, for the client and perhaps the counsellor, cannot be free from pain or anxiety. Furthermore, I would argue it cannot either be rule-bound, and it is often absolutely necessary to tolerate uncertainty and the unknown. I would also argue that we live, as counsellors, in an outcomes – or evidenced based – culture.

Allied to this, a deeply uncomfortable recognition has been the degree to which I have played a part in the professionalisation of counselling. Thorne (2011) writes about being the 'prime mover' (p. 165) of the procedure for accrediting student counsellors for the then BAC. His motivation at the time was to aim for high standards and to encourage openness towards personal and professional development. Furthermore, Thorne (2011) reflects on a cultural shift towards demonstrating effectiveness, surveillance and also a fear of failure. Whilst my part might be relatively small when compared to Brian Thorne, nevertheless it is there. My involvement with CfD, which is an IAPT 'compliant' modality, is one such example, as is my role as a trainer on a BACP accredited course.

In conclusion, Finlay (2003a) writes about sociological and post-structural accounts of reflexivity whereby researchers 'concentrate on the discursive and macro-sociopolitical forces shaping research narratives' (p. 5). I have endeavoured to offer some reflections on the cultural context for counselling at the present moment. By including my reflections, intentions and motivations I have sought to, as Finlay (2003a) citing Richardson (1994), suggests unmask the 'complex political/ideological agendas hidden in our writing' (p. 5). Moreover, I would argue that without the inclusion of my reflections and, in particular here my response to my membership body, BACP and their position on statutory regulation and the commodification of counselling, both my participants and my own political and

ideological agendas, in respect of counselling and so supervision, would have remained hidden.

Relational Narrative Typology

Given the humanistic origins of those who took part, it is perhaps unsurprising that one narrative type was that of the relationship in supervision. All participants identified themselves as having a core practice orientation, or initial training, which was either person-centred or humanistic-integrative. Training to work as a person-centred or humanistic counsellor generally privileges the relational aspects of therapy as much as the theoretical. As a trainer, I am aware of the centrality and focus on the relationship as the vehicle for change. Invariably first sessions on the training programme I co-run focus on relational aspects of working as a counsellor. This is from the perspective of the theory which underpins relationships, but also as this relates to inter- and intra-personal perspectives. This is in tandem with the emphasis for most, if not all, humanistic trainings on personal development. This dual emphasis or focus is reinforced over the two years of the training programme. What is emphasised in the literature on humanistic counselling is a focus on the person of the counsellor. Hence, the values, beliefs and relational stance taken by the counsellor, *who* the counsellor is, are all seen as inseparable from what is known at a theoretical level.

What follows in this chapter are the stories that participants told about their experience(s) of the supervisory relationship in response to the question about the meaning and impact of supervision. The stories fall into three areas:

Stories about safety in the supervisory relationship:

The core conditions in supervision

Trust

Length of the relationship

Stories about the therapeutic edge in supervision, and love, compassion and attunement:

The therapeutic edge of supervision

Love, compassion and attunement in supervision

Stories about 'non-traditional' relationships in supervision:

Friendship and supervision

Dual relationships

Stories about safety in the supervisory relationship

Without exception, all participants told stories about safety in the supervisory relationship. For some this was along a continuum: for instance Lucy, who moved backwards and forwards between two concurrent, but starkly contrasting, polarities in respect of her experience. Others, for example, Jane, offered a narrative of valuing supervision and wanting to feel safe, but where the reality was that she had, by and large, not felt safe. Wendy, Angela, Peter and James, told stories reflecting generally positive experiences, but could also name what felt unsafe. Angela linked safety with trust, empathy and the importance of the supervisor being able to show vulnerability and admit when they had got things wrong. Alice and Peter told stories about what made their current experiences safe, albeit with references to other less safe supervisory relationships. James felt that his current supervisory relationship was safe enough for him to feel '*caught out*' at times, but did refer briefly to what had been a difficult supervisory experience.

The core conditions in supervision

The stories that follow concern the core conditions³ which Rogers (1951) stipulated as the necessary conditions present in a therapeutic relationship. In particular, participants felt that the supervisor offering unconditional positive regard (UPR), being congruent, and offering an empathic understanding, was part of feeling safe in supervision. All participants used language generally attributed to a relationship built on these core conditions. It is worth noting that terms used for the person-centred core conditions are various, and not always confined to the description included here. For instance, transparency is often written about as part of congruence (Mearns & Thorne, 2013). Immediacy is another term which can be used as part of communicating an understanding

³ Rogers (1951) stated that there are six conditions which need to exist and continue over time in order for constructive personality change to happen. Of these three are seen as the core conditions: 1. that the counsellor is genuine or congruent; 2. that the counsellor offers the client unconditional positive regard (UPR) and total acceptance; 3. that the counsellor feels and communicates (and that the client can receive this at least to a minimal degree) a deep empathic understanding. Participants discussed another of the six conditions, that of the client and counsellor being in psychological contact

about empathy, and also refers to being genuine and congruent. Person-centred theory is not unified and the emphasis on the importance of particular theoretical concepts, including the core conditions, is at times contested vigorously. Sanders (2012), and Warner (2000), have, for instance, written about the tribal nature of person-centred theory.

With the exception of Peter, all participants used language which suggested that the core conditions, as conceptualised by Rogers (1951), were important in respect of safety in the supervisory relationship. Further, Jane expressed a desire for supervision which more closely aligned to what she offered clients, when compared to that which she had experienced in supervision. Throughout both interviews Jane stipulated that supervision which was safe needed to be predicated on trust, immediacy, transparency, honesty, collaboration. In particular lack of either a *'power struggle'* or an *'agenda'* appeared to be pivotal. In the second interview, Jane stated that she wanted more immediacy, or congruence from the supervisor. In particular, that the supervisor makes reference to the supervisory relationship. She was looking for *'them in that respect to take the lead and they never have done [...] so for them to be, you know to be bringing things to awareness about the relationship. Then I might feel a bit more comfortable doing the same.'* In turn, she felt that immediacy in the relationship with her supervisees was important:

Jane: And I think (pause) I think what shifted for me is, now I supervise (pause) you know, I am a supervisor as well, I believe I try really hard to meet my supervisee's needs and I would be really pleased if they raised issues within the relationship that I'd missed.

Trish: Yes. Yeah

Jane: Because, I really (pause) value supervision as a counsellor and I want to give my supervisees a good experience and feel that the strength of the relationship is so important that I would want them to raise issues with me.

Trish: Does that imply then that you think the relationship is the most important aspect or (sentence tails off)

Jane: Yes, absolutely, absolutely.

(Interview 1⁴)

In the first interview, Jane had been speaking about her hopes for a new supervisor she had just met. One of these hopes was to be listened to with no agenda, which is similar to empathy (Rogers 1951). During the second interview, Jane felt that the relationship with this supervisor had, again, not provided her with supervision which met her needs. The following exchange perhaps best reflects the sense I had of her experience of supervision.

⁴ 'Interview 1' refers to the first interview conducted with a particular client; likewise 'Interview 2' refers to the second interview conducted.

This encapsulates, for me, the poignancy and sadness which I felt at the time, on subsequent readings of the transcript, and on listening to the tape. Jane had been speaking about wanting her supervisees to leave supervision with her with *'a spring in their step'*:

Trish: Yeah. And how often over the years have you left your supervision with a spring in your step?

Jane: Probably not enough times, probably not enough.

Trish: Can you think of a time when you've left with a spring in your step?

Jane: Um, this feels really uncomfortable now.

Trish: Well stop if you want.

Jane: I can't, I'm sure there must have been I just, I can't bring anything really specific to mind but I'm sure there will have been but I just can't think of anything of a specific (voice trails off.)

Trish: I'm tempted to ask what felt uncomfortable, you don't have to answer but I am tempted to ask what felt uncomfortable.

Jane: Well I suppose because at the end of the day, if I'm being really honest, supervision has never, never been quite good enough but I've by the same token I have never sought out other supervisors because I've been stuck as well and that's my responsibility (voice trails off)

(Interview 2)

Later in the second interview Jane says that she has now *'given notice'* to this supervisor. Whilst there were a range of reasons for leaving, part of her rationale was the lack of immediacy. This coupled with her desire for a relational dialogue *'[...] with the supervisor I've got at the minute there is none of that, none of that at all, it is just about the kind of the bare bones of what I take and her views on that.'* In common with Jane, Mary also named the importance of the core conditions in supervision for her:

Mary: Yes, well that's in the core conditions in a way aren't we.

Trish: Yeah we are, aren't we, yeah, respect, genuineness, unconditional positive regard, empathy (voice trails off.)

Mary: Yeah.

Trish: Yeah, so actually in a supervisor those are the, it's back to wanting, or it is about wanting the core conditions from them.

Mary: I think so, yeah.

Trish: That they will respect you, that they will not judge you, that they will treat you with warmth, that they will be genuine with you.

Mary: Genuine is very important I think, yeah, and then I feel the more open and genuine they are the more open and genuine I can be.

(Interview 1)

Participants such as Jane, Mary, Wendy Alice, Lucy, and James expressed the desire to be able to *'take all of me'*. Wendy stated that she might *'[...] come in talking about a*

client but actually that's got threads in all sorts of how I feel, how I think, how I am physically [...]. Mary felt that *'[...]if counselling is all about the being of the counsellor and the relationship, you know, I don't take a bag of tricks into the counselling room and I don't take a bag of tools, I'm, all I have is me.'* Wendy articulated in both interviews a need to be understood holistically in supervision. Seeking to understand the client holistically is part of working empathically, and part of offering empathy is to listen intently to what is being expressed by that client. For Jane, for instance, it is important the supervisor does listen to her: *'[...] it comes back to that all the time because for me, as a counsellor, I believe my value as a counsellor is being able to be with my clients, to listen, to really listen, to be with them, to be walking alongside them. So in a supervisor I want the same thing [...].'*

Specifically, for Wendy, feeling safe was predicated on being understood by the supervisor, *'[...] safe, understood, that's really interesting, if I were using (pause) those are the values almost synonymously.'* Wendy also states that feeling safe and being understood are *'[...] certainly both there and I'm not sure I see them very differently.'* Furthermore, this is what she experiences with her current supervisor. In common with Jane, Wendy names the importance of the supervisor and supervisee working collaboratively, and seeking to actively foster and maintain a transparent, open dialogical relationship. Shortly after, Wendy refers to *'unconditional love'*:

Wendy: And how do we, yeah, how do we know that (pause)? Yeah, um (long pause) and I know it isn't a head thing, the more I think about it the more I can come up with rational reasons and I can feel them not hitting the spot.

Trish: Yes, but something else does hit the spot?

Wendy: Something else does hit the spot, definitely.

Trish: Can you, is it possible to name that or, an image for it or (voice trails off)?

Wendy: (long pause) Well to peel the layers off it feels like almost, I don't know, I get to a place where, which feels kind of a bit cheesy and it's something about unconditional love I guess.

Trish: Right. Because what's in my head was UPR, when you were talking it was UPR, that feeling of being accepted totally?

Wendy: Yeah, so UPR is the kind of counselling speak but (pause) yeah, that's it.
(Interview 1)

As with Jane, this could be argued to be about the importance of being understood empathically and without judgement (that is, UPR) by the supervisor. Alice also refers directly to the importance of the core conditions in the supervision relationship, for the supervisee. Alice states that, for her, the supervisory relationship is in itself therapeutic, when predicated on the core conditions:

Trish: I suppose what I'm playing around with, it's almost like what gets said there matters, not as much as how it feels to be there, how it feels to be in that relationship.

Alice: Hmm, hmm (pause) Yeah (pause) yeah (pause) and I suppose you could say the same of therapy in lots of way, you know, the relationship is the therapy. Maybe, yeah, if we're thinking of the therapeutic value of supervision, it is the relationship that's, that's therapeutic.

Trish: So what counts then in this way is not your supervisor's expertise, that might be important in other ways, but what counts here is her ability to build and maintain a solid supervisory and therapeutic relationship?

Alice: Yes, yes, so what she has to offer in terms of her experience and expertise does matter, and matters particularly so at the beginning I think, you know, when (pause) the counsellor is less experienced (pause) but yeah, I think as time goes on that diminishes in importance.

Trish: As you gain more experience.

Alice: As you gain more experience, but what she offers in terms of the core conditions and (pause) you know, kind of affirmation and being interested in your take on things and wanting to support you in your struggles and all of that, yeah, that really matters.

Trish: There's some I don't know, I suppose what strikes me is there's modelling in that, from a supervisory relationship core conditions to counselling relationship core conditions.

(Interview 2)

In the extract above Alice is referring to another important person-centred principle in that the counsellor does not seek to be, or present as an expert about the client. This is often linked to the core conditions and in particular to congruence (Mearns & Thorne 2013; Rogers 1951). During the second interview Angela also highlights the centrality of empathy for the client, the supervisor and the supervisee:

Trish: And you were talking earlier about what good supervision's been like for you, and that for me felt like core condition stuff.

Angela: Yeah, yeah.

Trish: UPR, empathy and support.

Angela: Absolutely, yeah, yeah. Yeah, and I think empathy is really important, both empathy for the client and also for me, and also for us in relation somehow.

Trish: So you and the supervisor?

Angela: Me and the client.

Trish: So like a three-way?

Angela: Yeah, yeah, and me and the supervisor I suppose, yeah, yeah.

(Interview 2)

Whilst Lucy does not refer to empathy, she did offer stories which attested to the importance of congruence and acceptance. Being accepted, without judgement, is another way of expressing UPR. These were important components which enabled Lucy to feel safe

in supervision, with her in-house supervisor. Lucy's view was that these core conditions were important for her because in the past she had been '*very incongruent with*' herself which had led her to feel distressed. Therefore Lucy was able, based on what her supervisor modelled for her in their relationship, in turn to offer this to her clients, as Lucy explained:

Lucy: (pause) so for me congruence is, I don't know if I'm maybe taking it too far now, going the other extreme, but congruence is vitally important to me, which again explains why I found [private supervisor] so difficult feeling that very incongruent relationship.

Trish: And that feeds again into client work then, if you have somebody who's prepared to offer you feedback, congruent feedback, that feels, because more of a sense of who you are?

Lucy: Exactly, yes. Uh huh, yeah. And I think it's the way that [in-house] supervisor does it, it's that congruence that isn't criticism or anything. There's complete acceptance. So it's almost like he offers a way of sort of modelling that I can see what that congruency looks and feels like, so that I can then offer it, practice it and offer it to clients.

(Interview 2)

In contrast, in the first interview Lucy named her experience with her private supervisor as incongruent, and further: '*[...] I think that's it, it doesn't feel congruent. She doesn't always feel congruent.*' And, during the second interview, whilst reflecting on a potential new supervisor for her private work, she names again the importance of congruence. It would appear that the lack of, among other things, congruence and acceptance led her to feel '*uncomfortable*' and perhaps unsafe given her use of the word '*dissociated*', in respect of her private supervisor.

Some of the stories Lucy told which suggested a lack of safety with her private supervisor related to being forgotten. The supervisor, for example, forgetting that Lucy was coming for supervision; or as Lucy said '*forgetting who I am*'; taking a long time to answer the door; or forgetting what Lucy's professional experience was. During the second interview Lucy reflects on how she is starting to be aware that '*the reaction I get when she opens the door to me, it is almost (pause) I do feel like there's a sense of judgment there.*' Though, Lucy, at times, could also forget that she was due to attend supervision, or had an appointment coming up with her private supervisor. Nevertheless, this might be seen as a lack of UPR by her private supervisor, and certainly Lucy expands upon her sense of feeling judged:

Trish: You get a sense she's judging you?

Lucy: Straightaway, uh huh, yeah. And I think actually I'd always just put that, this is just dawning on me now, I've always just put that down is that just her way of being. But maybe it's not, maybe there is more in how she does (pause) look at me. Because I don't think I have ever felt sort of welcome you know, when she's opened that door I've never felt welcomed by her (voice trails off.)

(Interview 2)

Whilst Lucy was the only participant who directly contrasted two concurrent supervisory relationships, others also mediated their understanding by comparing both good and not so good supervisory relationships. Throughout both interviews, Wendy evaluated and attributed meaning through the lens of the relationships she had over time with her supervisors. She offered examples across a spectrum of experiences with supervisors, in particular aspects of those relationships which had enabled her to feel safe, or not. Other participants (Jane, Mary, Wendy and Peter) compared experiences, between supervisors, and from different perspectives, and in common with Lucy, used the good and less good experiences as a means of understanding their positive experiences.

Whilst Peter did not refer directly to components of the core conditions, he did nevertheless speak of wanting a supervisor who was '*supportive and warm*'; warmth is often seen as part of UPR (Mearns & Thorne, 2013). At the time of the first interview, Peter was looking for a new supervisor and in the second interview this had taken place. In discussing what he wanted from the new supervisor he stated that safety was not only connected to support and warmth, but also to the supervisor being firm and clear:

Peter: Yeah. Because it's got to be, you know, I've got to believe that this person is going to be really firm and clear with me, as well as supportive and warm and so on, you know, so that if she's not, if she's worried about some aspect then she's going to say. I think she will be, you know, she seems pretty, a pretty tough cookie really.

Trish: There's something about being held I guess for me, I don't feel safe if people are too, if the boundaries are too loose, is that (voice trails off)?

Peter: Mm, yes absolutely.

(Interview 2)

In many ways, Peter's sense of a warm, supportive, but also firm and clear, relationship is similar to Wendy's description of a '*grown up*' relationship:

Wendy: It was, yeah, yeah. And I think that's (pause) it's incredibly warm and nurturing our relationship but actually it's a grown up relationship. When we were talking about the supervisor I had when I was doing my supervision training which I got to a good enough stage and the effort I put into making this relationship work, I felt like the grown up and I'm rather irritated that I had to be the grown up because

(pause) I thought in that context erm (pause) she was meant to be the grown up and I mean I guess that was kind of (pause) I came with a reasonable amount of experience of counselling and of being the supervisee. Okay I hadn't done supervision before so there was stuff I didn't know there were things I was concerned about but I didn't have that same sense that she trusted I knew what I was doing.

(Interview 2)

It was also important to Peter that the supervisor was '*committed to our relationship*', which I link to feeling safe, and he links to their competence as a supervisor:

Trish: And again that I wouldn't feel safe in that type of relationship.

Peter: No (pause) I think there's some, I mean I don't want to kind of over, we talked towards the end [of interview 1] about the cup of tea and the, you know, the warm friendly stuff, you know, I don't want to kind of overegg that really in the overall scheme of things at the end of the day it's about their competence, you know. They could be as rigid and strict and frame-like but if they don't have the competence that's no, on the other hand they could make me a cup of tea and offer me a biscuit if they like and as long as they seem like they know what they're doing that's fine [...]

(Interview 2)

In some ways, Peter's narrative does not match the more overtly relational aspects of the relationship named by some of the other participants. Peter was the participant who tended not use what Wendy referred to as '*counselling speak*' as frequently as the other participants. For instance, Peter did not make explicit reference to feeling safe or not in supervision, unless picking up on something I had said. Whilst Peter needed, in order to feel safe, a supervisor who was warm and supportive, what was as important was a supervisor who was competent and committed to the relationship.

James, in contrast did refer specifically to the core conditions in supervision. In this extract James is talking about how he was: '*[...] I'm struggling to stop thinking as a supervisor rather than a supervisee*'. Moreover, at times he moved into his experience as a counsellor and also as a trainer. All participants did this to some extent, particularly Angela. However, what was different with James was the degree to which this happened:

Trish: Right, so it's not possible to separate the person from the practitioner?

James: I don't think so, no, certainly not as a person centred, in a person centred sense. What I'm always interested in, what are the things I take to kind of supervision, is, and now I very much believe that supervision is a place for celebration as well, not kind of just problem solving or (pause) so it's a place (pause) for me and it's a place for my supervisees to feel good about their work as well, to identify their strengths as well as maybe their limitations (pause). And I

often think about this, you know, this tension between supervision, at what point does supervision become personal therapy and what point doesn't it? And one of the things I'm always kind of remembering as a supervisor, and needing to trust my supervisor, I think that's a really important thing, you know, I need my supervisor to trust me, I need my supervisor, and I'm talking now more as a supervisee, aren't I, I need my supervisor to kind of (pause) give me permission and offer me unconditional positive regard, for me to take what, those things that are concerning me, that may be concerning me personally and privately and existentially, because they always have an impact on my work.

Trish: You said, right at the beginning, something about safe, it has to be a safe place and a safe space.

James: Yes, it's got to be. [...]

(Interview 1)

James refers above to the importance of trust, the core conditions, and challenge, as had other participants (Jane, Wendy, Lucy, Angela and Alice). Mary also reflects on the link between safety and challenge. For instance, in describing positive experiences of supervision as a '*kind of safety net*' which include both support and challenge, Mary stated that supervision was '*[...] it's like a fuel, it's like being the palm of somebody's hand, it's like [...]*'. She concludes with this being '*[...]* about the core conditions, I think it probably is isn't it.'

To conclude this subsection, all participants told stories pertaining to the ways in which the core conditions being present in supervision enabled them to feel safe. Some, Jane and Lucy in particular, told stories where the absence of the core conditions had a negative impact. It would appear that participants were using language familiar to them as counsellors, in this instance concerning the core conditions. The stories which follow, about trust and respect, follow a similar pattern and build on the core conditions as experienced by the participants.

Trust

All participants told stories which attested to the link between the core conditions (as explicated above) and trust being present in the supervisory relationship. Perhaps it is unsurprising that when participants felt accepted, listened to, and not judged, they also trusted the supervisor. Angela expressed the relationship between trust and safety particularly well:

Trish: Because the word 'trust' has been in my head when you were talking about the poor supervisor relationship, and that felt like it came to be that there wasn't trust there?

Angela: No, no trust, no, no.

Trish: But currently it feels like that's an important (voice trails off)

Angela: Yeah, it is, it is. Hmm, and I don't think, and I hope, as my supervisees trust me, because I can't see as it could work if they don't.

Trish: I guess you can't feel safe, I can't feel safe if I don't trust somebody.

Angela: No, no.

Trish: And I can't disclose difficult things (voice trails off)

Angela: No, no (over talking)

Trish: If I don't trust something (over talking)

Angela: No, no.

Trish: (over talking) somebody.

Angela: And you've got to be able to be vulnerable, haven't you.

Trish: Yeah.

Angela: You've got to be able to say 'Oh shit, I think I'm (pause) [snorts], not sure I did that really well'.

Trish: Well for me that's an important part of supervision, is owning up to when I think I've done it wrong.

Angela: Yeah, yeah, absolutely, and if you can't say that, if you've always got to watch your back just in case they attack you, it's not going to work, is it.

(Interview 2)

Angela articulates clearly what happens that when trust is absent she feels unsafe. Conversely, of course, when trust (and respect) is present she feels safe. Lucy from the start of interview one, and through to the end of the second interview, compares her experiences of trust and respect between her in-house and private supervisor. Lucy describes her private supervisor in the following way: *'It's (sighs), I don't feel completely (pause) what's the word? I don't sort of trust her completely. I am a bit reticent about what I do take. I don't know if she's even aware of it.'* In contrast, her relationship with her in-house supervisor is described as safe and marked by mutual respect: *'[...] I think (pause) I really respect him. I respect his knowledge and I respect the fact that he respects me and my work, and that's what I don't feel from my private supervisor. I don't feel that she necessarily respects my work.'* One part of this for Lucy is about being, or not being, listened to:

Lucy: Because I think with her it's the fact that, it feels that she doesn't really know me, or she forgets who I am.

Trish: That feels (pause) that feels a big thing in terms of your supervisor not to (pause) your sense that she doesn't know you.

Lucy: Yeah, yeah, and I think that's where the relationship for me doesn't quite work. She hasn't took the time, or I don't know, doesn't work in such a way where she gets to know who I am.

(Interview 1)

In part this leads Lucy to feeling unsafe with her private supervisor: *'Unsafe is the word that first springs to mind, sometimes. Sometimes I come out feeling very frustrated,*

incredulous (whispers) what was that all about (laughs). Sometimes I come out laughing”.

James also refers to a difficult experience with a supervisor where he acknowledged the importance of trust in respect of feeling safe: *‘[...] the safety thing is really important, because I had a very malign experience of a supervisor. I’ve got to be mindful now, what I say.’* This was because during training, and for a year after, he had a supervisor *‘who manipulated’* him. As a result of this he was able to articulate his experience of supervision when trust is present:

James: Well trust, is like the kind of warm Mediterranean, that’s how it feels to me. I can swim around in here and feel myself turn around in the water and things flow through me and around me, and that’s what it feels like for me.

Trish: And when you can step into the warm Mediterranean and do that, do you get a sense of what becomes possible, on the back of that?

James: Hmm, yeah. And also what’s not possible, yeah, I think that’s really important.

(Interview 1)

James extends this metaphor shortly after *‘I hope she’ll forgive me for using this metaphor, it’s like an old familiar piece of clothing, her home is kind of familiar to me. She is.’* To the extent that when his supervisor was ill, and he saw a supervisor he also knew, despite feeling *‘fortunate’* he also *‘found that quite disturbing.’*

In comparison, particularly when compared to Lucy, Alice articulated a less dichotomous experience of supervision. Alice appeared to experience high levels of mutual trust and respect, and so felt safe, with her supervisor. This is perhaps best characterised by her description of the relationship as *‘robust’*:

Alice: Yeah, and I suppose I mean I started speaking about that as a way of saying our relationship’s not cosy, so following on from that, so it’s never been this kind of relationship where we each couldn’t challenge the other, so it feels a very robust relationship and it can tolerate that kind of rupture, and kind of can be repaired and resolved, so yeah I suppose I might agree that it, you know, you’re really kind of testing it aren’t you, you’re testing its robustness, with something like that, yeah.

Trish: And it puts me in mind of things like trust.

Alice: Yes.

Trish: For me inherent in what you’re saying, although you’ve got to take a deep breath to take it back I suppose you’ve got to trust in the relationship with the other person.

Alice: Yes yes.

Trish: To some degree or another?

Alice: Yes, I, yeah, I don’t know what I would have done if I’d have thought it wouldn’t withstand that challenge. If I’d have thought it wouldn’t would I have gone ahead, I probably would have gone ahead but with the understanding that it

might, we might need to finish together if we couldn't resolve it. But no I think I even, even though I had to take a big deep breath I did kind of expect that it would be okay, yeah. Yes, and I absolutely trust her, and I wouldn't say never that nothing like that could ever happen again, it could happen for all sorts of reasons, but I would always trust that [...] I think I know the relationship's important to her.

(Interview 1)

Whilst Wendy did not refer specifically, in this instance, to ruptures in the relationship, nevertheless she suggested that when the relationship is safe it is possible to get it wrong. It could be argued that '*getting it wrong*' but still having trust in the other person evidences a relationship which can tolerate ruptures:

Wendy: Yet you can say the most challenging and you can get it really wrong.

Trish: Yes.

Wendy: You can say something and really miss the point completely, if they get that you, underneath it, you want to get them.

Trish: Yes. So it's back to what you were saying before about intent.

Wendy: Yes.

Trish: If the intent is good and the relationship is good and that's, the intent is trusting.

Wendy: Yes, is experienced then you can cock up big style and you know that it doesn't make a difference.

Trish: Because the relationship's evident.

(Interview 2)

It might be that the commonalities between the stories told by Alice and Wendy relate to the link between congruence and building trust. Specifically, that in order to build trust it is necessary for the supervisor to be transparent and honest. Shortly after the extract from interview 1 above, Alice acknowledges the link between her safety and client safety, saying that for her '*[...] the ultimate client in supervision is the client, the counselling client. [...] the client's interests are best served, the counsellor's client interests are best served by supervision that's really safe.*' James told a similar story: '*[...] how best can clients be protected, if necessary, how best can poor practice be addressed, and I just think the best way is by having a safe, trusting relationship, not policing relationship.*' Further, in the second interview, Alice returns to the topic of safety, including client safety, in supervision and links this to her supervisor being 'straight' with her and in turn Alice offering this to her supervisees:

Alice: Yeah, they would absolutely know where they stand, and if I had anything to say I'd say it, I'd be saying it, and I do, you know I don't withhold good things that I might say, I'm always very keen to give praise where praise is due and, yeah. So I think that probably yeah the balance is maybe that sort of briskness is [...] that actually they're dead safe about where they stand.

(Interview 2)

For Jane this honesty, or transparency, needed to start with a written contract. In order to feel safe Jane argued that she needed to *'[...] feel that my supervisor has my best interests at heart, wants to assist me in the work that I do and if I feel that then I can take what I need to take.'* Moreover, this needed to be, in part, built on a *'comprehensive contract'*, as an indication of how *'[...] substantial a relationship can be. If the initial contracting is very robust, personally that gives me a sense of safety [...]'*. Jane felt that her own contracting was *'about making things very clear,* and furthermore that *'the more honest, the more transparent things are, hopefully the quickly the relationship is built':*

Trish: So if things are there clearly, transparently, honestly, then you can start to build trust?

Jane: Yes. Yes, because both parties know where they stand then.

Trish: And there's something about trust and safety and boundaries feel important as well.

Jane: Yes. Yeah. Yes, because that's about, for me, about being a professional. I have a need to know where I stand with people. So if someone who can hold the boundaries well, that is reassuring for me.

(Interview 1)

Therefore for Jane trust, and safety, began with a comprehensive, robust contract. In turn this enabled her to feel safe within clearly defined, professional boundaries. In many ways this is similar to stories told about the need for an honest and transparent relationship in supervision. Whereas Jane's focus here is on the need for a written contract, the overarching desire for transparency and honesty is nevertheless common across many participant narratives.

To conclude this subsection, it would appear that trust was an important component in supervision which was experienced as safe. Participants told stories which attested to the way in which the presence or absence of trust linked to safety in the relationship with their supervisor(s). It would appear that a pivotal aspect of this was the supervisor's ability to be honest and transparent.

Length of relationship

Length of the supervisory relationship was something that most participants made reference to. Some, Wendy, Peter, Alice and James for instance, felt that this was part of what enabled them to feel safe in that relationship. Most participants stipulated that staying with a supervisor for a number of years was a positive experience, and enabled them to feel safe. Jane was the exception to this:

Jane: That was really positive, really positive for quite a number of years because I had a lot of respect for that supervisor. And I believe that (pause) they kind of played a really considerable role in me qualifying and carrying on working as a counsellor. But I stayed with them too long.

Trish: Right.

Jane: But in the early days, I would say it was a good experience.

Trish: Mm. But something changed?

Jane: Yeah. As I qualified and got different levels of work then something changed within that relationship. And with hindsight, I should have moved on more quickly really.

Trish: Can you identify what changed with hindsight?

Jane: (Pause) I don't (pause) I say we became too familiar but too (pause) I can't think how to put it really (pause) it was all on a very superficial level. There was no real interest in (pause) I didn't feel they had any real interest in what I was doing or the impact of the work on me or anything, it was all very much on a (pause) very much on the surface and very much (pause) a lot of sessions felt very repetitive.

(Interview 1)

Jane does not link this overtly at this point to safety, but she does link this directly to the misuse of power in supervision. Arguably, misuse of power might result in the supervisee feeling unsafe in the relationship. Reflecting on the relationship with her first supervisor, Jane stated that it had been supportive at first: *'[...] but then it did, power did come into it latterly really.'* During the second interview Jane returns to this, in particular that she had tried to raise this with the supervisor: *'[...] I was as honest as I felt I could be and said I didn't know what was going wrong but it felt like something was going wrong and it almost felt as though the supervisor was bored with me [...] my expectation was that that session would then be focused on us looking at what was happening to our relationship and all they said was "oh gosh, well no that's not how I see things".'*

Peter, in contrast, began the first interview by naming his sense of loss about the impending retirement of his long-term supervisor: *'very, very sad about that so it's a loss, I feel really, it does feel like a loss for me. I mean five years is quite a long time to be with someone and [supervisor] has been with me through what's been quite a, a time of a great deal of change for me (pause).'* Peter started working with this supervisor after the

previous one had become ill and died: which had been another loss. Peter also described how a good relationship took time to build with this supervisor. This was a phenomena, which was also considered important by others, for example, Wendy and Alice.

Peter: Yeah, yeah, I mean they need to know my limits as well don't they really and that's why I think it takes a good long while, you know a year or 18 months really to get into a good relationship with a supervisor because they need to get to know, really that's only like 12, it could be as few as 12 sessions couldn't it?

Trish: Yeah, it's not a lot is it?

Peter: You know and 12 hours is not a long time to get to know someone.

Trish: So changing supervisor for you how does that feel then, it's an enforced change.

Peter: Yeah. Well like I said at the beginning I do feel very sad and I was aware when I was talking with [supervisor] the last time I actually filled up a bit and felt a bit emotional but I'm also aware, and I was able to say this to him, that I'm a bit pissed off with him actually, you know, because it's damned inconvenient and I'm a bit, I'm cross about that.

Trish: Because he's leaving you?

Peter: Because he's leaving me and rationally I understand the guy is nearly 70 (pause) but you know and he understands that I'm a bit cross about that you know, because he feels I'm you know, abandoned a little (pause) and I'm going to have to sort of go out there and it feels quite exposing and, you know, risky and like last time I might not make the right choice first off and then have to change again and so on.

(Interview 1)

Wendy expressed a similar view, that the relationship takes time to develop, when discussing an experience with one of her supervisees. She asks the question: *'[...] and then (pause) as I'm talking about that, so what's the difference between that and counselling? There is no difference (pause) in a way, the challenge was that I met her once a month as opposed to every week so it took longer for the (pause) [...].'*

In contrast, Alice opened the first interview with a *'declaration'* in relation to having had the same supervisor for a long time that *'[...] there is obviously some kind of, obviously some sort of not embarrassment exactly'*. Alice expresses her discomfort: *'[...] even a bit of shame about that'*, that she should have *'ditched'* her supervisor by now, *'[...] and that it must be very cosy, which it isn't actually.'* It seemed apparent during both interview that, in fact, this was not a *'cosy'* relationship. Moreover, the relationship was extremely important in supporting her work with clients. Hence, Alice's *'shame'* about its longevity seems understandable only in light some implicit prohibition she feels is operative in relation to getting too close to, or comfortable with, one's supervisor. In the second interview Alice reviews her response to the length of the relationship with this

supervisor:

Alice: Yeah, yeah, that's true, that's true, yeah, yeah. So I am myself, I think I am absolutely myself (pause) yeah. There's something else, and it just touched on something else that I was thinking of (pause). Yes, and I don't quite know what the link is, but it (pause) another thing that's come out of that interview is it really highlighted, **really** highlighted for me the fact that the ultimate client in supervision is the client, the counselling client. I mean I knew that but it really brought it out to me, because you were kind of helping me see that, actually if the client is well served by my being in supervision with this supervisor, that I've been with for years isn't that what matters? So there's some line there (pause) erm (pause). Is it that supervisees know where they stand absolutely with me and that makes them kind of safe, safe in the supervision, and then there's a safety around their practice in that somehow? So the client is best served by that too because, because their supervision is safe.

Trish: Yeah, and safe supervision for you equals (pause) it feels like there's a (voice trails off.)

Alice: Yeah, yeah, that then there's the client's interest are best served, the counsellor's client interests are best served by supervision that's really safe.
(Interview 2)

James appeared to hold a less conflicted sense of being with his supervisor for a long time. Here again this seems to link to trust in the supervisory relationship, being known over time by the supervisor, and experiencing the core conditions:

Trish: And you as supervisee, I'm wondering how that translates into you as, or for you, as supervisee?

James: Ermm (pause) I feel very held by my supervisor. I've worked with her for a long time now, and that's really important to me, and, you know, lots of people, I mean, I've taught supervision and lots of people would argue that it's important to change every few years. I can see that it, you know, I can certainly see sense in that, but, for me personally, in attachment terms, it's really important for me to feel that, you know, I have somebody who's consistent, who believes in me, who respects me (pause) who I'm able to impress sometimes, but also who can challenge me as well, you know, because I can be a pompous bastard, so it's not a bad thing that, do you know what I mean?

Trish: Yeah, there's something about being known in there, which is what you were saying before.

James: Yeah, yeah. Feeling safe to kind of, this is an important thing to me, feeling safe to be caught out sometimes, but not in a shaming way. Does that make sense?

(Interview 1)

As can be seen, what was important for James was that the relationship was safe enough for him to make mistakes and '*be caught out*' but not shamed. And, as with Peter, Wendy, and Alice, the longevity of the relationship appeared to be an important

component of feeling known and so feeling safe. As James stated:

James: and I think, for some human beings it takes that kind of length of time to feel safe and trusting [...]
(Interview 1)

To conclude this subsection on the length of the relationship, it would appear that what some participants articulate is that being known, over time, was important in order for them to feel safe. Though these stories also contain narratives about shame (see Alice) and power (see Jane) which might militate against feeling safe, albeit differently. Stories told in all subsections suggest the importance of the core conditions in relation to safety in the supervisory relationship.

Stories about the therapeutic edge in supervision, and love compassion and attunement

What follows are the stories participants told about the therapeutic and transpersonal aspects of supervision. These comprise the therapeutic edge of supervision; and love, compassion and attunement in supervision.

The therapeutic edge of supervision

Jane, Mary, Wendy, Alice and James all reflected on the therapeutic use of supervision. Whilst Peter did not directly refer to supervision as therapy, it could be argued that a supervisor who was '*big enough*' to hold him comes close to this. Peter does state that he feels '*lighter*' when he has been to supervision. Moreover, he believes that it is '*a therapeutic process*' for him, particularly in respect of reminding him of his need to take care of himself. Whilst Lucy did not refer to supervision in these terms it might be argued that the way in which her in-house supervisor modelled congruence, discussed in the preceding section, or the '*complete acceptance*' of her might be experienced as at least restorative, if not therapeutic. This might have been particularly important given her experience with her private supervisor.

Whilst neither Jane nor Mary overtly used supervision as therapy, both expressed a desire for that to be part of their supervisory experience. Shortly after the end of the second interview, Jane disclosed that the interview process had caused her to reflect on the line between supervision and counselling. With her permission we re-started the tape:

Jane: One of the things that (pause) it actually, it came to me when I first started to read the transcript and started to think about recent supervision sessions that I've had, that there's such a very, very fine line between supervision and counselling and that although quite often you read about or if, you know when we were studying on the diploma and other courses, you know it always seems to be hammered home supervision is not counselling and you know you need to have personal therapy happening at the same time if you're struggling with different aspects but it's never as black and white as that.

Trish: No.

Jane: It can never be as black and white as that because in supervision you can unearth the reasons why you're doing what you're doing, saying what you're saying, not doing what you should be doing and it can be linked to your own stuff so very closely that within that supervision space there has to be some space, maybe for half an hour's counselling just because it's absolutely pertinent at that moment.

(Interview 2, de-brief)

Jane felt that in supervision it might at times be *'[...] useful to actually dig a bit deeper with the therapist but not just shut it down'*. Throughout both interviews Jane told repeated stories about her experience of the supervisor closing down rather than opening up discussion. This was across a spectrum of issues relating to both personal and professional spheres. Mary also felt that there was a fine line between supervision and counselling, and for similar reasons. Whilst Mary does not say she felt shut down, there was nevertheless a desire for the discussion to be opened up. What follows perhaps best exemplifies the dilemma experienced counsellors might feel about this boundary. Certainly it is a dilemma I feel both as a supervisee and supervisor.

Mary: Yeah, I mean within reason, I mean, I (pause) it was sometimes tempting, I used to think it would be lovely to have this as a therapy session, and I was never sure quite what the boundaries were between talking about my stuff and my clients stuff, and I used to think (pause) when I first started I used to be a bit frustrated sometimes when she'd ask me how I was and how I was looking after myself and things like that, but then it became very apparent to me, you know, that those were very important things to do, so she was interested in me as a person and interested in relation to my clients, but I was, it's, there's sometimes and I still get a little bit confused about that even now, about how far supervision, well I suppose it's all about you really, but how far it's about you and your clients or just you and I know in recent times sometimes I think I have gone to supervision and just talked about me.

Trish: Sorry I didn't (talking over her)

Mary: No, I was just going to say, just talk about me and what's going on in my life because I felt it was impacting on (voice tails off).

Trish: Yeah, but there's a confusion somewhere for you.

Mary: Yeah, sometimes I used to think ooh, is that therapy or is this supervision.

Trish: Right, what do you want it (talks over me).

Mary: And what I, what did I want it to be, and I think when I used it I sometimes wanted it to be therapy, but it wasn't, I knew in my head it wasn't.

Trish: No, would there have been a benefit to you for it to be therapy as well as supervision?

Mary: Mmm (pause) I don't know, I don't know, I find that really difficult, I think, yeah, I think sometimes you can lose sight can't you as a counsellor of how much stuff is impacting on you and I think and it's interesting 'cos I've never talking to other counsellors about sometimes I think my supervision could occasionally recognise that I needed to talk about me, because I was tired or angry or sad or whatever, and we needed to do that first before we could talk about clients, or even how that was impacting on a client, so yeah, so that's for example if I went in and I just said "I'm so tired" "why, let's think about what's going on for you", you know, and that was it, such a relief sometimes to do that.

(Interview 1)

In contrast, in the first interview Alice felt that it was important supervision did not become therapy. Whilst she expressed feeling supported by the supervisor, she stated *'[...] but that certainly didn't stray into therapy or anything like that, but she was very supportive and I know that she cares about me as a person, as well as a counsellor. So that, you know, that felt very appropriate and I felt very supported as a person as well as in my practice by that.'* However, in common with Jane, towards the end of the second interview, Alice reflects on her experience of the interview process as having opened her to the possibility of a more porous boundary:

Alice: Yes, yes, yeah. So it really brought it home to me. I suppose what it has done is, yeah, it's changed my (pause) I think it has changed my thinking about the supervisory relationship, it's much more like the counselling relationship than I had thought.

Trish: You were very clear, this is not quite the same as you said, but you were very clear that therapy and supervision, there was a really clear line between them.

Alice: Yeah, yeah, yeah, but I know that when we talked last time you were kind of talking about the therapeutic value of supervision (pause) in terms of being growthful and all of those things. Yeah, I think it's, it's (pause) obviously still a very different enterprise and yet it is more similar than I had thought, or the relationship is more similar than I had thought.

(Interview 2)

Shortly after, Alice names the way in which she feels the relationship in supervision is the therapeutic component, much as it is in counselling:

Trish: And it's the therapeutic value of supervision that's (sentence tails off.)

Alice: It's sort of the therapeutic value of that kind of relationship (pause) that kind of relationship.

Trish: I suppose what I'm playing around with, it's almost like what gets said there matters, not as much as how it feels to be there, how it feels to be in that relationship.

Alice: Hmm, hmm (pause) yeah (pause) yeah (pause) and I suppose you could say the same of therapy in lots of ways, you know, the relationship is the therapy. Maybe, yeah, if we're thinking of the therapeutic value of supervision, it is the relationship that's, that's therapeutic.

(Interview 2)

In contrast to all other participants, Wendy told the most explicit stories about using supervision for therapy in both interviews. During the first interview, Wendy named how therapeutic aspects of supervision enabled her to make sense of her work with clients. Arguably, this is what Jane, Mary and Alice were also referring to, but Wendy provides the clearest articulation:

Trish: The other thing I suppose that's in my head is I'm wondering about whether there would be anything you wouldn't take to her?

Wendy: Interesting question, um (pause) Mm (pause) It's hard to imagine there's anything I wouldn't take and I know that, I mean I've taken quite personal things because I know that they're all tangled up in it. And sometimes, you know, in an hour and a half supervision we've had about an hour of therapy and then the supervision bit's been dead easy because it's cleared all the gubbins out of the way and then it's "oh yeah, I was going to talk about this client, now I can see why I'm in a mess about the client or the supervisee".

(Interview 1)

Wendy makes the following observation at the start of the second interview, affirming further her view of supervision as therapy. On reading the transcript she became aware of '[...] *how much I use supervision as therapy.*' Further that '*a bit of me thought "oh is that okay?" And then another bit thought well actually, yeah, it's absolutely fine because I know I use it for supervision too and having that solid understanding of me makes supervision really easy but the actual clienty bits on the outside makes it much more straightforward.*' In fact, her position is similar to Alice's view that there are more similarities than differences between the counselling and supervisory relationship, as Wendy explains:

Trish: Yeah. So the foundations are the same then for counselling as for supervision.

Wendy: For me, yeah.

Trish: Hmmm. And the foundations are the relationship?

Wendy: Well you make it sound very simple but yes (mutual laughter) that's what I believe, I think that's what I believe.

Trish: And saying what you do, what you do in each space might be different on top of that but with that starting point there then there can be all sorts of possibilities.

Wendy: Yeah, and without the starting point, actually it feels like a house built on sand.

(Interview 2)

Whilst talking about what makes supervision a safe space for supervisees, James also considers the mutability of the boundary between supervision and therapy:

James: And for obvious reasons as well. A lot depends on what, clients may be evoking in supervisees, they may pull them perhaps to hide things, but, for me, it's about always having those channels open and, so some of my session as a supervisee might feel like personal therapy to other people, and I get kind of a bit annoyed about that preciousness about that.

Trish: Right. The preciousness of (voice trails off)?

James: The preciousness of, you know, because some people believe that, oh, you know, the boundaries should be completely, absolutely clear. I think that's the trust thing.

Trish: Yes.

James: If I have a supervisee who, every session, is like that, that that's a real concern and that might be a point to kind of say that maybe this belongs in therapy, but certainly not to kind of close down anything in supervision.

(Interview 1)

His view, expressed earlier in the interview, was that he often took personal things to supervision because it *'always has relevance to my therapeutic work'*. As with Wendy, there was a sense that the boundary for him between therapy and supervision was fluid. Further that it was important not to shut anything down, and to trust that the boundaries can be held without rigid imposition.

In contrast, in both interviews, Angela viewed supervision as similar to, but different from, counselling. The similarity being that supervision is a space reserved for the supervisee:

Angela: I think it is a valuable process, I mean I suppose because of what you do (pause) we do, we value discussion and exploration about anything, don't we? And I think about your counselling work, it is a valuable thing to have and to have that space and time that is just for you and for you to be able to talk through things is incredibly valuable, particularly if you've got a busy life, is to have that space where somebody is (pause) and it's not the same as counselling, but it's that space is kept for you, which is similar.

(Interview 1)

For Angela, the distinction between supervision and counselling is that it is the supervisor's responsibility to make judgments about [client] safety. There does however,

appear to be a tension in this in that she feels it should be both a safe and non-judgemental relationship, and also one predicated on the supervisor holding the power to judge matters of safety:

Angela: No, no. I think it's having a respectful relationship, and I don't mean, you know, 'Yes, sir. No, sir', but I mean that you both respect each other as professionals, and that neither of you talk down to the other no matter what your role is, whether you're the supervisor, so it's a bit of a coming together and a bit of common experience, erm (pause) and I think it's that sense of safety, that you can say anything (pause) and don't feel that you would be judged for it. So, I mean, it's very similar to a counselling relationship in a sense, although of course as a supervisor you do have to make some judgements about safety and things. (Interview 2)

To conclude, stories told about the therapeutic edge of supervision appear to highlight a range of tensions. These tensions focus on where the boundary sits between supervision and therapy. Jane and Alice articulate stories where the stance taken about supervision as therapy shifted as a result of the interview process. James and Wendy by comparison told stories about overtly using supervision as therapy. Angela, in contrast, stated that whilst the relationship needs to be safe, it also needs to contain some judgement about client safety.

Love, compassion and attunement in supervision

It is perhaps unsurprising that those who aligned most closely with 'supervision as therapy': that is, James and Wendy also told stories about love and compassion in supervision. However, they were not the only participants who did so. For example, Alice spoke movingly about the high level of attunement she had experienced from her supervisor. Equally, it might be argued that, Peter, in naming the desire for a supervisor 'big enough to hold him', alludes to something close to love and compassion. Similarly, stories told about the importance of being known (from Jane, Mary, Wendy, Alice and James) seem to suggest a relationship which can contain a degree of attunement, and perhaps compassion.

Throughout, it seemed apparent that the meaning and impact of supervision for Wendy was mediated through words such as 'love' and 'compassion'. In both interviews, she described the relationship in terms of relational depth and stressed the important of being accepted holistically, at both an emotional and intellectual level:

Wendy: And so there is an intellect, I have got a need to have an intellectual understanding of something and an emotional understanding of it.

Trish: So that intellectual, that emotional, that being accepted, being who, being accepted holistically. The other word to me is compassion, it sounds like there's compassion there.

Wendy: There's huge compassion there, yes (pause) yes there is.

Trish: And that it surprises me not that you use the word love the, there's something about, but I keep, in my head I keep coming back to this word love.

Wendy: (pause) If you'd talked to me ten years ago I wouldn't have used the word love, I think I've got a lot more comfortable with using the word love as a result of working at X and we talk about love in the counselling relationship. And the more I talked about it the more I realised how comfortable I felt with it but also how much more comfortable I felt talking about it. And it's not a, it's a kind of universal love and un-possessive love, it's nothing (pause). But it's a word that's so open to misinterpretation that, um, I'm wary.

(Interview 1)

At one point Wendy says that what she gets from her supervisor is intangible. We return later to the impact of talking about love in a research interview:

Trish: How does it feel talking about it here?

Wendy: It feels okay, it feels absolutely fine. I'm hoping you'll understand as you, but as you question me I'm thinking "I wonder if this is a, um (pause) this is X speak. A bit. And I guess I see you vaguely as part of that because I've seen the way you are with X, so there's a kind of "oh she'll get it."

Trish: Yes, but it sounds like (voice trails off)

Wendy: But you might not. (laughs)

Trish: Yes, it sounds like there's a little bit of a "but" there in terms of "she might not get it, I think she might but"?

Wendy: When I first used it I didn't think about it and then now you picking up on it I'm thinking "yeah this isn't ordinary everyday counselling language.

(Interview 1)

It was interesting that Wendy was hesitant to use the word 'love' in a research interview. It was clear that her knowledge of me through someone in her workplace enabled her to 'hope' that I would 'get' it. Her concern was that her references to love could be misinterpreted and, after a longer exchange where she reflects on where this comes from for her, she finishes by saying '*[...] perhaps I use the word love in a slightly challenging way because I want and feel it's really important for that, the emotional bit, to be heard powerfully rather than tidied up to make it fit (pause) with a cognitive kind of framework.*' James is the only other participant to use the word 'love' and, furthermore, considers its importance to every aspect of his life:

James: The one thing that underpins everything I do, and it has to be, if this goes, for me, all goes, its loving people. Not in a way that's selfishly satisfying of my own needs or, you know, it's that whole Agape thing that's kind of really important for me. That's when I know I'm in trouble. Does that make sense?

Trish: When that goes or when that's not there or (sentence trails off)?

James: When it runs out, if it runs out. And I've seen it run out in people. Does that make sense?

Trish: Yes, yeah, that sense of burn out?

James: That's what burn out is, I think. But that's what, for me, underpins everything I do, everything.

Trish: And in supervision, then, you as a supervisor and supervisee, there's that importance of that therapeutically loving space?

James: Hmm.

Trish: And just how important that is?

James: It's kind of, yes, because that's the compassionate bit. It's, I find it very rewarding to love somebody for just being who they are in this moment, without having no expectation of them, you know, just, you know, the beauty of them, that's the romantic in me, you know, the beauty of a person. Each new client is like an undiscovered country to me, and I suddenly become, if it becomes therapy by numbers, that's all down the pan.

Trish: Yeah. And therapy by numbers doesn't, I guess, allow for that loving therapeutic space.

James: No, no, no. Love is something that, I think, in certain aspects, it's almost like the feeling that daren't speak its name.

(Interview 1)

I link his way of working, which demands a huge amount of him, to the potential importance of the supervisory relationship. Interestingly, he responds: *'Yeah it does [the supervisory relationship]. Not in the sense that I need my, because I don't need my supervisor to love me, in fact, we've never talked about that, which might be really interesting, but I need her to kind of respect that that's important to me, and she does.'* It might therefore, be argued that, whilst he does not need his supervisor to love him as articulated in the extract above, she does need to know it is important to him. This is arguably similar to Alice's story about the importance of knowing her supervisor experiences the same intensity that she does about their relationship. The extract from James'' interview above is followed shortly after by the following exchange:

Trish: Yes. I mean, we're nearly at the end, I'm just wondering as well whether that translates for you as supervisors to supervisees, that capacity to love supervisees?

James: Hmm. Oh, well, your question is do I feel love for my sup (sentence trails off)

Trish: Yes.

James: Yes, I do, yeah.

Trish: And you've not talked to your supervisor about it, but is that what you want from her?

James: I'm not sure what you mean. I wouldn't necessarily, I mean, when I hear loving feelings, because often there's a lot of shame attached to that, that shame chokes things off.

(Interview 1)

On reading the transcript, I am left with the feeling that James can give love to others: students, supervisees and clients, in a non-possessive way he speaks about above – “Agape”. However, there is a poignant sense that he finds it more difficult to accept love: perhaps this is the shame that “*chokes things off*” that he refers to. He says: ‘*Yeah, I do in terms of things that I cherish most of all, things like loyalty, dependability, integrity, empathy, respect, all those kinds of things, you know, I do feel I get from her. Maybe I need to tell her more often.*’ It might also be worth noting that this was our first meeting, our only research interview, and he had no knowledge of me. Perhaps, unlike Wendy, it was more difficult for James to trust that I could hold concepts of love, Agape, and the boundary between supervision and therapy as being more fluid.

Whilst Alice does not use the word ‘love’, there was a point in the first interview where she is in touch emotionally with what her supervisor offered her. Immediately before the following extract Alice realised how attuned to her changing needs (from trainee, to newly qualified, to experienced counsellor) her supervisor must have been over the years, and she likens this to a maternal attunement:

Alice: No, it (pause) no, it feels as if it's just happened, yeah, organically (pause) as you say and it, the relationship has always continued to meet my needs, whatever they were at that time.

Trish: And you looked quite tearful when you said “I feel moved by that”, that feels special?

Alice: It does, it does feel special, I don't know why I'm so moved by that but just (pause) it's like oh isn't that great, I don't think I'd recognised actually that but isn't that great (pause) that it has happened so easily. No, I think I feel that (long pause) [cries] this is totally surprising to me (pause) I just think I'm really grateful actually (pause) I feel really grateful for it and to her for this relationship (pause) I think I'm really lucky and really blessed.

(Interview 1)

Whilst the stories about love, compassion and attunement were relatively rare, nevertheless they are important to represent. Not least because these stories build on and extend stories told about the therapeutic edge of supervision. It also feels important to note that the participants who did include these stories were those who also told less

conflicted or ambivalent stories about supervision (with the exception of Peter). Hence, it would appear that supervision for some experienced counsellors has very wide boundaries.

Stories about ‘non-traditional’ relationships in supervision

In this final section in this chapter on relational narratives of supervision, I cover stories about non-traditional relationships in supervision which appeared to cross, what might be regarded as, the commonly referred to boundaries discussed in that literature (e.g., Bond, 2015; Creaner, 2014). For example, references were made to friendship and the description of maternal and paternal relationships were used by some participants, notably Alice and Peter. Here, it might be that participants used archetypes or colloquial terms in order to offer common understanding and, for instance, I instantly understood Peter’s reference to a *‘good friend’* and Mary’s to *‘the wise woman’*. The first set of stories presented here relate to those told about other types of relationship; and the second to dual relationships.

Friendship and supervision

Whilst other participants do not refer so directly to friendship, it does feel to be embedded in some of their narratives about supervision. For instance, Wendy describes how she first met her current supervisor in a social situation with her then supervisor. However, Mary was the participant who told a series of stories with a broad focus on friendship with two of her supervisors:

Mary: (pause) I think my first supervisor I had right, all though my training, and then when I went, then when I became a qualified counsellor and was working as a qualified counsellor I kept, I kept her, and I’m not sure if that was a good thing or not because I think we’d got to the point where it felt, yeah it felt a very close relationship and I felt that she’d been hugely supportive and helpful through my training and it was difficult to, it was difficult to leave her (pause) and it was quite, it was actually quite a painful ending and we did meet a few time as, I don’t know, as friends perhaps, afterwards because we couldn’t, well I can only speak for myself, but she was prepared to go along with it too, ‘cos we didn’t want to lose that relationship so that’s perhaps, and I’m sitting here thinking how ethical is that (laughs) I don’t know! I don’t know.’

(Interview 1)

Mary’s story suggests that whilst the relationship with her supervisor was close, helpful and: *‘I think I just liked her’*, she was also left wondering about how ethical it might be to transition into friendship. In the second interview she returns again to the way the

relationship with her first supervisor ended: *'I don't know how long it went on for, perhaps between six months and a year, when we met irregularly, almost as friends, as she was quite needy of me.'* Hence, in both interviews, Mary tells stories which relate to her supervisor as friend but also to how the relationship ended. There was also a reversal of roles in that, after the supervision finished, the supervisor came to Mary for support in respect to a significant experience in her professional and personal life. However, Mary felt that the relationship nevertheless: *'always felt quite healthy, I didn't feel that I had an unhealthy dependence or anything, we just liked each other.'* Later in the same interview I question whether *'I also hear a sort of fear that it was [...]'*, to which she replies *'Yeah that I need to justify it, that interesting, that it was [...]'*. Which feels to be a hint of how not Mary, but others, might in reality view this. In a similar way Alice questions the appropriateness of the personal relationship she has with her supervisor:

Trish: But there's something about a fear almost that you'll get found out that somebody will go (voice tails off)

Alice: That supervisory relationships shouldn't be like this (voice trails off)

Trish: We shouldn't be meeting up outside of supervision, and we shouldn't have that sort of personal element to it which means that we exchange birthday cards and presents, in a way that feels inappropriate by other people's reckoning, it doesn't feel in appropriate to me, although maybe it does, maybe it does feel inappropriate. Maybe it feels inappropriate but it doesn't feel compromising, does that make sense?

(Interview 1)

Her view, after a lengthy discussion about the appropriateness of the relationship, was that it works for her, is not collusive, and does not put clients at risk. Of particular interest in Alice's narrative is that the critical voices she alludes to seemed to be confined to professional others: hence, her sense of feeling potentially judged and found lacking by colleagues. However, although Alice moves backwards and forwards between the *'personal element to the relationship which shouldn't be there'* ultimately she says: *'I kind of think, well so what.'*

Whilst Peter does not refer at any stage to a social relationship with a supervisors, he does use the analogy of a good friend, in the following extract, making an interesting shift to the concept of 'friendship' from his former experience of maternal and paternal models:

Trish: And so there's something in that about somebody who will challenge you, can challenge you, knows you well enough to challenge you?

Peter: Yeah (pause) sighs (pause) There's a temptation to think of that in a kind of paternalistic or I think paternalistic way rather than maternalistic because my maternalistic models are not that great in my life, but I don't think it is parenting like that, I think it's (pause) the analogy I can come up with really is that of a good (pause) I know supervisors are not good friends, I don't mean it like a literal analogy, but a good friend of mine is someone who is not afraid to tell me something I don't want to hear, but at the same time is someone who's there for me, and who I respect and look up to and I'd hope that they would have a similar feeling about me. And really in my actual friendship type life I've only got one person that I can think of who's like that and he's my oldest and longest friend, and you know he's the guy that I would ring if I found myself in a police cell at four o'clock in the morning or something (pause) I know that my supervisor would if I didn't take, pay heed to what he or she was saying would ultimately take some, some severe action (pause) but then maybe a good friend would do that as well, you know if it was a really good friend.

(Interview 1)

All of this is linked by Peter to ethical issues in that it was about protecting the client if the supervisor '*thought the client was in danger from the way I was working.*' However, it is conceivable that the use of maternal, paternal and friendship analogies or archetypes are significant in enabling Peter to articulate what he needed from supervision, and a supervisor. Hence, towards the end of the first interview at the end of a much longer segment he says:

Peter: [...] this is what I do and it's scary work so this person has got an incredibly important role in my life and you know I might really like them as a person, and could almost imagine perhaps going for a pint with them or something, I'm never going to do that, but it needs to be someone who is pretty much the equivalent of that good friend that I mentioned, you know.

(Interview 1)

It is interesting to note that later during the interview he instructs me not to take his reference to a good friend literally.

In conclusion, it could be argued that there are commonalities across the three stories represented above. Specifically that all three participants appeared to express concerns or qualifications, albeit differently expressed, about links to friendship in supervision.

Dual relationships

Some of the stories pertaining to friendship also potentially relate to the idea of dual relationships in supervision. Alice's long-term supervisor had also at one point been a work colleague, and she felt that the relationship existing in two different spheres better enabled her to disclose personal issues: *'And we had a bit of a kind of conversation about that which was probably more personal than it might have been with somebody who I only ever saw for supervision and that was the end of it [...]'* This was based on her sense that, because the relationship existed in both arenas, it was *'[...] very easy to be able to talk to her about that very personal situation [...]'* However, it was clear that there was also some embarrassment about this:

Alice: Therapy wouldn't be, no it's getting even more complicated now (laughs) and I'm feeling quite embarrassed because actually because of the situation, because we've worked together we do socialise together with a group of people that we worked with so maybe two or three times a year (pause) no probably two times at the most we will get together in that group and go out for a meal, so on that occasion we are work colleagues, not supervisor and supervisee. But as I'm saying this I'm thinking this sounds well dodgy, we also exchange birthday cards and birthday present (pause) and again I'm thinking now that doesn't sound right but actually it feels okay (pause) but I suppose I'm imagining the voices are saying "oh well that's well dodgy and you certainly shouldn't be doing that" and yet it does feel very boundaried, it does feel very boundaried. Definitely works for me.

Trish: And yet there's this sense that keeps coming back in of there's somebody who'd say it's dodgy or (laughs) it's well dodgy you said or it's not healthy or?

Alice: In fact I don't know that I've ever thought that about the fact that we would socialise with this group (pause) and that we exchange birthday cards and presents, except that I'm not talking about this on tape.

Trish: But it's in the talking about it.

Alice: It's in the talking about it.

Trish: And it's on tape?

Alice: Yes, and it's on the tape, and it's going to be written down and it's going to be (laughs), I'm gonna be found out and yet it absolutely feels very boundaried, it feels very safe. I never had, you know, the thought of us socialising together say, you know, meeting for a coffee or going for a meal together would be unthinkable, that would be unthinkable.

(Interview 1)

There was something about the safety of this being a work environment which was significant for Alice and, perhaps, enabled the boundaries to be held and contained. In a similar vein, Wendy tells a story about her response when her current supervisor asked her to be placed on a list of supervisors and counsellors open to Wendy's students:

Wendy: Yeah, it is. She asked to go on a list of supervisors and counsellors that we give out to students and I really didn't want to put her on there. She's mine (laughs.)

Trish: So it's (voice trails off.)

Wendy: I did put her on there. I was aware of the fact that, you know, how would it be if one of my students was going there? Not okay sometimes, particularly if it was one that I was struggling with.

Trish: Then how would that feel, if you had a student you were struggling with and that student was then supervised or, by them, how would that feel for you?

Wendy: We did talk about that and I think it would, I mean (pause) I trust that she would manage the boundaries. I had to take a deep breath when I said that and as I'm saying it to you I'm thinking "yeah, it's still there, that deep breath" but actually if I think about it I do trust it. My instinct is to say "no don't" but actually there's something about her, and we talked loads about managing boundaries and yeah, inevitably you must find the same thing, that teaching, supervising and counselling, you know bloody everybody (laughs) in some shape or form?

Trish: Oh, yes.

Wendy: So managing, it's no good saying, you know, you can't go to somewhere because you know somebody because actually for us that isn't an option.

Trish: No. There's something about the multiplicity of dual relationships.

Wendy: Yeah. And she gets that, whereas my other, my previous supervisor understood it was there but didn't have the same experience of it.

(Interview 1)

In some ways this is a similar story to that told by Alice, which is the need to negotiate the inevitability of dual relationships within a small professional community. Stories told by Alice and Wendy articulate a need that this negotiation takes place within a safe supervisory relationship.

Whilst Lucy does not have a dual relationship with either her private or in-house supervisor, there is a potential professional dual relationship with one. Specifically her in-house supervisor, both work for the same organisation. Generally in-house supervision, for counsellors, has been seen as more akin to case or line-management. However, for Lucy this relationship did not cause conflict between the needs of the organisation and her needs as a supervisee. Specifically this appears to be predicated on being known, relationally, by this supervisor:

Trish: Yes, there is something about (pause) knowing somebody, is that something of what you're saying?

Lucy: Yeah, yeah, that's it. Because I think I do know, I do feel that I know [in-house] supervisor, and I know him sort of as a person, not facts and things about his life but I know who he is.

Trish: Yeah, it's a different type of knowing.

Lucy: Very much so, uh huh, yeah. Whereas I don't feel that with [private] supervisor but I do know (laughs) a lot of facts about her life actually and her family

and things that she does. But I don't really have that sense of her as a whole person, which I do from [in-house].

Trish: And if you were, and I know you work relationally and the embodied aspects of then knowing somebody I imagine is hugely important?

Lucy: Yeah, yeah, yeah it is. And I think again that's why [private supervisor] just hasn't, increasingly doesn't work for me. Because I think there is that (pause) it feels more intellectual exercise with [private supervisor]. There isn't that personal self, embodied, relational relationship going on. It is an intellectual exercise.

(Interview 2)

With her in-house supervisor, Lucy experiences the relational aspects of supervision, and this is absent with her private supervisor. In common with Alice and Wendy, Lucy's experience with her in-house supervisor was one of feeling safe, and supported. Further, this enables her to negotiate, as Wendy and Alice did the inevitability of actual or potential dual relationships.

The stories told above attest to some of the complex boundary issues that participants encountered in relationship with their supervisor(s). These stories appear to suggest that negotiating these boundary issues work best when predicated on a relationship which is experienced as safe.

Discussion

What follows is a discussion of the three main areas contained within this chapter: stories about safety in the supervisory relationship; stories about love, attunement and the therapeutic edge of supervision; and finally stories about 'non-traditional' relationships in supervision. Before continuing it is worth noting that, since the interviews with participants took place, BACP have made substantive revisions to their Ethical Framework (BACP, 2016). This includes revision of all information pertaining to, and supporting, this Ethical Framework. As a result, a distinction must be made between resources used in this discussion pre- and post-2016. However, participants would, of course, have been drawing on the Ethical Framework and supporting information in use at the time of the interviews.

Stories about safety in the supervisory relationship

Safety in supervision appears to relate almost exclusively to what enabled participants to feel *emotionally*, and *relationally* safe, and no participant described safety in physical terms. Put another way, safety was predicated on the core conditions (Rogers, 1951) being present. Specifically the supervisor creating relational safety involved a supervision space characterised by empathy, immediacy, and transparency, the supervisor being authentic and congruent and avoiding being judgemental. When participants felt

safe relationally they were able to feel safe emotionally. This equated to, and links to the second section on trust: feeling that the relationship was sufficiently safe to be vulnerable, without fear of attack. It was notable that the absence of the core conditions equated, for these participants, to a lack of safety.

The core conditions in supervision

One emergent aspect of my study is the similarity between the therapeutic relationship and the supervisory relationship. Whilst this was based on supervisor being able to offer the core conditions (Rogers, 1951), participants also told stories attesting to a desire for a relationship which was more than an alliance. Mearns and Cooper (2005) describe working at relational depth as being characterised by, in part: 'a feeling of profound contact and engagement with a client, in which one simultaneously experiences high and consistent levels of empathy and acceptance.' (p. 36). In this respect the language used by participants more closely aligned to the literature pertaining to therapy rather than supervision. That is, participants use concepts such as congruence, being accepted without judgment, unconditional positive regard, authenticity, and immediacy, in their stories of feeling safe. Moreover, language used to articulate safety, emotionally and relationally, aligned more to the literature pertaining to working at relational depth. Arguably this is more familiar relational territory for humanistic counsellors. Perhaps this is what Jane referred to in stating that: 'as a counsellor my value is being able to be with my clients [...] so in a supervisor I want the same thing.' Importantly, other participants also told stories which reflected the fine line between what was offered to the client, and what they wanted in supervision. Furthermore, as stories told by James articulate, it was difficult to 'separate out the person from the practitioner.'

The importance of the relationship is reflected in research pertaining to supervision for experienced counsellors (e.g., Crocket et al., 2007; Meekums, 2007; Weeks, 2002; Webb, 2000; Webb & Wheeler, 1998). Weeks (2002), for instance, argued that the 'most striking feature of the whole study was the strength of feeling surrounding the supervisory relationship' (p.36). Weeks (2002) identified safety in the supervisory relationship as a key factor. In common with participants in my study, this was reported as based on the absence of judgement. Stories told by my participants attest to what happens when judgement, from the supervisor, is either present or absent. Participants such as Lucy and Jane, told stories about feeling judged by the supervisor, and so feeling unsafe. In contrast,

Alice, Mary, Wendy, Peter and James offered stories about the supervisor offering a non-judgemental space, and so told stories about safety in supervision.

Webb and Wheeler (1998) highlighted the paucity of research, and signalled the need for more, into the relationship in supervision given its importance. There is still, at the time of writing, little research which specifically focuses on the supervisory relationship. Moreover there is a particular lack of research focusing on the relationship from the perspective of the supervisee and, in particular, supervision for experienced counsellors. Most, if not all, of the generic supervision literature makes reference to the importance of the supervisory relationship. However, the generic literature is generally concerned with the supervisor establishing a relationship with the supervisee which is *formative* (i.e. educative), developmental and from an implicitly, and at times overtly, hierarchical position. Chang and O'Hara (2010) whilst writing about supervision in training, nevertheless articulate well the purpose of developmental models of supervision. Specifically that the assumption being made is one of growth and 'change as a result of the supervisory process.' (p. 146). Developmental models assume a shift from novice to master-craftsman, namely that over time the supervisee acquires skills and competence. Further, that this developmental process takes place, in part at least, in supervision. As Chang and O'Hara (2010) observe developmental models are both 'sequential and hierarchal' (p. 147). Smith (2009) takes this further, arguing that the 'concept of "master-apprentice" supervision evokes a hierarchy of power that favors the master as the "authority"' (p. 1). Jane and Lucy told repeated stories about feeling unsafe in the supervisory relationship. In particular Jane referenced 'power struggles' in the relationship. Arguably one aspect of this might have been, as Smith (2009) states, attributable to a hierarchy of power where the supervisor was seeking to assert power in a developmental and hierarchic relationship.

A similar emphasis on supervision as developmental, and so arguably hierarchal, can be found in the Information Sheets published by BACP to support the Ethical Framework (2010). In an archived BACP Information Sheet - 'What is supervision' - (Densper, 2011) no mention is made regarding the nature of the supervisory relationship, outside of whether or not it will be possible to establish rapport. However, supervision is firmly located as developmental in that supervisors 'will encourage the therapist's development, continued learning and self-monitoring' (Densper, 2011, p. 2). More recently, BACP have produced a series of Good Practice in Action (GPiA) resources to support the introduction of the most recent ethical framework (BACP, 2016). Of particular

relevance here are those by Stainsby (2015), and Bager-Charleson (2015), the first offering advice on monitoring the supervisory relationship from the supervisor's perspective, the second from the supervisee's. Stainsby (2015) contends that the relationship is a component of the alliance, and that the 'relationship is not the purpose of supervision, it is a means to an end of working together for the benefit of the client.' (p. 5). It is true that my participants felt the supervisory relationship was to benefit the client, and that it could be collegiate, though arguably these from a quite different perspective. However, and significantly, participant narratives attested to the relationship being the foundation of supervision rather than a means to an end. As Wendy stated, without a safe trusting relationship supervision was 'built on sand.'

Furthermore, both Stainsby (2015) and Bager-Charleson (2015) assume hierarchy in that the supervisor holds the authority within the relationship. Stainsby (2015), for example, argues that it is the responsibility of the supervisor to set and maintain relationship boundaries. Bager-Charleson (2015) assumes a similarly hierarchical stance, but includes also a developmental perspective. For example, the advice is to monitor the relationship, among other things, in respect of how it meets the educational needs of the supervisee. For an experienced counsellor it is difficult to comprehend the value of an educational perspective in supervision. Certainly my participants did not link developmental, or educational, needs to either supervision or the relationship. Additionally, many experienced counsellors, as in my research, are also experienced supervisors. Hence, it can be argued that because of this, the BACP guidance on supervision is more relevant for those who are in training or newly qualified. Certainly there was little match between these GPiA resources, in terms of the supervisory relationship, and my participants' narratives.

The framing of the supervisory relationship as a learning, developmental and hierarchical relationship is reflected elsewhere in the literature. Creaner (2014), for example, positions the supervisory relationship as one with 'purpose' and as a 'learning relationship' (p.13). Drawing on Bordin's (1983) working alliance, the supervisory relationship is characterised as the development of emotional bonds, agreed goals and supervision tasks. It is interesting to note that Creaner (2014) in writing about supervision across the career lifespan begins the chapter with 'supervision in the context of training' (p. 24). Furthermore, this conflation with supervision whilst in training and for those with experience continues throughout the chapter. Moreover, whilst Hewson (2008) contends that the supervisory relationship 'is one which can be educative, supportive, growthful,

challenging and collegial' it is 'albeit one more resourced than the other' (p.35). As with Creaner (2014) and the GPiA resources, the supervisor is positioned as the one who is more resourced, and experienced. Carroll (2014) does refer to the 'forgotten' supervisee, nevertheless this is still positioned within a *learning* and hierarchical relationship.

Page and Wosket (2015) acknowledge the importance of the core conditions in enhancing the quality of the relationship. The argument made is that this can facilitate transparency within a hierarchical relationship. Certainly, participants told stories about the importance of transparency, or congruence, as part of safety in supervision. It could, therefore, be argued that the presence of the core conditions positively affected their perception of any hierarchy. However, my participants also told stories about wanting supervision that was evidently more collegiate than hierarchical. Moreover, participant stories appear to have more similarities with working at relational depth (Mearns & Cooper, 2005) in supervision. Knox (2012) in describing relational depth states that it is 'an enduring relationship in which the therapist consistently offers the client a high degree of empathy, congruence and unconditional regard' (p. 214). Wendy's stories highlight the importance of being understood empathically and without judgment. Furthermore, participants such as Wendy, Mary, Alice and James all told stories about the importance of being 'able to take all of me', or to be understood holistically.

In general, much of the literature on supervision adopts a 'generic perspective, seeking to define the purpose, function and practice of supervision [...] across different therapeutic orientations' (Lambers, 2013, p. 453). And, indeed, there is less written about person-centred supervision (Bryant-Jeffries, 2005; Lambers 2001; 2013). However, there is some supervision literature which remains approach specific. Of particular relevance here is the person-centred supervision literature, which more aptly reflects the participant stories and narrative regarding the supervisory relationship. It is worth noting that not all participants had a purist person-centred training, though some did. Most had an integrative training, which would include some person-centred theory. However, it is unlikely that this small body of literature would have been familiar to them. Certainly, I had not come across this literature until researching the extant literature on supervision. It might be that participants were, therefore, drawing on more familiar narrative resources pertaining to their original training: in particular the literature which signifies the importance of the therapeutic relationship, the centrality in person-centred therapy of the core conditions of empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence, and their consistent connection to therapeutic outcome (e.g., Cooper, 2008). As Mearns and Thorne

(2013) point out, these are not conditions which are turned on and off 'as if congruence were some kind of behaviour technique that can be applied when required.' (p. 42). Who the counsellor is - their capacity to develop trusting relationships - is central to working as a humanistic counsellor.

Furthermore, in the person-centred literature the educative perspective is downplayed, and emphasis is placed on the personal development of the supervisee. As Valentine (2004) states, the 'ability to offer a congruent, empathic and accepting relationship to the supervisee is an essential feature of person-centred supervision.' (p. 130). Moreover, Lambers (2000) writes about the meaning of the core conditions in supervision, specifically empathy, acceptance and congruence. In common with many of my participants, Lambers (2000) argues that congruence is of such importance that supervisors might well need to have this as their focus. Whilst there is also an emphasis on development in all these texts, this is from a personal rather than educational perspective. That is, it is the personal development of the supervisee is the focus rather than supervision having an educational focus. And personal development is represented as desirable, and an important part of safety in supervision, in the stories told by my participants. Lucy especially valued the congruence of her in-house supervisor. In turn, his offering congruence enabled her to develop this and so offer it to clients. In fact, all my participants told stories which reflected the link between safety and supervisor congruence.

Mearns and Cooper (2005) highlight another key concept in humanistic approaches, that of transparency or immediacy. While transparency requires that the counsellor be themselves, immediacy is concerned with 'deliberately disclosing our here and now felt-responses' (Mearns & Cooper, 2005, p.129) in the therapeutic relationship. These disclosures are seen as being at the heart of a relationally-based client-counsellor relationship. As Spinelli (2015) states, it is 'experiential immediacy' which is often mutual, and involves a sense for the counsellor of 'being with a particular other' which can be utilised as part of the therapeutic process (p.113). My participants such as Jane, and Lucy, told stories where the lack of immediacy made supervision feel unsafe. It seems therefore that my participants are narrating their experiences of supervision in ways which privilege therapeutic ways of being.

It is conceivable therefore that narrative identity (Frank, 2010) for most of those who took part in this research was predicated on the relational factors of supervision. Frank (2010) states that narrative habitus, a component of narrative identity, is a

disposition to 'hear some stories as those that one ought to listen to.....and ought to be guided by' (p. 53). Further that these are the stories that get under the skin, are embodied, tacit and that we recognise as either '*for us* or not for us' (p. 53). Certainly this is something I recognise, and was recognisable in my participants' narratives. Perhaps these are equally the stories in which humanistic counsellors are most heavily invested. As Mearns and Thorne (2013) suggest, being a person-centred counsellor is no easy task. It is not possible to 'seek refuge in [...] diagnostic skill or in the application of a clutch of therapeutic techniques.' (p.36). Perhaps Mary most clearly articulated this in saying that if 'counselling is all about the being of the counsellor and the relationship [...] I don't take a bag of tricks into the counselling room [...] I'm, all I have is me.' Furthermore, as Jane stated 'I believe my value as a counsellor is being able to be with my clients, to listen, to really listen [...] So in a supervisor I want the same thing.'

Arguably the stories about safety in the supervisory relationship are reflected in Herwig's (2007) desire for supervision which was 'more than merely good enough' (p. 14). This was based on an experience with a colleague who had been involved in a potential litigation. This persuaded Herwig (2007) that she wanted was to work with a supervisor who would offer her empathy, acceptance, congruence and be 'challenged within those conditions rather than outside of them' (p. 14). In many ways this reflects succinctly the majority of the participant narratives in my research. They articulated the desire for a relationship which was based on the core conditions and, importantly, that this was required in order to experience supervision as safe. As Lambers (2013) argues:

As in therapy, empathy, acceptance and congruence are important relationship qualities, supporting and facilitating a climate of mutual trust and respect. In supervision, these qualities help to create a relationship where supervisor and supervisee can work together creatively toward a genuine dialogue (p. 461).

Trust

Trust was seen by participants as being intimately connected with the core conditions. When the core conditions were present, in a relationship which felt safe, it was possible for trust to exist. Moreover, participant stories reflect the importance of trust as mutual and reciprocal. Angela also linked safety and trust to vulnerability, and felt it was possible to be vulnerable when trust was present. In comparison Jane and Lucy both 'shut down' when trust was absent, therefore presumably not feeling it was safe enough to be vulnerable in that setting. Little reference is made within the generic supervision literature to trust, and when reference is made it does not appear to reflect the stories told by my

participants. Carroll (2014) writing about managing the supervisory process, writes about the link between the supervisor having a contract and trust. The argument being made is that a contract is 'built on a committed, adult relationship of trust and fidelity to one another' (Carroll, 2014, p. 49). Whilst Jane did state a contract facilitated safety, she was the only participant to do so and furthermore had not, in reality, felt safe in supervision.

In contrast, it is possible to find references to trust in the person-centred literature on supervision. Gibson (2004), for example, states that trust 'is of profound importance to me. It matters to me that I trust my supervisor implicitly' (p.35). Further, she goes on to say that this is connected to not feeling judged, and the supervisor's ability to offer her UPR. In fact, for Lucy feeling judged meant that she did not trust her private supervisor. In contrast, other participants (Wendy, Alice, Peter, James) indicated that lack of judgement equated to mutual trust. Participants who reported feeling trusted by their supervisor also reported feeling accepted, and not judged, and safe. Furthermore, Herwig (2007) writes about the need to be trusted by her supervisor, and additionally the importance of the supervisor believing in her integrity. She says that over time it became clear that what she was looking for was mutual trust, 'reciprocal willingness to be open to one another. For that to be possible I had to experience some degree of authentic contact, or at least the possibility of such contact' (Herwig, 2007, p.13). Stories told by my participants regarding the link between trust and safety reflect both ends of this spectrum. That is when trust, a belief in the integrity of the supervisee, and authentic contact were present, there was mutual trust, and participants reported feeling safe. In contrast when these were absent, notably Jane and Lucy, but also on occasion Wendy and James, participants did not feel safe.

Mearns and Thorne (2013) argue that when the counsellor is transparent, and is able to show their 'workings out' (p. 103), trust is built. Whilst this relates to the counselling relationship there are similarities to stories told by participants. Specifically that the counsellor earns rather than commands trust, the latter is concerned with being 'mysterious and hidden' (Mearns & Thorne, 2013, p. 103). Arguably this is connected to stories told by Jane about what happens when the supervisor has an 'agenda' which is not shared with the supervisee. James also referred briefly to a supervisor who 'manipulated' him resulting in a 'very malign' experience of a supervisor.

Worrall (2007) makes the connection between trust and an empathic understanding of the supervisee. Furthermore, he makes the argument that supervision which has a focus on empathic attention, to both client and supervisee, is also predicated

on supervision which trusts the internal locus of evaluation of the supervisee. Moreover, Worrall (2007) suggests that this style of supervision is particularly relevant for experienced counsellors. For participants such as Alice, Wendy, Peter and James being trusted appeared to offer them, as experienced counsellors, supervision which was relevant and importantly safe. Tudor and Worrall (2004) postulate that in person-centred supervision the concept of the actualising tendency⁵ means the supervisor is able to hold trust in the work that the supervisee does. Certainly for participants such as Lucy, when her private supervisor appeared not to trust (and to judge) the client work she was doing, Lucy expressed feeling unsafe.

Length of the relationship

There is a lack of clarity and consensus in the literature regarding what is an optimal length of time for a supervisory relationship. BACP do not stipulate a particular timescale with a given supervisor, although Henderson (2009) states that BACP discussed the notion of either a two- or five-year maximum but this was not written into the ethical framework. Furthermore, there is no reference to timescales in the ethical framework published in 2016 (BACP, 2016). However, Inskipp and Proctor (2001) suggest changing supervisor approximately every three to five years. Page and Wosket (2015) state that more experienced counsellors might stay longer than those in training. But, even for experienced counsellors, the advice is to review or considering changing every five years. Creaner (2014) briefly refers to the way in which the supervisory relationship is 'generally a time-limited professional relationship' (p. 109). Though she also acknowledges that the supervisory relationship can extend over many years, as does Henderson (2009), suggesting that the actual length of time is more likely to be 10-15 years for experienced counsellors. This would seem, in general, to accord with the stories told by my participants. Moreover, with the exception of Jane, those who told stories about the length of the relationship appeared to value long-term relationships.

Wilmott (2008) writes about the value of long-term supervision in psychotherapy. Her proposition is that a long relationship facilitates a deep level of exploration in supervision, particularly in respect of unconscious processes. Certainly this is similar to some of the stories told by participants in this study. Peter and James both told stories reflecting on the link between safety, and the length of the relationship with the

⁵ The actualising tendency refers to an important person-centred principle of a motivational force which determines the development of human beings. The actualising tendency ensures that people move innately towards growth (Mearns & Thorne, 2013.)

supervisor. James, for example, felt it was possible to be 'caught out' but not shamed by his supervisor. Wilmott (2008) articulates the type of long-term relationship which can be built through 'thick and thin' as opposed to 'jumping out of it' when it feels uncomfortable (p. 106). Alice certainly had this type of relationship: built over a lengthy period of time, it was robust enough to survive temporary ruptures, and for those to be repaired through discussion. However, Feltham and Dryden (1994), and Page and Wosket (2015), argue that there is a danger of the relationship becoming either cosy or collusive, if the supervisee remains with the same supervisor for a long time. In this light it is interesting to return to Alice's embarrassment, as articulated at the start of the first interview, about the length of her relationship with her supervisor and her feeling that others might judge her for that. Yet at the same time she had a strong conviction that this particular relationship supported her and best served her clients.

Henderson (2009), and Dunnett et al. (2013), debate the merits, and otherwise, of long term supervisory relationship. On the one hand Henderson (2009) posits that the indicators which suggest the relationship is too lengthy 'include fuzzy boundaries, boredom, predictability, and over-identification' (p. 7). Further she links this to collusion and idealisation of the supervisor. On the other hand she acknowledges that the length of time can lend depth, and knowledge, to the relationship. Dunnett et al. (2013) agree, stating further that supervisees (and supervisors) in a longer-term relationship 'often, each in their own way, enjoy the harvest which the arrangement brings' (p. 125). It would appear that participants, in particular Alice, Wendy, Peter and James, valued a supervision which existed over a sustained period of time. Jane was the only participant who felt she had 'stayed too long' with a supervisor. However, her reasons for leaving were not based on the relationship being either cosy or collusive. Rather her stories were about the supervisor's misuse of power.

Henderson (2009) writes about what happens when the supervisor needs to end with a supervisee. She does acknowledge that long-term relationships 'can become significant emotional attachments for both parties' (Henderson, 2009, p.199). Further she suggests that the professional ending process might be conceptualised in attachment and loss terms. Certainly, Peter expressed his sense of loss and abandonment when his long-term supervisor retired. Similarly James articulated the impact, as 'disturbing' when his supervisor took a temporary break because of illness.

To conclude, this section on stories told about safety in the supervisory relationship in terms of the core conditions; trust; and the length of the relationship. In the first sub-

section, participants appeared to draw either on the literature on safety in the therapeutic relationship or the person-centred literature on supervision and in some case perhaps both. Around half of the participants had a person-centred orientation as their first training. The remainder had a broadly humanistic-integrative orientation which encompasses person-centred theory. There were commonalities and divergences across and within the stories and narratives which make this assertion complex. Lucy, for example, had a humanistic training; however her story about the importance of congruence in supervision closely matches the person-centred supervision literature. In contrast Angela, who was more affiliated to person-centred theory, did not mirror this literature as clearly. However, what is less contentious is that participant stories did not match, to any great degree, the generic literature on supervision, nor that produced by BACP.

Stories about love, attunement and the therapeutic edge of supervision

In the documents supporting both the current and previous ethical framework (BACP, 2010; 2016) it is clear that BACP view supervision and therapy as separate activities. The boundary between supervision and therapy is acknowledged to be fluid, but nevertheless to be held. Despenser (2011), in defining what supervision is, and is not, expresses the opinion that, whilst supervision might support the supervisee, it should not be seen as a substitute for therapy. In a more recent GPiA resource Bager-Charleson (2015), states categorically that supervision 'is not therapy' (p. 10). Other authors such as Carroll (2007) mark a clear divide, arguing that 'supervision that is not centred and focused on actual practice and work is simply another form of counselling or psychotherapy' (p. 36).

The therapeutic edge of supervision

Bond (2015) writing about ethical issues in counselling, argues that, whilst supervision has a supportive element, it should at times be *supplemented* with therapy, if required. Likewise, Aldridge (2014) argues that the focus of supervision should be the client 'not the personal needs of the counsellor' (p. 128). At those times when personal needs arise 'it is the ethical responsibility for the supervisor to ensure that the counsellor recognises and accepts the need for self-care' (p. 128). Offering a perhaps more flexible position, Page and Wosket (2015) point to the difficulty in ascertaining where the boundary between the two sits. Furthermore, they advise that further exploration, as to what is supervision *or* is to be taken to therapy, should be discussed with the supervisee. In so

doing they make clear that there is a boundary between supervision and therapy. Furthermore, Creaner (2014) highlights one reason for holding this boundary as connected to the gatekeeping and evaluating functions of supervision. Moreover, Creaner (2014) states that supervisors 'always hold a gatekeeping function and monitor normative standards' (p. 90). Nevertheless, she acknowledges that supervision might be experienced as therapeutic, whilst maintaining that it is not therapy.

Spinelli (2015) to some extent offers a similar view, though arguably without the focus on monitoring the supervisee, in that whilst existential supervision:

is not therapy per se, existential supervision can often be experienced as therapeutic. Nonetheless, it remains the case that whatever may be touched upon in the course of existential supervision that is experienced by the supervisee as having wider ramifications extending beyond the professional to the personal should always be brought back to its relationship with, or impact upon, the therapeutic work being undertaken with the particular client under discussion (p. 249–50).

From a person-centred perspective Lambers (2013) concurs, suggesting that, whilst there are parallels between the relationship in supervision and therapy, there are nonetheless differences. She makes the distinction between the client's freedom in therapy to talk about any part of their life, whereas in supervision the focus must be on the 'therapist's experience as it emerges in the relationship with the client' (Lambers, 2013, p. 463). Spence (2006), from the same orientation, supports this assertion, stating that supervision is relational, personal and therapeutic but is not therapy. Furthermore, Bernard and Goodyear (2009) report that 'Roger's own conception of supervision seemed to lean more towards therapy' (p. 83). Of note here is that Vallance's (2005) participants reported supervision was less helpful when personal issues were unexplored by the supervisor. Many participants appeared to offer stories which mirror this more fluid boundary between supervision and therapy. Alice who, for example, felt that it was the relationship in supervision which was, for her, therapeutic; and Jane and Mary told stories which appear to acknowledge the similarities in the relationships. Both wanted supervision to contain therapy, and for them to be able to take significant events to supervision.

In contrast, James and Wendy told stories of supervision that was overtly used as therapy. The therapeutic aspects of supervision for Wendy in particular, supported her in her work as a counsellor, and so directly benefited her clients. There are few references in the supervision literature which support this position. However, Tudor and Worrall (2007a) argue that the division between what is personal and what is professional is somewhat

arbitrary. Further that, as far as they are aware, there are 'no commonly agreed or articulated guidelines as to what's appropriate to discuss in supervision' or what should be discussed in therapy (Tudor & Worrall, 2007a, p.170). Their view is that such an arbitrary divide is reductive and puts the focus on one aspect, the professional, rather than viewing the counsellor holistically and as in process. Put simply, the argument is that 'everything is personal' (Tudor & Worrall, 2007a, p. 171). An important point here is that, in their experience, an arbitrary divide in supervision can limit discussion and also leave the supervisee feeling unheard. Jane's story regarding the supervisor who appeared to ignore, or at least never reference, a significant 'life event' would appear to support this contention. Perhaps as Tudor and Worrall (2007a) contend, 'there is no such thing as a 'therapy' issue. There are only issues which we work through – in therapy and in supervision' (p. 172). As both Jane and Mary said, they take themselves, there is no 'bag of tricks' when you work from a humanistic perspective.

Reflected in participant stories such as Mary and Alice, Henderson (2009) articulates what might be a dilemma for many counsellors in respect of supervision. Namely that on retiring and so ending with supervisees she felt 'some uncertainty' regarding her reputation, specifically that she 'imagined another supervisor.....might think less well of me for tolerating supervisory "bad habits", such as sometimes and for some people using too much time on personal issues' (Henderson, 2009, p. 206). Further she reports that these 'habits' were nevertheless the ones which her supervisees found 'important for their professional survival in difficult times' (Henderson, 2009, p. 206). Whilst not linked to retirement, some participants, especially Alice but also Wendy, Lucy and James to a lesser extent, did express uncertainty about what 'professional' others might think of them. Alice in particular felt embarrassed, professionally, and that others might not see her relationship with her supervisor as 'grown up.'

There also appeared to be an inverse experience whereby when supervision contained an element of therapy, or be experienced as therapeutic, participants tended to report fewer issues with power differentials. Likewise supervision tended to be reported as safe, Wendy, Alice and James. In comparison Jane felt unheard, and so 'shut down' in supervision when her personal experiences were ignored. Hence leaving her feeling unsafe, and reporting that power 'definitely played out' in the relationship with her supervisor. Jane, and Mary, told stories about wanting supervision which was on occasion more akin to therapy. It is therefore interesting to note that Creaner (2014) postulates exactly the opposite of this. Specifically that supervision 'effects an evaluative role

highlighting the power differential' such that the 'boundary needs to be held between supervision and therapy in the interests of the supervisee' (Creaner, 2014, p. 59). This appears to position the supervisor as the expert and supervision as hierarchical. For experienced counsellors, all of whom were also supervisors, it is potentially difficult to justify this position. Certainly, this was not a position reflected in the stories told by my participants.

Feltham (2000) argues that experienced counsellors may have different needs to those with less experience. His contention is that this is an unexplored area, and I would argue that nearly two decades later this is still a relevant argument. Moreover, Feltham's (2000) argument that 'some experienced practitioners may benefit more from freely chosen personal therapy' (p.15), is one which may hold some truth for my participants. Webb (2000) contends that whilst 'there is a widespread conviction that it is most ethical to keep supervision and personal therapy quite separate, this is not a universally held view.' (p. 61). Arguably there are now few voices which would hold the views expressed by either Feltham (2000), or Webb (2000).

Love, compassion and attunement in supervision

Two participants, Wendy and James, used the word love in relation to the supervisory relationship. Geraghty (2016) contends that in the world of counselling and therapy, we are afraid of using the word 'love', instead tending to use concepts such as 'accurate empathy', or 'congruence'. Her argument is, in part, that our anxiety arises out of what happens in supervision. Specifically, that 'we learn more about professional guidelines' and there is a 'focus on confidentiality, boundaries and professional development' (Geraghty, 2016, p. 21). Hence, we learn less about the importance of love and authentic presence. This is a view supported by Spence (2006): i.e., that supervision is moving towards ways of working which are directive, less focused on the experience of the supervisee, and have more focus on 'quality control' (p. 3). If, as Geraghty (2016) argues, love is at the heart of our human experience and central to working as a counsellor, it is interesting to note the lack of reference to it in most of the generic literature on supervision. Whilst this will be developed further in subsequent chapters, it is worth noting here that within counselling and psychotherapy the move towards, what Totton (2011) might call the medicalisation of therapy, might account for Geraghty's (2016) observation. Moreover, as Thorne (1995) argues it is 'notable that in vast corpus of professional literature which now exists on counselling and psychotherapy, there is not much reference

to this issue of love.’ (p. 164). Arguably in the intervening years, references to love, in both the literature on supervision and therapy, have become less evident.

Spence (2006) also expresses his discomfort at the professionalization of counselling and the move towards an outcome based culture. Writing in 2006, Spence suggests that it is hard to find mention of love in the literature on supervision. It would appear that this trend has continued, and arguably increased. Of the few references, Shohet (2008) writes about fear and love in supervision, viewing these as central to supervision. His contention is that humans have a deep need to connect but that this can be blocked by fear. Hence, in exposing and exploring fear in supervision, it may become more possible to access love, for the client. Tudor (2007), too, citing Spence (2006) notes that it is surprising the BACP’s Ethical Framework does not include love, and both quote Fromm (1957) ‘who views love as an active concern for life and growth, and the basis of acts of giving’ (Tudor, 2007, p. 28). Spence (2006) links this to ethics, in respect of care and responsibility among other factors, stating that:

This is a way of understanding love which highlights that it is a commitment to self-exploration and growth and of offering this to the service of others as well as of self. It also underlines the disciplined, knowledgeable, and ethically aware nature of this stance towards others. (p. 2).

Moreover, Shohet (2011) also writes about fear and love in the accreditation process in counselling and psychotherapy. Part of the argument here is concerned with whether fear, in the process of accreditation, leads to defensiveness. Specifically, that the process might have a lack of trust embedded in it. It might be argued that this goes full circle back to issues identified by Geraghty (2016), Spence (2006), and Totton (2011). Namely that the rise of professionalisation, medicalisation, and increase in ‘rigour’ has led to a fear-based and defensive practices in supervision. I agree with Shohet (2011) who argues that ‘any action or thought that springs from fear is ultimately unproductive’ (p. 55). Whilst Wendy felt free, though hesitant, to use the word love, James on the other hand was more reticent. It is interesting to note that Wendy knew of me through a mutually trusted connection. In contrast James did not have any knowledge of me: it was our first and only research interview. Whilst speculative, it might be that fear got in the way for James in further explicating his view on love in supervision, and perhaps therapy in general.

Rowan and Jacobs (2002), writing about the part of the counsellor in the therapeutic relationship from the perspective of use of self, offer three ways in which this can be understood: namely, from an instrumental, authentic and transpersonal

perspective. *Instrumental* is seen as a set of skills which can be applied, whereas *authentic* involves a more personal identification with the client, more open exploration of the relationship and is often associated with humanistic approaches to therapy. *Transpersonal* is, as Rowan and Jacobs (2002) contend, less familiar but where concepts such as the 'higher self' or the 'soul' are in play, and where the 'the idea is that certain boundaries are quite different at this level, and may even disappear altogether' (p.71). And Spence (2006) suggests that much of supervision might well take place at the instrumental level, including much of the writing about supervision.

There were two references to what might be described as the instrumental relationships. Peter spoke about needing to feel his supervisor was competent, and Jane did say that a written contract enabled her to feel safe. And it could also be said that the way in which Peter talks about competence has more connections to an instrumental than an authentic relationship. However, it could be argued that what the participant extracts demonstrate is the desire, and perhaps expectation, that the supervisory relationship operates at the level of the *authentic* or *transpersonal*, rather than *instrumental*. It was for instance, what Jane wanted, and felt she had never received, from a supervisor and Wendy, Alice, and James all had experiences in supervision which could be argued as sitting within an authentic view of the relationship, but often for both moments of transpersonal relating with their supervisors. In particular, when participants felt safe enough to hear challenge, to work with a different perspective and to grow and learn in supervision, to bring mistakes, errors and omissions, or ethical dilemmas this was described in authentic and transpersonal rather than instrumental terms.

The capacity to be fully present is cited by Rowan and Jacobs (2002) as being present in humanistic approaches, further that the presumption is that therapists 'will have developed up the Maslow ladder, to the point that it is the authentic (self-actualised) self of the therapist' engaging with the client (p.58.) Most participants had a great deal of experience, over a number of years, so it is conceivable that they fit this description. If so, it is conceivable that what they need in supervision is to be met in an authentic, and transpersonal, relationship.

To conclude this section, there would appear to be little commonality between the participant stories and the generic literature in supervision. In contrast, arguably participants were utilising what might be more familiar narrative resources. That is the literature pertaining to the therapeutic relationship, and perhaps some of the literature relating to person-centred supervision. However, in respect of the latter, it is smaller and

less well-known than the generic supervision literature. Nevertheless it is more closely aligned to participant narratives. Tensions were identified in the boundary between supervision and therapy. In a similar way words such as love, attunement, and compassion are not well-represented in the literature. It might also be argued that fear and defensiveness is a factor in the move towards a more instrumental, or technical, direction in supervision. This is in contrast to most participant narratives where the therapeutic edge of supervision, including love and attunement, were valued as contributing to safety in supervision.

Stories about 'non-traditional' relationships in supervision

Perhaps unsurprisingly it is hard to find reference to friendship in supervision across the body of literature on supervision. Bond (2015) is one of the few to write on this topic, and argues that maintaining boundaries is a long-held consideration in supervision. Similarly, Creaner (2014) maintains that a dual relationship, such as friend and supervisor, compromises the integrity of the professional role. Likewise, the supervision literature contains few references to dual relationships, aside from the need to minimize the potential for an adverse effect.

Friendship and supervision

Bond (2015) argues that it is important to maintain boundaries in supervision. This is situated in two domains: first the importance of behavioural modelling; the second is predicated on accountability. Behavioural modelling is, according to Bond (2015), a 'powerful way of reinforcing or under-minding learning for other relationships' (p. 231). This seems, again, to frame supervision as developmental, and conceivably hierarchical. He puts forward the argument that part of the justification for supervision is accountability, which can be 'clouded by possible confusion with line management issues, divided loyalties, friendship and close personal relationships' (Bond, 2015, p.231).

Certainly Alice was left with some discomfort about whether professional others might view the long-term relationship with her supervisor as collusive, in part because of the personal element. Mary, in contrast, was less uncomfortable about either supervisory relationship translating into friendship. Henderson (2009), writing about the need for professional intimacy, warns of the risk of 'collusion and the avoidance of challenge' (p. 31). Furthermore, Henderson's (2009) view is that intimacy 'implies the possibility of moving *beyond instrumentality*' (p. 31). Arguably what Alice had with her supervisor was

professional intimacy, though in fact, it was evident in the stories offered that the relationship was neither collusive nor was challenge avoided.

Participant's stories about friendship did not appear to draw on either Bond (2015), or Creaner's (2014) conceptualisation of dual relationships, and so friendships, in supervision. Furthermore, Wendy, Alice and Mary told stories which attested to the way in which the supervisory relationship was made more robust, as opposed to less, because of friendship. Moreover, Peter used the analogy of a good friend to illustrate the level of challenge he was seeking and that, in respect of the supervisor taking responsibility for his work, the ability to challenge without rupturing the relationship.

Dual relationships

Neither version of the ethical framework (BACP, 2010; 2016) refers explicitly to dual relationships. Further, outside of a requirement that supervision is not line-management no stipulation is made about other dual relationships. Similarly no reference is made in either Despensier (2011) or Bamber (2015) to dual relationships, or boundary issues. However, some of the generic supervision literature does make reference to dual relationships, though almost always under the heading of boundary issues. Creaner (2014) refers to dual relationships as being those which refer to other relationships existing outside of the 'professional therapy or supervision realm' (p. 73). As Creaner (2014) acknowledges most of the literature on boundary issues, such as dual relationships, is drawn from and based on the client-counsellor relationship. Bond (2015) stipulates that it is as important to maintain the boundaries in supervision as it is in counselling. His arguments for this are twofold, one being concerned with the supervisor modelling appropriate behaviour, and the second predicated on supervision as being predicated on professional accountability. Specifically that: 'such accountability can be clouded by possible confusion with line management issues, divided loyalties, friendship and close personal relationships' (Bond, 2015, p. 231). However, no research evidence, or other literature, is cited in support of this contention. Stories told by, for example, Wendy articulate the dilemma of the inevitability of dual relationships for experienced counsellors. Furthermore, Alice and the dual relationships with her supervisor also speak to the complexity of long-term relationships. In this light it is interesting to note Alice's self-imposed prohibition about this relationship. This was in spite of the fact that it evidently worked well for her, and her clients.

Moreover, as Totton (2012a) remarks, the theory of boundaries specifically arose in the context of work with survivors of sexual abuse, and so was about protecting vulnerable client groups. In part, his argument is that whilst helpful in that context, it has been appropriated for thinking about issues such as fees, timings of sessions, or telephone contact, for all client groups. Furthermore, Owen (1997) highlights the multiple understanding of the word 'boundary', for instance boundary as formal and immutable, to a more informal notion of boundary for a person-centred counsellor. Nevertheless, Totton (2010a) argues that, as a result of developing concepts of appropriate boundaries, counsellors are potentially forced into defensive practice. In particular, he argues, in respect to the 'codification in legal and quasi-legal structures' which 'increasingly forces all therapists and counsellors into *defensive practice*' (Totton, 2012a, p. 67). Arguably, in some of the generic supervision literature this move is arguably evident. Creaner (2014) for example, describes boundary issues in terms of the relationship; content; time; space; and confidentiality. Mitchels (2015) in the GPiA relating to supervision and the law is arguably another example of move towards the positioning of supervision, and counselling, within a legal and quasi-legal structure. Jenkins (2015) argues that this is partly BACP's response to failing to achieve statutory regulation. As a result, Jenkins (2015) believes BACP are 'now faced with the challenge of how to operate a register of therapists on a voluntary basis and how to underpin this process with an Ethical framework which does not carry the force of the law.' (p. 2). Furthermore, Bondi (2009) argues that the separation of normative professional boundaries from those which are personal, social and familial might be: linked to masculinist strategies of separating the rational from the emotional, and the professional from the personal' (p. 175).

To conclude, the stories told in this section relate to friendship, and also dual relationships, in supervision. Few stories were told, however those that were suggest that these are complex areas. On the one hand, as stories told by Mary, Alice and Wendy suggest both friendships and dual relationships exist, and are part of the inevitability of working life for an experienced counsellor. Nevertheless, this can cause discomfort, Alice for example, about what is appropriate, or might be seen as appropriate by professional 'others.' What literature exists suggests that for some, Bond (2015), and Creaner (2014), boundaries must not be transgressed. Moreover, as Totton (2012a) and Jenkins (2015) have argued boundaries might be seen as having links to the professionalisation of counselling. Finally, Bondi (2009) positions this as a masculinist strategy.

Support, transparency and developmental narrative typology

This chapter and the one which follows - Career Long Supervision – span, what might broadly be labelled as, a focus on ethical and professional issues in supervision. It is too simplistic to say that either typology has an exclusive focus on ethical *or* professional issues. The stories in this narrative typology span supervision as support, to the need to be open in supervision and, finally, the requirement for on-going professional and personal development. Stories told in this chapter also interweave with stories told in the chapter on Relational Narratives. It would appear that for many participants, whose stories are represented below, the strength of the supervisory relationship is an important factor.

All participants were members of BACP. Some also held membership of affiliate professional bodies such as the United Kingdom for Psychotherapy (UKCP), or the Health Professional Council (HPC). However, with the exception of Angela, the first membership had been that of BACP. This is worthy of note because membership of BACP suggests a humanistic orientation as the first training. It also suggests that participants were more likely therefore to have encountered the ethical framework to which BACP expect members to adhere whilst in training. It could therefore be argued that participants held allegiance to, or at least were most familiar with, the ethical codes espoused by BACP.

This chapter is structured into the following sections and sub-sections which outline the support, transparency and developmental narrative typology:

Self-care in supervision:

Support as self-care

Support with client work

Affirmation and trust as supportive

Transparency in supervision, taking ‘anything and everything’:

Perceived benefits of transparency in supervision

What helps transparency in supervision

What hinders, or gets in the way of transparency in supervision

Developmental aspects of supervision:

Supervision needs over time, from novice to experienced counsellor

Needs, developmentally, as an experienced counsellor

Choosing a supervisor

Self-care in supervision

In the first set of stories, participants appeared to draw on narrative resources taken from the literature pertaining to self-care. Self-respect, often referred to as self-care, is one of the BACP ethical principles (BACP 2010), and counsellors are required to foster their 'self-knowledge and care for self' and 'to use supervision for appropriate personal and professional support' (p. 4). All participants referred to support and self-care in supervision. In addition, all participants offered stories which attested to the value of supervision. Similarly, stories were told about the link between supervision and the reminder that self-care was important: for instance, Mary, Peter and Angela. Self-care and support consisted of a continuum from emotional to practical support and feelings of safety were linked by many: Jane, Mary, Alice and James. That is, stories were told which attested to the way in which, when supervision felt safe, it was possible to receive these kinds of support from the supervisor. Conversely as Lucy articulated in interview two, stories were offered about '*shutting down*' when supervision, or the supervisor, did not offer a safe place, emotionally and relationally.

Support as self-care

The stories which follow are those where participants reflected on support received from the supervisor. Stories were told about the importance of support at both a personal and professional level and, in particular, to the way this related to self-care. Jane, for example, wanted a '*place to recharge your batteries as well in a way, a place to just get rid of some stuff, to feel a bit more energised.*' Using the analogy of a garden she says: '*very simplistically it's about them tending to my needs in a way, enabling me to have the conversation that I need to have.*' Jane saw this as being enabled to get back in touch with some skills she had perhaps lost touch with, and feeling more equipped to work as a counsellor. Further, it is '*about just nurturing (laughs) being nurtured in a professional way [...].that is [supervision] somewhere I can get some nourishment really [...].because as a counsellor that's what I give all of the time and supervision gives me something back, a big something.*' However, throughout both interviews there was the sense that we were talking about how supervision *might* be supportive, and encourage her self-care, rather than how she had actually experienced it. This is based on Jane's expressed view in the relational narrative type that supervision had, in reality, never met her supervision needs.

Wendy had, generally, by comparison had a positive experience in supervision, here in respect of supporting her to care for all of herself. At the very start of her first

interview, Wendy positions herself as an ethical counsellor who values supervision and finds it supportive. In fact, in the following she articulates her commitment to supervision:

Wendy: As I just said I'm not counselling at the moment but it would never occur to me to not have supervision. I regard my supervision as really important. I use it for supporting my, I am supervising so I use it for supporting my supervision. I use it for supporting my teaching and supporting me as a person in amongst all of that. And yeah, I would feel very cheated if somebody said 'well you don't need that.'
(Interview 1)

Likewise, in the second interview, Angela also states that she values supervision. Reflecting on whether she has trust in herself, and whether or not she was '*a responsible counsellor*' the conclusion is reached that supervision '*makes my practice better*'. As Jane did, Angela valued supervision as a place to think through the emotional costs of working as a counsellor:

Trish: I don't know why but that puts me in mind of the value of supervision, because that was the other thing that came through really strongly was you kept returning to supervision has a value.

Angela: It does.

Trish: But it felt difficult to name what the value was, or is.

Angela: [Long pause] I think one of the values is the opportunity to focus on one thing at a time rather than having, trying to do 27 different things at the same time, to know that this hour, 50 minutes, whatever it is, is devoted to talking about client work, and that the phone's not going to ring and I'm not going to read my email, and then (pause) you know, so that's, that's one of the values I think, that it is focused. I think (pause) another of the values is it (pause) encourages me to look at things differently. I think erm (pause) I think, when you're working with (pause) well, anyway, in life, I think you make meaning from what you're given and you sort of tend to assume that that is the true meaning, and it can be really useful to talk about it with somebody else so that there's a possibility where actually there might be something else, which is really good and really helpful. I think it's a place to be able to work through the emotional costs I suppose of counselling erm (pause) and to acknowledge the emotional cost of it (pause) and I suppose it's also somewhere to be able to think through ethical issues and that side, you know, they're often not clear cut, so to be able to bounce that off a supervisor. You know, if you did have suicidal clients or that sort of extreme, to have a supervisor there that you know you can contact and talk it through is really, really supportive, you're not alone with it.

(Interview 2)

James also felt that feeling safe, and being taken care of, was a supportive aspect of supervision. For example, James said he had been looking forward to the interview as a space where he could talk. This seemed expressed as a hope that the interview would be similarly supportive:

James: Yeah. That sounds like I can't, and that's not the case, but it's a familiar role for me to kind of look after other people, I'm good at it.

Trish: Yeah, and having, I wonder if that's the thing about supervision as well, it's like you have a, we have a sanctioned space to go and be looked after, be supported.

James: Yeah, that's it, it feels nice, and I trust her to take care of me.

(Interview 1)

This feels similar to Wendy's response to being asked by her supervisor to consider changing to two-way peer supervision as opposed to their current uni-directional supervisory relationship. That is, in the first interview Wendy gave an example of her then supervisor asking her to enter into a peer supervision relationship. In the second, she refers back to this, saying one reason for not doing so was that, at the time, *'I felt I needed lots and lots and lots of support and I wouldn't have enough to give her in a way [...].'* Hence, for Wendy, not only did she value, and need to be, the focus of the supervisor's care, she felt that she did not have the emotional resources to reciprocate in the same interaction. Jane likewise expressed a similar desire for support during difficult personal circumstances. Therefore, it might be argued that what these participants articulate is a need for a particular type of supervisory relationship at moments of intense personal crisis. That is a relationship where care, support, and importantly the restorative aspects of supervision, are provided by the supervisor.

As Jane and Angela had, James stated that: *'I'm always saying that to my students as well, you know, that's the importance of supervision, you know, because you can feel very burdened by what you experience and so it's really important that you feel you've got somewhere to unburden yourself.'* This was said with respect to carrying the emotion of others in his role as counsellor, supervisor and trainer. The common thread across the narratives of Jane, Angela, Wendy and James appears to be one of counselling demanding a great deal of the counsellor (emotionally), and so having a space where you can 'unburden' yourself is important. This is clearly articulated by Lucy in the following extract, where she also makes the link between client safety and the emotional wellbeing of the counsellor:

Trish: Yes, and for you, if you were to encapsulate why it's so important for you, if you were to (voice trails off).

Lucy: I guess there's sort of three elements, the client safety so that you can, so that you have got a safe place where you can talk through any concerns and so that, you know, clients aren't being put at risk for having people just out and about doing potential harm to clients. For the counsellor their own I guess (pause) emotional (pause) wellbeing, so that there is somebody there who maybe can check 'are you okay? Is this impacting you in any way?' Sometimes we don't see

that ourselves. And also for me I do enjoy the ongoing development side of it and I do want to continually learn or see different ways of looking at things. And for me I think we can always learn no matter how experienced you are (voice trails off.)
(Interview 2)

Both Peter and Angela express similar sentiments about the way supervision can remind them, in Peter's case directly, not to underestimate '*the importance of my self-care in supervision*':

Peter: (Pause) and that, you know, I know, I've been told before that I have to be, I'm not as good at looking after myself and probably, you know, probably work a bit too hard and don't take enough breaks and things like that, sometimes, you know, have too many clients and so on and I know I've got to watch that. But (pause) yeah, another, you know, the bit of supervision that I know is important that I don't always acknowledge is, you know, I feel a whole lot better sometimes, nearly always, when I've been, I feel lighter, you know, it is a therapeutic process for me I think.
(Interview 2)

What Peter finds supportive is a reminder of the fact that '*well actually Peter it is supposed to be about you as well*'. Later he offers the following example:

Peter: Well (pause) one of the things I really liked about [previous supervisor] was he, you know he was very clear about my rights in away and, you know he once, one of the most powerful things he ever said to me was "Peter you can change your mind", you know, and I thought that was superb really, well yeah I can't I, you know? I think sometimes I, I'm kind of so client-focused that I lose sight of me a little bit and the fact that, you know, I could decide to, you know, move premises or, you know, of course I'm allowed to do that, you know. I could decide that I don't want to, you know, don't want to work with this client, I'm allowed to do that and I think that's been a really powerful part of our relationship really and I'm hoping to sustain in that in the new one.

Trish: So [previous supervisor] reminded you of your self-care needs? [He] reminded you of your rights if you like in terms of (voice trails off.)

Peter: Empowered me really, empowered me I think. Which as I say that it feels a bit strange, you know, I feel gosh yeah, you know, on the one hand I'm saying I'm competent and experienced and yet I still need someone to remind me of my own, my own rights. But it's true, you know, I do need that sometimes. I think I'm so focused on ethical practice and getting it right and I sometimes forget I'm in there.
(Interview 2)

In some ways this is similar to Angela's view that supervision reminds her not to overlook her own need for support, even when, in other ways, she had an ambivalent response to the mandated nature of supervision for BACP members. What she was not ambivalent about was her sense that supervision supported her self-care because '*if it's for*

me it can go on a back burner [...]'. Angela linked this to being busy and so the 'easiest things not to do are the things that you do for yourself.'

To conclude, the stories represented above about support as self-care articulate a need for a particular type of support in supervision. That is support from the supervisor which allows, facilitates and enables the supervisee to *'unburden'* at an emotional level. A space where experienced counsellors can be nurtured and receive care, and be reminded of their right to self-care. James describes supervision as a *'sanctioned'* space for being looked after and supported, in all of his roles not only as a counsellor. This sense of a sanctioned supported and *'looked after'* space pervades the stories presented above.

Support with client work

Some participants, particularly Mary and Peter, referred to the importance, and value, of supervisory support when working with challenging clients. For others, such as Jane and Lucy, with her private supervisor at least, stories told reflected the lack of support. In the first interview Jane relates a story about the challenges of working in a pressured setting: *'[...] she just couldn't grasp what pressures were put on me as a counsellor in that environment. To her, it was all very straightforward, well, you know, BACP suggests that as a full-time counsellor you shouldn't be working more than eighteen to twenty hours a week, one-to-one counselling. But the pressures in an FE setting are so great you have a running battle to not work more than that.'*

Lucy welcomed challenge from her in-house supervision, and offered many stories which attested to this. Conversely with her private supervisor she had a different experience. In the following example she reflects on the difference between the two supervisors:

Trish: Yeah. And dissociate, so just go (pause) go through the motions (voice trails off.)

Lucy: Yeah, I'll go and talk through my clients, I know she's not really gonna listen to it anyway so it kind of doesn't matter.(laughs) And for example I had a client recently who, a male client, who made quite a threatening kind of pass at me in the middle of a session. I handled it fine, there's a lot of stuff that could have come out from it. When I talked to her about it, straight away her response was, "He must have a personality disorder. Have you thought about referring him to somebody else?" And I was like, "Where did that come from?"

Trish: What did you want from her, ideally? If you'd taken it to your other supervisor, what would you expect to have (voice trails off)?

Lucy: To just have an open discussion about how I'd experienced it, to look at how I'd handled it, was that the best way that I could have done, and where (pause)

where him and I would go next with the counselling relationship. Not just to be told to refer him on cos it sounds like he's got a personality disorder.

Trish: So am I (pause) I don't know if I'm right in this, but it feels like what is really lacking is a support.

Lucy: Yeah. Yeah. She's not (pause) If I had (pause) or in fact, if I do have, you know, you've had a session with a client, you're left with something lingering, I would never think of contacting her. I've got another counselling friend who I guess would do peer supervision. She's the person, and maybe that's all that I need, is just that peer supervision, maybe formalise that.

(Interview 1)

In contrast Mary felt supported to work with a challenging client. Though the work ended on '*a good note*', her feeling was that: '*... if it hadn't been for supervision, it was then I really thought my goodness you need supervision, I couldn't have done that on my own.*' For Mary what felt supportive was '*having a place where you can say the unspoken [...]*' and she explained how support from her supervisor enabled her to offer this client compassion even though he pushed the conventional counselling boundaries by sending her flowers and cards. What she gets to is the following:

Mary: And just to have somebody say "that's fine, that's OK" and "you don't have to work with him if you don't want to", yeah "you've got a choice here", "you can pass him onto somebody else" and you think no actually I can do, I can do this, so it's about permission isn't it, it's about somebody else hearing you and giving you permission to do it or not do it and, but to say "if you decide to do it I'm here and you can actually ring me" or, and then you probably don't need to.

(Interview 1)

She was able to work with the client through using supervision as a place where she could feel reassured, supported *and* challenged:

Trish: But it occurs to me that there is that balance then between support and challenge that is as ever difficult to manage but is what you want, you don't want to feel entirely comfortable (voice trails off.)

Mary: No, no I think sometimes I do, depending on how I'm feeling, I want somebody to say, you know, 'you're not doing anything disastrous, it's gonna be alright', but I also want somebody to be able to say to me, you know, to look at something in a way I haven't seen it and say 'look, you know, could it be this, was this going on for you, tell me what was going on for you'.

(Interview 1)

Both Mary and Peter refer to the desire for both support and challenge from their supervisors. Participants appeared to use the concept of 'challenge' in a variety of ways. On the one hand Peter wanted a supervisor who, if he feels scared, will reassure him that

the work he is doing with the client is alright and that, after exploring a challenging piece of client work in detail, his supervisor will say “*But you know I think you can work with this person it will be okay [...].*” Similarly:

Peter: [...] I need someone who’s not afraid to challenge me, who maybe is quite tough in that sense really. Because that, that mental toughness is what I need when I’m in bits, because trust me I am in bits a lot of the time, you know, yes I am very competent because I’m, you know, I’m not going to pretend that I’m always, everything I need myself to be because I get terribly challenged by clients sometimes and I need that support.

(Interview 1)

On the other hand Peter also wanted a supervisor who could identify times when he might not be working appropriately with a client. In the first interview he offers an example of working with a dissociative client, here he tells the story of his supervisor picking up on something he had not: ‘[...] *and oh God I hadn’t spotted that one, you know. So it’s not carte blanche to do what the hell I like, it’s that kind of (pause) and knowing and believing that they know that stuff, you know that they can spot that stuff that I always can’t necessarily spot.*’ In this instance the supervisor appears to be challenging Peter to face a ‘blind spot’ in the work with this client. Nevertheless the challenge was delivered supportively, and in a trusting, safe relationship.

In some ways this is similar to Wendy’s feeling that when the supervisor can offer unconditional positive regard it is possible for her to hear a supportive challenge, and also what happens when it is absent:

Wendy: Yeah. So I need to know that somebody’s going to poke the bits that need to be poked because otherwise I’ve got to do it and I can do self-critic (pause) with gold stars on, whereas if I can just bring me in a more relaxed form and I know that they will pick up something that isn’t okay.

Trish: And I wonder whether with this UPR, loving UPR in place, I wonder what that does to the critic that you can bring? Does it quieten it or (voice trails off)?

Wendy: Yeah, it quietens it down and I can, hugely can see “okay I can see that might not be the right thing to do but I absolutely understand why, why I made those decisions that led up to that, to that point”. And actually looking back I probably wouldn’t have done, each one seemed absolutely the right thing to do so that feels much, I can be much more compassionate towards myself. Intriguingly I was thinking then about when you were saying that about the critic and experience because the, [name] the person who was my supervisor when I was working for X had lots of experience of working within X (pause) And there was something about her that (long pause). It was a, it was certainly a good enough relationship but it was so different and lacking in certain areas. I found it quite hard to accept challenge from her at times because I thought “you just don’t get that do you?”

(Interview 1)

All participants, with the exception of Angela, referred to the need for both support and supportive challenge to be present in supervision. Alice evidences the impact of this and links it to her work with clients:

Alice: Yeah, mm, so I suppose both affirmation and challenge, direct challenge kind of cause you to reflect on yourself and evaluate and come to some sense of who you are as a counsellor don't they?
(Interview 1)

Alice needed to know that there was the capacity for mutual challenge in supervision. During interview one she relates an example of challenging her supervisor regarding information Alice felt the supervisor might have withheld: *'Yes, I, yeah, I don't know what I would have done if I'd have thought it wouldn't withstand that challenge. If I'd have thought it wouldn't would I have gone ahead, I probably would have gone ahead but with the understanding that it might, we might need to finish together if we couldn't resolve it.'* Further, Alice wanted supervision which also affirmed her. In fact she felt that with that affirmation in place the challenges could be strengthened:

Alice: Yeah, just sort of, yeah, that sort of a groundedness I suppose, that groundedness. And you know, the affirmation I get from, and actually the challenges I get in supervision so the affirmation and the challenges, and being able to withstand those challenges so they may be stronger too.
(Interview 1)

This is similar to James who puts it this way: *'[...] for me personally, in attachment terms, it's really important for me to feel that, you know, I have somebody who's consistent, who believes in me, who respects me (pause) who I'm able to impress sometimes, but also who can challenge me as well, you know [...], so it's not a bad thing that, do you know what I mean?'*

In conclusion, the stories explicated in this sub-section reflect a desire for supportive challenge. Stories also reflect the need for this to be in a space where the counsellor feels affirmed, see Alice for example. Further support could be seen as embedded in stories told in other narrative types. For instance, stories told about the significance of the relationship in the previous chapter. Certainly both Jane and Lucy told stories which suggested that when supervision is not safe, challenge is not always delivered supportively. Affirmation as supportive in supervision is taken up in the following sub-section.

Affirmation and trust as supportive

For some participants the supervisor offering affirmation of them personally and professionally was experienced as supportive. Similarly the supervisor valuing, and trusting, the supervisee was also considered helpful, and supportive. For Alice, Lucy and Wendy it was the counsellor offering this affirmation and trust which enabled them to develop a sense of personal and professional trust in themselves. Lucy also named the impact of not feeling valued, that she felt 'shut down' by her private supervisor. In particular Alice's stories attest not only to the importance of affirmation, being valued and feeling supported, but also the supervisor being attuned to her, and her needs.

Alice expresses her view that this supervisor's affirmation is an important part of her sense of herself as a professional, and the self-confidence such affirmation gave her in her work: *'I think if I didn't feel affirmed as a counsellor (pause) if I felt a bit shaky or not quite sure of myself [...]. So if I didn't have that sense of myself, if I was a bit kind of wobbly and shaky (pause) would that mean I was a less good practitioner?'* Despite knowing that the supervisor met her support needs, her sense was that 'people' might be saying 'she should be standing on her own two feet.' This causes her to assess whether she needs professional affirmation or affirmation in general from people with more experience than her:

Alice: 'Yeah, I'm kind of thinking am I the sort of person who just (laughs) is a bit (pause) needy (pause) when it comes (pause) god, oh god knows where this is going Trish but anyway, I don't think of myself as needing a lot of affirmation generally speaking but I think maybe in the professional (pause) arena I do (pause) I think maybe I do.'
(Interview 1)

Whilst Lucy does not use the word affirmation, she does name the way in which she learnt to trust herself (as a counsellor) because her in-house supervisor trusted her:

Lucy: Ah, yeah, yeah. Because I guess with [in-house supervisor] I learnt to trust myself as a professional because I think I maybe did still have doubts way back. And [his] trust in me (pause) allowed me to trust myself and I do wonder if, again if I hadn't had [him] how that would have worked with [private supervisor]? If I would have, if my trust in myself would have maybe been chipped away, whereas I don't think it was in that whatever she said if I didn't believe it or it didn't sit right for me I was able to think 'no, that's not right, I know what I'm doing (voice trails off)'

Trish: You have (pause)

Lucy: (talks over) 'feels right'.

Trish: (talks over) enough then in the sense of personal what's right and wrong?

Lucy: Yeah. Whereas I think it could have been easy (pause) to listen to [private supervisor] and to start doubting myself and thinking 'yeah, what if she's got it

right?’ But I think because I got that trust and respect from [in-house supervisor] it’s like ‘well actually I must be alright’. And I think actually [in-house supervisor] has helped me develop that trust in myself.

(Interview 2)

Alice, Wendy, and James all expressed the importance for them of respect. Many of Lucy’s experiences and stories attest to the importance of respect and the impact of its presence or absence: *‘[...] I really respect him. I respect his knowledge and I respect the fact that he respects me and my work, and that’s what I don’t feel from my private supervisor. I don’t feel she necessarily respects my work.’* In the second interview Lucy names the link between respect and trust: *‘Because I didn’t really trust her enough to open up (pause) I’m just trying to work out the link with respect (pause) but I think that’s it for me. If I don’t feel respected and I think this is one of my kind of personality traits, then I will shut down. I feel I’m not being valued, it’s almost “oh what’s the point, why should I bother telling you?” (laughs)’.* Similarly, for Peter, mutual respect served an important function in supervision:

Peter: [...] a good friend of mine is someone who is not afraid to tell me something I don’t want to hear but at the same time is someone who’s there for me and who I respect and look up to and I’d hope that they would have a similar feeling about me. And really in my actual friendship type life I’ve really only got one person that I can think of who’s like that and he’s my oldest and longest friend and you know he’s the guy that I would ring if I found myself in a Police cell at four o’clock in the morning or something. So I’m kind of looking for that, don’t translate this literally, but that kind of sense of holding that you know, I really respect the person, they will tell me what’s what [...]

(Interview 1)

In a similar way Jane also valued the support with client work that can be gained from a supportive and trusting supervisor. This felt to an extent to be an idealised view of supervision as Jane’s overall narrative was that of supervision never having met her needs. However, the following extract appears to attest to an attuned supervisor, or perhaps the desire for an attuned supervisor, who has the relational skills to facilitate a productive exploration of the unknown:

Trish: Is that, I wonder, to do with (pause) I don’t know, you’ve used supervision for a long time, is that a familiarity with it, is that the skills that the supervisor uses, do you have a sense (voice trails off)

Jane: I think it’s (pause) I suppose it’s a bit of all those things really. I suppose it’s just the knowledge now that (long pause), you know, an hour and a half will never ever be enough, there’s always that much to say, something (pause) something will

come up, even if it's just an exploration of (pause) if I couldn't think of anything that was particularly pressing, an exploration of why not would bring a lot. So it's just the knowledge that there will be plenty to talk about and plenty of really substantial stuff to talk about but also combined with their skills teasing out the most, kind of what seemed to them to be the most relevant points. The sense of me feeling safe enough to just go and sit and start, and know we'll make sense of it.

(Interview 1)

Mary also wanted a supervisor who would notice, or be attuned to, what might be under the surface. Mary presented most clearly an important aspect of practice as a humanistic counsellor, namely that counselling is less about technique and more about the relationship built with the client. She perhaps therefore articulates one 'truth' about supervision for humanistic counsellors. Specifically, that what is desired is a supervisor who can provide the same for the supervisee. This was something also articulated by Jane, and reported on in the chapter on Relational narrative types.

Mary: Yeah, because I believe, and part of my, you know, beliefs around counselling is that all I have is me to work with, 'cos you know, if counselling is all about the being of the counsellor and the relationship, you know, I don't take a bag of tricks into the counselling room and I don't take a bag of tools, I'm, all I have is me, so me has got to be fine-tuned so I sort of want my supervisor to do a bit of tuning as well, and just to be able to notice things about me that maybe I'm not noticing about myself, for the benefit of me and my clients, you know, so if I'm overworked or tired or not doing enough self-care I want that pointed out to me as well.

(Interview 1)

It could be argued that this level of mutual trust, respect, and attunement – or being tuned-in to the needs of the supervisee – can only be built on each party 'knowing' the other, in a relational rather than factual sense. This is well articulated by James:

James: Hmm, yes, it is. I kind of, I think for me, the test is, simple test, for me, is do I feel supported? Yes. Do I feel challenged? Yes. And do I feel restored? Yes.

Trish. Yeah.

James: Maybe not every time, but then that's you know, that's something else for me to reflect on, in any event. Was there something that I didn't ask for or, you know, she's going to be well, it's kind of, it's knowing of each other, I think.

(Interview 1)

James sums this up, stating: '[...] *but she knows me, that's the important thing.*' James was not the only participant to highlight the importance of being known. Wendy also felt that being known was an important part of feeling supported, trust and challenge:

Wendy: It's being known by her, yeah.

Trish: In a very wide sense being known by her.

Wendy: Yes it is, yeah.

Trish: Emotionally, intellectually, cognitively, how you work, what you believe.

Wendy: All of that, spiritually, yeah.

Trish: Spiritually. Yeah.

Wendy: Yeah, all of those things. And it's the trust because if, yes it will provide a space where I can sort out my own boundaries, where do I stop? Where, is this about me? Is this about the supervisee? But I also trust that actually if I get it wrong she will come in and say "hang on, I've got, I feel uncomfortable", she won't say "you're doing it wrong", she'll say "somehow that doesn't sit comfortably with me" and I can trust that she will be involved on that level, and that's the experience.

(Interview 1)

The stories presented in this sub-section attest to the significance of affirmation, trust and respect. Jane and Lucy told stories which directly or indirectly highlight the impact when this affirmation and respect are absent. It would seem that, as Alice, states, affirmation from a supervisor can support both the supervisee and the client. It would also appear that affirmation can enable, as with Lucy, the supervisee to develop trust in their abilities as counsellors. Jane and Mary told stories about the importance of the supervisor being attuned to their needs, and picking up on what might be going on underneath the words. Finally James and Wendy, articulate the positive effect of being 'known' by their supervisor.

Transparency in supervision, taking 'anything and everything'

Webb and Wheeler (1998) state that 'the process of supervision relies upon counsellors being able to disclose everything and anything' pertaining to client work (p. 509). Some had a positive experience of supervision, for instance Mary, Alice, Wendy, Peter and James, where it had been possible to take 'anything and everything'. In contrast, others had a more ambivalent and, at times, difficult experience. The only participant who unequivocally stated she could always take anything to supervision was Alice. In the stories which follow, across all three sub-sections, the capacity for transparency, or honesty, in supervision appears to be based on relational safety. In particular these stories relate directly to the assumption that it *should* be possible to take anything to supervision. In particular, that it was important to be able to take issues which might affect client work. Hence, one benefit of being transparent in supervision was client protection.

Perceived benefits of transparency in supervision

Stories were told which reflected an understanding that being transparent in supervision was beneficial. This appeared to be based on the assumption that it should be possible to take anything and everything to supervision. Jane links the ability to take 'anything and everything' to supervision as something which leaves her feeling 'braver' as a counsellor, and to safety. Therefore: *'[...] when I go for supervision, I want to feel safe and I want to feel that my supervisor has my best interests at heart, wants to assist me in the work that I do and if I feel that then I can take what I need to take.'*

Jane: I think it really impacts because if I'm working with a supervisor that I've got a belief in their ability and I feel safe with and that I can take to them any kind of difficulties I'm having, any challenges I'm facing, any bits that I feel I'm not doing particularly well, if I can take anything and everything to my supervisor and start to unpick it and look at what am I doing, where am I doing it, how it's impacting on me, how it's impacting on the client, if I can have that kind of discussion with them then I believe I can be a bit braver counsellor

Trish: Yes, yeah.

Jane: (Pause) Because I know I've got somewhere to go back to, to sort of put everything on the table and say, I'm using this intervention, I'm doing that and this is the response I'm getting and I'm not matching things up. That kind of exploration definitely makes me feel a braver counsellor.

(Interview 1)

Wendy articulated a similar view, that it was beneficial to sort out what belonged where and to explore client work from a different perspective. The value of having a different perspective brought to client work was also named as beneficial by other participants: that is, Mary, Lucy, Peter and James. Wendy felt it is beneficial to have a supervisor to whom she can take all aspects of her professional work:

Trish: So can you give me some idea of what it is that you get from supervision, I know you've named support, can you give me some idea of what it is that you get from it?

Wendy: I was thinking about that, um (pause) I guess that there's another perspective. There's the opportunity to unpick what's not going okay and quite often that's been unpicking what's my stuff, what's their stuff and what do I do with the bit in the middle. So if I've been getting, I mean students rattle my case from time to time, I'm sure you're familiar with that.

Trish: Yes, very (mutual laughter.)

Wendy: And what is it about them that rattles my cage? Why is it that student that I can feel, that I could happily ignore and that student I'm willing to go beyond reasonableness to be supportive of? So I'm kind of trying to, I was going to say to try and get some kind of objectivity but I don't know that she provides it but she provides me with the opportunity to get it.

Trish: Right, so the space to explore and to gain objectivity?

Wendy: Yeah, to get a sense of proportion about things. I mean she used to be a trainer, she used to run a counselling training business, she's a supervisor, she's a counsellor and I really value the fact she's done training as well because she understands more, my previous supervisor didn't understand the training as well. So there's something about this person who I can take all of me.

(Interview 1)

Lucy wanted supervision where she could be transparent, and told stories about this being possible with her in-house supervisor. As with Jane and Wendy, Lucy felt the benefit of such supervision is to explore client work from a different perspective. In this extract she is comparing what her in-house supervisor offers her, a safe and non-critical environment, as opposed to what she experiences with her private supervisor:

Trish: Because what interests me is you used the word challenge in the first interview and you're using it again, and I'm wondering what that means for you and what might sit underneath challenge?

Lucy: It's to help me develop my practice erm (pause) and to look at things in a different way. But I guess for me challenge is about helping me I guess open my own thinking rather than as I say [private supervisor] just telling me. It's that challenging me as an individual and a practitioner to just maybe could you have thought about this differently? Could you have done this differently? Or even just the way somebody says 'well I might have done it like this', because [in-house supervisor] does that and it comes across fine, whereas I say when [private supervisor] does it it feels like I'm being almost told off and 'this is the way you should do it.'

(Interview 2)

In contrast, Alice, Peter, Wendy and James expressed a reasonably clear view that they could take anything to their supervisors at the time of the interviews. Alice had been with this supervisor since training and was one she experienced as safe. Moreover, she also expresses what other participants had said less directly, namely that it is good practice to take ethical issues to supervision:

Alice: Yeah, I always know I can take them and that I have to take them.

Trish: Yes. That you have to take them?

Alice: Because (sighs) it wouldn't be good practice not to take them. Those things that I feel a bit ouchy about are the very things that I have to take, so having a relationship where I know I can take them, even if I'm a bit uncomfortable or a bit, you know, cringing about them, having a relationship where I know I can take them is really important.

Trish: Yeah, so it's safe.

Alice: Yes.

Trish: Even though it might sting a bit and it might be difficult to take say a mistake or something or something you're embarrassed about?

Alice: Yeah, yeah. And actually it's more the taking that's difficult 'cos it's never difficult when I take it, when I actually take it it's never difficult, the difficult bit is the saying of it, you know.

(Interview 1)

Alice referred more than one to the 'voices' who might 'tell her off' but says that in reality she *'would feel more concerned about my clients if I thought oh there's things I can't take or that I wouldn't feel safe taking or that I wouldn't feel the supervisor would call me on aspects of my practice or attitudes [...]'* As with Jane, Lucy and Wendy she felt an important function was that her supervisor helped her to question herself, and *'kind of catch myself [...] in things that might have just passed my awareness [...]'* Again in common with Wendy she felt that it was important to *'[...] bring the whole of myself and the bits of me that are annoyed with myself or frustrated with myself or, and the bits of me that are really enjoying the work or enjoying a particular relationship with a client (pause) the bits of me that are wondering and perturbed [...]'* This sense of taking all of her is similar to the importance Peter and James speak of in terms of *'being known'* in supervision. In some ways this is best articulated by Jane's desire in supervision to have all of her experiences, personal and in a work setting, known about and discussed.

In a similar vein Peter wants supervision where he can discuss all aspects of client work, including perceived mistakes. As expressed in the stories told by other participants Peter valued supervision as somewhere he could obtain a different perspective on client work. As evidenced in the following extract, this could only be in a safe and trusting relationship. Peter is also articulating the need that his supervisor does not 'freak out' on hearing details of his work. This is perhaps particularly important given the complexity and vulnerability of the clients he works with:

Peter: Yeah, yeah (pause) and at the same time pointing out things that, you know, I mean I remember I had a client who had a dissociative episode during the session and, you know, possibly even some sort of, I don't think an epileptic seizure but some sort of seizure as well and was trembling and I, you know, I gave her a blanket to keep her warm and [current supervisor] was saying, you know, be really careful about the symbolisation of giving someone a blanket because effectively you're putting them to bed and you know, and oh God I hadn't spotted that one, you know. So it's not carte blanche to do what the hell I like, it's that kind of (pause) and knowing and believing that they know that stuff, you know that they can spot that stuff that I always can't necessarily spot.

Trish: Yeah. And to feel confident in the supervisor that you can take any area of your work and have it open to be looked at demands trust in the supervisor.

Peter: Yeah because you know we're all different and like you haven't sort of freaked out when I said about the rice pudding episode but you know, you can

imagine that, because I sense that you understand that but you know someone might freak, "He did what?" You know, and it's like the last thing I want is some new supervisor sort of questioning some of the stuff that I've done, I mean I think they wouldn't do that but you know, blimey it's [sighs] this is me here, it's me, you know this is me on the line, this is everything that I do. This is how, I don't, well I do a bit of teaching now but I don't do anything else, this is what I do and it's scary work so this person has got an incredibly important role in my life and you know I might really like them as a person and could almost imagine perhaps going for a pint with them or something, I'm never going to do that, but it needs to be someone who is pretty much the professional equivalent of that good friend that I mentioned, you know.

(Interview 2)

The story told by James further articulates this in that what he wants is supervision where there is no need to censor what is said:

James: (Sighs) For me, supervision has to be a place, has to be a place, I mean, perhaps I'm thinking as a supervisor as well, but, for me, where I feel safe to be whoever I am and to talk about whatever. I think the most important thing for me about supervision, and I feel this really strongly, as a supervisor, is that it has to be a forum in which my supervisees and me as a supervisee, that there is nothing that I, there is nothing I feel I want to censor in supervision, I think that's the most important thing for me, that I can take and trust my supervisor, who I've worked with for a long time now, that I don't have to kind of feel like I'm being told what to do, in some sense, that whatever I take to supervision, even if it's stuff that's about me, and personal stuff, which it often is, always has relevance to my therapeutic work. Ermm (pause) I'm struggling to stop thinking as a supervisor rather than a *supervisee*.

(Interview 1)

Arguably the benefit which arises from lack of censorship is the freedom to take all aspects, including personal issues, and so equates to client safety. In common with Wendy James wanted, in supervision, to be known '*as a person, not just as a practitioner (pause) because I don't think it's possible, ultimately, to separate the two.*' As with other participants certain conditions had to be present in order that they felt safe enough not to, as James later said, hide things in supervision. He described this as '*the worst supervision of all.*'

To conclude this sub-section, what participants articulated was the link between safety and the ability to be transparent in supervision. There are, of course, also overlaps with the stories participants told about safety in the supervisory relationship. Specifically, being listened to, respect, congruence and transparency (from the supervisor), and an exploration of whatever was brought at more than a cognitive or 'telling how to do' level

were all felt to be significant issues. Stories told suggest that this, in turn, enables an exploration of client work from a different perspective, and in so doing protects clients.

What helps the supervisee be transparent in supervision

Participants perceived transparency as beneficial in supervision because of the belief that this protected clients. What follows are those stories told about what was helpful in aiding transparency, or honesty, in supervision. Furthermore, participants framed helpful aspects in terms of the supervisory relationship, safety was again an important factor. The core conditions, and in particular lack of judgement, congruence and being listened to attentively (empathically); trust and respect were identified as key components in this. Angela makes the link between mutual respect, safety and lack of judgment which can then aid transparency. She also stipulates the need for the supervisor to make some judgement regarding client safety:

Angela: No, no. I think it's having a respectful relationship, and I don't mean, you know, 'Yes, sir. No, sir', but I mean that you both respect each other as professionals, and that neither of you talk down to the other no matter what your role is, whether you're the supervisor, so it's a bit of a coming together and a bit of common experience, erm (pause) and I think it's that sense of safety, that you can say anything (pause) and don't feel that you would be judged for it. So, I mean, it's very similar to a counselling relationship in a sense, although of course as a supervisor you do have to make some judgements about safety and things.
(Interview 2)

In contrast, Wendy cites unconditional positive regard, congruence and honesty as important:

Wendy: Equal I think yeah. We were talking about the importance of UPR but I think actually this is something about the importance of congruence in there as well. And I absolutely trust that she will be absolutely herself. She won't sit there thinking "mm, not sure" and we'll, and so if she's not sure we'll talk about her not sureness and we'll unpick that because it will be relevant.

Trish: And it gives you permission I guess?

Wendy: It does, yeah.

Trish: To be congruent and to (voice trails off).

Wendy: It's so much easier. I mean I'm quite good at congruence providing the other person is, but if the other person isn't it's much harder (laughter).

(Interview 1)

Lucy valued the congruence she experienced from her in-house supervisor, and felt both she and her clients benefited from that. In turn this was something that enabled her

to be honest and transparent in supervision with him. However, what she also wants is mutuality:

Lucy: Very, very much so, and it's that sense with him it is very much an equal, and more (pause) more a sharing kind of relationship. He'll maybe give me some of his experiences which are relevant to what we're talking about, as will my private supervisor, but with her it feels that, "Oh, I'm telling you this cos this is how it should have been done." Whereas with [in-house] supervisor it's very much (pause) just a contrast, maybe, a different way of thinking about it. It doesn't feel like he's picking fault, it is just a general discussion, and I feel very much that he learns a lot from me in the same way that I learn a lot from him, it's that very much a mutual relationship.
(Interview 1)

Furthermore, Alice's story extends this mutuality and highlights the importance of the supervisee knowing '*where they stand*' with the supervisor. As with other participants, notably James, but also Jane, Angela, Lucy and Peter, Alice draws on her wider professional experience, in this instance as supervisor, counsellor and tutor: '*[...] but I think, you know, supervisees absolutely know where they stand with me, I'm very, very open, very honest.*':

Alice: Yeah, they would absolutely know where they stand, and if I had anything to say I'd say it, I'd be saying it, and I do, you know I don't withhold good things that I might say, I'm always very keen to give praise where praise is due and, yeah. So the balance is maybe that sort of briskness is (pause) that actually they're dead safe about where they stand.
(Interview 2)

Equally, what Alice found helpful in supervision was that her supervisor was '*dead straight*' and was congruent about that:

Alice: Yeah, yeah, yes, yes. Yes, I never have to wonder (pause) with my supervisor what might be going on behind the words. No, I absolutely know, she's dead straight and I really, really bank on that.

Trish: And that's the advantage I guess of feeling you label it as 'brisk' but that's the (voice trails off).

Alice: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yes, so maybe it would feel incongruent to be kind of over-softening something, maybe there's a sense in which I think 'Well I really feel the need to say this, I'm going to say this.'

Trish: There's something for me about being congruent there, it's congruent with who you are, you know this about yourself and it's congruent with (voice trails off.)

Alice: Yes, yes. I don't particularly like it but I do know it about myself, and maybe to be doing something else would be a pretence, would be a pretence.

(Interview 2)

Alice's experience was that she did not have to wonder what lay behind the words, and it was evidently a robust relationship. With his supervisor's retirement imminent, Peter reflects back on his concerns prior to their relationship commencing. In common with Alice, Peter valued supervisory relationships which were robust, and where he could rely on the supervisor to be honest with him, but at the same time 'meet him' in the work he did with vulnerable client groups:

Peter: (pause) the work I was able to do with my clients, she empowered me so much. You know, if I say to you that I once fed, and this is going to sound out of context, it's going to sound ridiculous but trust me it was okay, you know, I once spoon fed a client out of a bowl of rice pudding, you know, and to have the kind of support and the understanding to give me the confidence to do that, that was what that client needed (pause) so you know that experience was such a healing experience for the client. And when I, one of my question marks over [current supervisor] was, you know, would he take me on? And would he meet with me on this level really? And he, you know, after we met he confirmed that he was and I really felt that depth of commitment coming from him.

Trish: Yeah. So to do the work that you do demands that sometimes you step outside what might (voice trails off)

Peter: Hmm, could easily be seen as slightly odd. I mean I don't make a habit of that kind of thing obviously but if necessary.

(Interview 1)

Throughout both interviews it was apparent that this supervisor did 'meet' Peter in the way he needed. This, in turn, led Peter to be transparent about client work, evidenced in examples of what he took to supervision. An important component of this for some participants was that the supervisor listened to what was brought attentively. For Wendy this entailed her supervisor paying attention at both a cognitive (or intellectual) level and an emotional one:

Wendy: Yeah. Well M was my x supervisor so I would start you know, I'd have a client issue and I'd go and talk to her about it and we'd kind of get to a place where I thought "oh yeah, that's helpful". I, but I was really aware that it was kind of cognitive, that it, I had got some logic and some, and useful stuff and maybe some practical help as to how to deal with the x role than anything else. But then I could, I sometimes ended up by taking the same client, the same issue but I was in a different place with it because I'd already explored some of it, but very often that took me to a much deeper, emotional exploration when I went to x who's my other supervisor who I've been working with for, ooh about, I was going to say three years but I think it's probably about five, one of these things (laughter.)

(Interview 1)

Jane offers a similar view in that being listened to, and in this instance understood, at a deep level is important. This also leads her to what she does not find helpful:

Jane: Yeah. And really listening for (pause) because often it's about what you're not saying. It's someone's experience, someone's ability to just (pause) "Hang on a minute, you know, yes they've told me this, this and this but actually what I'm not hearing is (pause)." And that's what I look (pause) that's what I want in somebody, I don't want somebody who can give me a lot of text book stuff, I don't want that.

Trish: It's that word 'experience'.

Jane: Yeah, it is, it comes back to that all the time because, for me as a counsellor, I believe my value as a counsellor is being able to be with my clients, to listen, to really listen, to be with them, to be walking alongside them. So in a supervisor, I want that same thing. I want them to be able to help me to look at what I'm doing, what I might do a bit differently, how I might (pause) you know, why I've got feelings that I've got (pause). Certain feelings I've got for a client, why I've got them, what am I going to do about them? I don't want somebody to be able to sit and tell me, well if I've read x book and this book and this theory fits in or (pause). Sometimes it can be useful but not all of the time.

(Interview 1)

Towards the end of the first interview, Wendy reflected on the importance of the similarities, for her, between counselling and supervision in that she wants the same from both spheres. She returns to her criteria for choosing a supervisor:

Trish: And supervision that doesn't match that if you like doesn't function for you?

Wendy: For me it doesn't, no. And I was thinking there when I say to students when they're looking for a supervisor, my criteria for a supervisor would be somebody I can go and say "I have totally fucked up" and burst into tears. And I need to be able to do those, those two things with a supervisor and if you can't do that I'm not going to be, whatever will be taken there will be short changed because I won't, if I'm guarded and protective then I'm, it's not going to work.

(Interview 1)

To conclude this sub-section, the stories above relate to what enabled participants to feel it was possible to take 'anything and everything' to supervision. It would appear that congruence, or in Alice's words the supervisor being 'dead straight', with the supervisee is an important component of that. Other factors appear to relate to the importance of the supervisor listening attentively, which might also be linked to an empathic understanding. In turn, this attentive listening allowed for an exploration of whatever was taken to supervision, including those times when participants felt they had made a mistake, at an intellectual (cognitive) and at a more embodied and emotional level.

What hinders, or gets in the way, of transparency

What follows is, to some extent, stories that articulate the opposite of what helped participants to be transparent in supervision. Hence, for example, stories are offered about the absence of some factors identified in the previous sub-section. However, stories represented below also evidence the concerns some participants had, notably Jane and Lucy, about what agenda the supervisor might hold. The following exchange takes place directly after Jane's comments in the preceding section about what helps. Jane wanted to have confidence in the supervisor sufficient that she could *'take anything to'* that person. However, she also felt that *'[...] if I am being really hones I've not particularly felt that with the last two people [...]'* Reflecting on this, Jane stated it was *'[...] because if there had been anything that was particularly difficult [...] with both of them I had a sense that it would have been them telling me what to do, telling me how they would do it [...]'* Furthermore:

Jane: Hmm, and that's what I've begun to notice with the person I'm with at the minute that although obviously I introduce what it is I want to use in the session, it very quickly seems to become her agenda, her view on it and how she would handle it. And sometimes I feel able to bring it back and say "well actually no, that's not what I meant" or "this is not going down a route that I'm finding particularly useful". But because I have to do that so much there are other times when I can't be bothered, huh! And I just go with it and think "well, you know, I've got somewhere else I can take this so I'll let it go"

Trish: So it sounds like sometimes you are able to say "no, this isn't helpful" but actually because of the, I don't know, the volume of times almost that you have to say it's not helpful, there are some times when you just sit back and go (voice trails off.)

Jane: Yeah, I just feel like there's only so many times I can do that and is it because I expect too much? Yeah, and then I'm, I guess then I worry a bit that am I expecting, am I being unrealistic in my expectations of somebody.
(Interview 2)

Lucy had a similar experience with her private supervisor:

Lucy: Yeah. And again, that's what happens in the supervision. You know, I'll be talking about a client or the work that I'm doing, I'll be going down a particular path, and then suddenly something comes in from the side and it is it's like, "What? Where did that come from?" And then for me it's that, "Were you not listening to what I was saying?"
(Interview 1)

Lucy also felt her private supervisor did not listen to her, which contributed to not feeling safe and so shutting down: *'It keeps coming back to the relationship in all sorts of ways. Not being listened to is, for me, or being listened to is a key part of a relationship.'*

Whilst Mary felt she had been listened to, nevertheless she expressed surprised that she had not been able to take an ethical dilemma to her supervisor:

Mary: [...] so that started what has been a very fruitful relationship, but different, different in a sense that it's, it did feel more equal in a lot of ways, more professional and also there's one thing that I did, I'm not going to tell you what it is (laughs) I don't think, that I'm not sure is ethical or unethical, I do have, you've probably noticed I do have a lot, I do worry about ethics in my counselling, I, that I did with a client that I never told her about, and I'm sitting here think I wonder why I didn't tell her.

Trish: Do you have any hunches or (voice trails off)

Mary: 'Cos I really thought she would have disapproved. But I'm not 100% sure, I don't think it was terribly unethical and I did talk to somebody else about it and they didn't, and they said to me "what does your gut tell you", and I said "my gut says it's alright" so it probably is, but I never told my supervisor, and I feel a bit ashamed, I feel a bit ashamed of that.

Trish: And you didn't tell her because of a fear of disapproval?

Mary: I think so, I didn't, I want, I, there's a part of me that wants her to think I'm a good counsellor and there is a fear that she might think I wasn't a good counsellor. I really don't know why I didn't tell her, I think there was also a part of me that was determined I was going to take this course of action, and I thought I'm going to do it anyway so (voice trails off).

(Interview 1)

Up to this point she had felt she could take anything to this supervisor and perhaps to supervision in general: *'I always felt that there wouldn't, up to that point, that there wouldn't be anything I couldn't discuss with her.'* Towards the end of the second interview Mary returns to the ethical dilemma with a realisation:

Mary: And I'm a teacher. So, it tells me something, that to be, that to trust in supervision and to be able to tell (pause) which you need to do, don't you? You need to be absolutely honest or supervision's not going to work. Because if I can't bring something I've not done very ethically, if I can't discuss that with my supervisor, then something in the relationship is not quite right, I'm thinking, and if it's fear, there's something holding you back, and I'm thinking even now, I'm not sure I would tell my supervisor (pause) if I went back to my supervisor I don't think I would tell her, whether I thought she was going to roar [with laughter] or not.

(Interview 2)

The impact for Lucy of an unsafe supervisory relationship was one of feeling unprotected:

Trish: Almost in a way you've got to shut down.

Lucy: Uh huh, yeah. Otherwise you're leaning yourself open to (pause) criticism, to pain, to whatever, yeah. So it's almost like the defence (pause) mechanism which you don't want in a supervision relationship.

Trish: Well I guess then you cannot be open to challenge because it's not safe to be (over talking)

Lucy: (Over talking) that's it.

Trish: Challenged.

Lucy: No, not at all, not at all.

Trish: Because you've got to protect yourself.

Lucy: Uh huh, yeah. So I guess any kind of challenge does come across maybe more (pause) as a sense of criticism (pause) than it maybe would be in a respectful relationship.

(Interview 2)

In contrast in the safe, respectful relationship with her in-house supervisor she did feel able to take 'anything and everything'.

To conclude, stories told by participants about what stops them being able to take 'anything and everything' to supervision are also stories about unsafe supervision. As Mary reflected when the relationship is not 'right' it is not possible to be transparent in supervision. Participants also told stories regarding what happened when the supervisor was not transparent, or when they suspected there to be a hidden agenda.

Developmental aspects of supervision

All participants told stories about the developmental aspects of supervision, and how their needs had changed post-training. Stories told by participants reflected a shift towards supervision as ideally being more collegiate, collaborative and equal. The focus on supervision as, in part, developmental requires that the supervisor has more experience than the supervisee. Participants told stories which reflect some of the inherent tensions in that position. All participants were also supervisors, and some were trainers of counsellors and supervisors, and this was reflected in the stories told.

Supervision needs over time, from novice to experienced counsellor

Many participants reflected on the transition from trainee to experienced counsellor. Most compared and contrasted their experience along the continuum, or timeline, of their experience. They compared supervisors past and present, reflected on good and bad experiences with supervisors, examined reasons why they had taken particular decisions, and charted their development, personally and professionally. Stories were also told reflecting their experiences of supervising trainee, novice and experienced counsellors.

Mary is the participant who focused most on her experience as a trainee, mapping over the two interviews her development as a counsellor. In the first interview Mary talks

about her first supervisor, whom she had from her Certificate in Counselling *'all the way through to the end of my Masters, all through that 150 hours or more and then into my, into my actual, you know, what do you call it, qualified status, it would be a couple more years so it was a long relationship.'*

Trish: And the relationship was good by the sounds of it.

Mary: Yes, and it had grown, you know, and I'd started off with her as a very unsure and not knowing what I was doing and I still remember, I can still remember the very first time I went to see her and I sat down, I said "I don't know what I've got to do, I don't know what I'm supposed to say to you", I hadn't got a clue what I was doing and so she sort of nursed me through how to use, so I suppose, yeah, quite interesting, 'cos she taught me how to use supervision.

(Interview 1)

Mary goes on to say that it had been a significant relationship and that this supervisor *'taught'* her *'different techniques'*. As a trainee counsellor what she wanted from her supervisor was someone who understood the client group she was working with. Therefore her choice of supervisor was based on the fact that *'[...] she was one of the few counsellors in the area who did supervision and she was an expert in children, and so she, we used to talk about that and how to let children express their anger, and so she'd teach me (pause) so a lot of, a lot of stuff that I don't think I would have known about without [...]'*. However, whilst wanting someone with expertise, Mary experienced as positive this supervisor's willingness to be open and honest, and yet not *'the expert'*:

Mary: (pause) I used to feel that I could ask her, if I was having a specific issue with a client she would give me a lot of, I'm not sure if it's suggestions, but things I could try and even though sometimes I totally forgot about them and didn't even use them, the fact that somehow I'd been given some pointers as to where I can go (pause) I used to find that really being helpful, and just the fact that we'd talked about it in supervision and then I would go and see the client and very often things would be unstuck even though I hadn't put in place any of things (pause) which I hadn't really felt with my other supervisor, it wasn't so proactive in that sense. But then I was becoming slightly more advanced in my, I could see clients stuckness and I could in a way perhaps I don't think I could.

(Interview 1)

Alice expresses a similar sentiment: *'[...] I think maybe trainees have just been so busy trying to figure out how to do this counselling lark that actually they can't give any energy or attention to building a relationship with their supervisor.'* Alice also muses on whose responsibility it is to build the relationship, the trainee or the supervisor:

Trish: And I'm thinking of the trainee, I wonder, I suppose what I'm playing around with is does the supervisor have more responsibility to build the relationship with a trainee? I don't have a definite answer, I'm just (voice trails off.)

Alice: (Long pause). You mean does the trainee depend more on the supervisory relationship?

Trish: Yeah, or depend more on the supervisor, or (voice trails off.)

Alice: Yeah, yeah (pause). I think there's something about modelling for me in that, yeah, when you're working with trainees, that perhaps the modelling is more important.

Trish: I was thinking of the example you gave, you were the one who said to her. "Please can we look at this in the here and now" and that was based on your longevity if you like as a trainer, a counsellor and a supervisor.

Alice: Yeah, yeah (pause). Yeah, there's something again about attunement for me and kind of (pause) yeah, attunement to the individual's level of experience and development and what they need as they, as they grow. So I don't support (pause) hmm (pause) I'm kind of wondering just thinking it through now, is the supervisor more responsible for the trainees practice than they are for the experienced counsellor's practice?

Trish: It's an interesting question, isn't it, yeah.

Alice: I don't think the responsibility to build a relationship is any less, there might be a greater responsibility for their practice.

(Interview 2)

This position accords with the stance taken by BACP where the supervisor does hold more responsibility for the client work when working with a trainee counsellor. However, what Alice wants as an *experienced* counsellor is different: *'so what she has to offer in terms of her experience and expertise does matter, and matters particularly so at the beginning I think, you know, when (pause) the counsellor is less experienced (pause) but yeah, I think as time goes on that diminishes in importance.'*

As Alice did, Angela draws on her experience, as a trainer and supervisor and reflects on the differences developmentally in her use of supervision. In common with most participants, Angela's view was that supervision moves from being a teaching and advisory position, to an exploration of what is happening between client and counsellor. Naming, therefore, the shift in supervision from an educational space to a more collaborative and collegiate one as the counsellor gains experience. However, she is clear that *'the usefulness of it hasn't changed like it's still very useful.'* Though Angela did name one difference for her as an experienced counsellor in that she had become *'more picky'* about which clients she needed to talk about:

Angela: No, I don't think the value hasn't, I mean I think it was (pause) I think the value (pause) I think there's all sorts of values in it, I mean I think certainly when we first started, there's learning, there's reassurance, there's um all that sort of thing but I think as you get more experienced, there's still learning but I think it

may be more about me in the relationship. Whereas before when I first started, maybe it was more about um (pause) well, you know, what's (pause) maybe more about the issue that the client was bringing, but also about how I was managing that. Whereas now, it feels it's much more (pause) much less about that, about the mechanics of it, if it is a mechanical thing, but much more about my perception of the client, my perception of myself and the client, what it's touching in me, what might be stopping me being as fully in the relationship as I should be.

Trish: Mmm, but it sounds to me it's much more process-led and (voice trails off.)

Angela: Yeah, I think it is.

Trish: (pause) more about the processes that are happening or might be happening between you and the client.

Angela: And I think, in the beginning, it was much more practical, you know, what do you do when a client is still talking and it's the end of the session? How do you manage that without being offensive? And all (pause) you know, those sort of things.

Trish: Yeah, and they are more practical issues than 'I feel this in response to my client and I'm not quite sure'.

Angela: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I mean I think there was some of that going on but I think it's certainly moved much more towards that now, yeah, yeah, the practical sort of issues don't seem to be around anymore. Having said that, I'll probably have a client next week and I'll have to say "I didn't manage this, I (pause)" but certainly it's normally much more the process.

(Interview 1)

Angela and Alice's stories reflect a movement towards a more collegiate and equal relationship. In the following extract Lucy reflects on the differences between her private and in-house supervisor in this respect. Her private supervisor is more an educator, whilst she experiences the relationship with her in-house supervisor as more equal, or collegiate. In this she also describes the importance of having her expertise as an experienced counsellor acknowledged:

Trish: Right so she's the educator.

Lucy: Yes, very much so, and that doesn't work for me, not when I know that I know more than her about the subject area. And I think that's a difference once you become an experienced counsellor, you maybe don't need as much education in the supervision as when you're a trainee or in the early stages of your counselling career.

Trish: And this experience is different to [in-house supervision] experience?

Lucy: Very much so, because I think with my [in-house] supervisor it's much more an equal, it feels very equal. It's the difference, there's also the difference in that my private supervisor is gestalt trained, my [in-house] supervisor is person-centred, so comes from the same background.

Trish: Is that more of a match for you?

Lucy: Very, very much so, and it's that sense with him it's very much an equal, and more (pause) sharing kind of relationship. He'll maybe give me some of his experiences which are relevant to what we're talking about, as will my private supervisor, but with her it feels that 'Oh, I'm telling you this 'cos this is how it should have been done.' Whereas with the [in-house] supervisor it's very much

(pause) just a contract, maybe, a different way of thinking about it. It doesn't feel like he's picking fault, it is just a general discussion, and I feel very much that he learns a lot from me in the same way that I learn a lot from him, it's that very much a mutual relationship. It's (sighs), I don't feel completely (pause) what's the word? I don't sort of trust her completely. I am a bit reticent about what I do take. I don't know if she's aware of it. She's somebody who's got a (pause) who's got a good reputation in the area, oh her name's well known in the area. I was very disappointed when I moved to her (pause) cos she wasn't as good as I was expecting her to be.

(Interview 1)

In the first interview Peter reflects on his realisation that, from a developmental perspective, his needs as an experienced counsellor had changed. This recognition happened as a result of a workshop he attended which: *'[...] that helped me to realise that I can't, you know I can't go around looking for a father figure or a mother figure in terms of developing myself because I'm going to run out of, you know, I'm going to run out of that and it's not real anyway.'* He returns to the topic of the workshop in the second interview, reflecting on how he had to work out for himself what supervision he wanted:

Peter: I can certainly see now you mention it actually how all, and I've said it, started off saying it today didn't I, that it has changed for me over the years and I like what I've got now. I certainly didn't like what I had when I was a student and I was, and I'd got a college appointed supervisor or more, several, didn't like that. Took me, I think it's taken me a while to kind of figure out for myself what I want my supervision to be and it kind of changed during [previous supervisor's] tenure. It was partly because of him but I think it was mainly because of my own training around, as a supervisee, not as a supervisor, you know, the seminar that I went to I think and (voice trails off.)

(Interview 2)

Towards the end of the first interview Peter states his view that: *'I think there's definitely been different needs at different times.'* Immediately post-training he had a supervisor who was *'[...] was still challenging but in a much more gentle and a holding kind of a way and I think that balance of the reassurance that she offered me sort of earlier on in my career was really important for me at that time [...].'* Peter, therefore, offers a similar story to other participants, which is a desire for something more holding, and more educative, early on but moving into a more collegiate and equal relationship over time. Wendy also felt that as she had become more experienced she was more able to identify what she needed, as Peter had done, mapping the shift from trainee to experienced counsellor:

Wendy: Yeah, I do. I think that's a real whole interesting thing in amongst the whole thread that's sending me off in all sorts of very tangential directions about my ability to ask for what I need and thinking back, you know, previous supervisors and how long have I been able to do that (pause) and was I able to do that at the very beginning? No, I wasn't.

Trish: As a trainee?

Wendy: As a trainee, beginning counselling, I was much less able to do that. On balance I probably had more supervisors who were encouraging of me to do it than not and the ones that were not (pause) I have rejoiced when I didn't work for them (laughs) didn't work with them. I had one in particular right at the beginning [describes coming across this person again which I have removed to offer anonymity] and I had such a strong reaction and I thought actually you're just not a very good supervisor, it's nothing to do with your [orientation] which I thought as a trainee so that was the (pause) and I didn't think actually he was a very good supervisor and (pause) [name] had been sold to me as wasn't I lucky to work with [them].

(Interview 2)

Reflecting on her experience with her first supervisor, Jane states that she felt she stayed too long once qualified. This was a relationship which she felt, eventually, had an unhealthy power dynamic. However, what she is expressing below is, again, a desire for an attuned supervisor who is in rapport with her development as a counsellor:

Jane: Yes (pause). Yes, because I think that's something a good supervisor should be able to recognise, as a counsellor moves on and gains more experience or does additional qualifications or whatever it is, has various personal difficulties in their life, that things are changing and I think they need (pause) you know, a good supervisor, hopefully should have an understanding of that

Trish: Yes.

Jane: And again, without crossing over into the counselling relationship, should encourage that to be looked at in the context of the work that's being done within the counselling relationship.

(Interview 1)

This is in contrast to Alice's statement that her supervisor was attuned to her development as a counsellor. And, interestingly, both were referring to supervisors they had first met whilst in training:

Alice: Yeah, and I hadn't realised how important this relationship is actually. And not just the work we do but the relationship and that, you know, that attunement, that sense that I've just got of how attuned she must have been all this time to have, you know, 'cos it doesn't really feel that I've had to negotiate anything actually in moving from (voice trails off.)

Trish: So your sense is that as you have matured as a practitioner, she's met and matched and been attuned (voice trails off.)

(Interview 1)

To conclude, the stories in this section suggest that, with experience, participants valued a supervisory relationship which was more collegiate and equal. For example, Lucy, as an experienced counsellor, did not value the educative stance taken by her private supervisor. And, as Angela's story indicates, whilst 'learning' might still be of value, it is of a different order. Rather than a technical 'how to' learning, what is valued is learning about the self in relationship with the client.

Needs, developmentally, as an experienced counsellor

The type of learning valued by participants is reflected in the stories which follow. Developmental needs were not confined solely to 'learning' either from an educative or personal perspective. Participants also told stories about their wider needs as experienced counsellors. Therefore what follows might also be described as what an experienced counsellor requires from supervision. Moreover, these stories extend and build on stories in the previous sub-section.

Jane was the only participant who expressed a desire for a formal contract, preferably written and detailed from her supervisor. Mary, in contrast, wanted less formality:

Trish: You also said a few minutes ago that you were unsure if it's important as an experienced counsellor.

Mary: Yes, and I'm almost contradicting myself now, aren't I? Yeah, I think I see supervision now as an experienced counsellor, the word "neutrality" is coming into my head. That I would like to have a relationship with somebody who I talk about my clients and then they talk about theirs.

Trish: So peer?

Mary: Yeah, peer supervision.

(Interview 1)

Mary returns to this in the second interview, stating that her role as a trainer had changed her response to supervision for experienced counsellors. In the second interview Jane, by comparison, feels that she needs more from supervision, rather than less:

Jane: Yes. Yes, it does, I guess thinking about supervision in general more because of taking part in this study with you, I've realised that the more experienced I am as (pause) have become as a counsellor therefore the more I want from supervision and I imagined, when I think back to doing my training, I sort of imagined it would be the other way round, that yes I'd need my supervisor very much so as a trainee and as a newly qualified counsellor but as the years went on and my experience

grew so actually I probably wouldn't need supervision quite as much because I'd have more of a sense of what I was doing and in a way I find it's the opposite.
(Interview 2)

Whilst Wendy did not specifically want more supervision in the same sense, she acknowledged the need for a supervisor who could enable her to work with feelings *and* the intellectual aspects:

Trish: And feelings are the challenge?

Wendy: Yeah.

Trish: And yet that's what you're drawn to?

Wendy: Yeah, which is kind of interesting. I mean my own understanding of it it's about, um, it's my own actualisation (pause) to, to bring that, but that side of the potential.

Trish: The feeling side of the potential?

Wendy: The feeling side, yeah. So I did quite a lot in developing the thinking's, the thoughts and thinking's side earlier on, but this is the bit that now needs to be brought into balance. But something about working with the two together.

Trish: Yes. There is something important isn't there about work, for me anyway (voice trails off)?

Wendy: Yes. They're not just either/or (voice trails off).

Trish: No, they're not.

Wendy: (pause) there's much, so you're putting all of it together which is a, the real challenging bit. I can do the feelings as in be in emotional heap but to actually understanding emotional heap and be with it without separating myself from it is a challenge. And that's a challenge for clients and a challenge for supervisees.
(Interview 2)

In the second interview Angela tells a similar story, recognising the shift in what she wants from supervision:

Angela: You probably haven't come across her because it's aimed at people working with children, but I think you'd be interested in it. She basically says that a supervisor has to be a poet, a plumber and a policeman, so you have to be the poet for their emotional bits of it, you have to be a plumber because sometimes you need to say 'I wonder if you could try that', and a policeman because of the ethics yeah.

Trish: Yes, I will look at it, I will go and have a look. And as a supervisor, that poet, plumber, policeman, what's your sense of that, either as supervisee or supervisor?

Angela: I think as a supervisor it's more (pause) it's more (pause) it's more poet, with the occasional plumber, and very, very rarely a policemen, very rarely a policeman, and I think, yeah, I think that's probably true (pause) as a supervisee, as I've become more experienced I think the balance probably shifted, I think probably there was a lot more plumbing involved when I was learning as well as a poet, I think the plumber's sort of needed less maybe. Yeah, so I think it was more the poet.

Trish: So your sense is that potentially, as you've moved to a much more experienced place, that what you need most is the poet?

Angela: Yes, yeah, I think so.
(Interview 2)

Though she says later that *'[...] it can be really helpful to talk about things you might try, but I suppose I'm at the stage now where (pause) I don't (pause) this sounds so arrogant (pause) I think I know most things to try, do you know what I mean?'* Furthermore, that *'[...] it's probably arrogant to say that I don't feel as if I need the plumber or the policemen as much, but I don't think I do, and I think that's true of most experienced counsellors.'* Alice extends this and, in some ways, picks up on the story told by Wendy regarding feelings, or the role of supervision in working with self-awareness and the personal learning of the supervisee:

Alice: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, and actually, if I think of what will help somebody develop as a counsellor it would be things like you know, becoming more self-aware and more able to offer the core conditions and those kinds of things, so yeah, yeah.
(Interview 2)

Alice's view is that, whilst a goal for supervision might not be that supervisees grow as people, it might nonetheless be an outcome. Moreover, that: *'[...] so the goals are different, the goals are very different because I would hope to help them develop as a counsellor rather than as a person, maybe the latter might happen.'* Leading on from this, Lucy was clear that she did not value the educative aspects offered by her private supervisor. On the contrary, she valued her in-house supervisor's acceptance of her and his support of her on-going development. As with his congruence, Lucy felt that *how* he was as her supervisor was important: *'[...] and I think I sort of feel from [in-house supervisor] what I want to offer my supervisees and my clients'* was useful:

Trish: And also something about being trusted as an experienced counsellor.
Lucy: Yeah, and I think I almost found that quite difficult at first with [in-house] supervisor because I can remember, and this links in with his congruence, way back in our relationship I guess me going there and almost expecting him to ask me stuff, to tell me what he wanted, and not giving me that. And it felt (pause) and feeling uncomfortable with him just providing that space for me to use in whatever way was right for me, because I already had [private supervisor] at that point so I wasn't prepared, ready for that, wasn't used to that. And I can remember [in-house supervisor] questioning me on it and him saying to me "is this, is what I'm offering you is it any good for you or not?" and we talked it through.'
(Interview 2)

In common with Lucy, Jane did not want an educative element in supervision, and did not want the supervisor to: *'[...] sit and tell me, well if I've read x book and this book and this theory fits in or (pause) sometimes it can be useful but not all of the time.'* Peter felt that he wanted to feel stimulated in supervision but, rather than a book or theory, it was often more about the supervisor coming from a different perspective and about the relationship with the client:

Peter: I think I need to feel stimulated, now that might not be perhaps as it were when I was a student, some new theory or some new book to go and read or I've never heard of that, although it can be that, it's nice if it is that and often times it is actually. But now that stimulation might be (pause) coming from a different perspective, something in the relationship, in the case of [his retired supervisor] I think it probably came from his love of literature (pause) and in the case of [new supervisor] it will probably come more from (pause) erm (pause) her art, her creativity (voice trails off.)
(Interview 2)

What Peter found helpful as an experienced counsellor is that *'there's somebody else [supervisor] involved in the family, in this relationship I've got with my clients.'* This would appear to be about safety for Peter.

To conclude, stories told in this sub-section reflect a common thread. Learning, and so development, was valued, but the focus was on the personal. There was recognition that an educative stance had been useful early on and in particular whilst in training. However, once experienced, learning was conceptualised as personal and arising out of having a forum within which to reflect on their relationships with clients, which includes exploration of new perspectives in dialogue with a supervisor who respected their expertise.

Choosing a supervisor

The stories included in this final sub-section are those told by experienced counsellors about the choice of supervisor: from choosing a supervisor, to stories told about the difficulties in leaving an unsuitable supervisor, through to the importance of the supervisor understanding the range and complexity of work undertaken. Stories were also told regarding how much experience a supervisor needed to have.

Participant stories suggested that they did not actively seek to change supervisor and, when they did, this was usually due to factors outside their control, such as Lucy's private supervisor being unwell. Choice, for Lucy, also appeared to be constrained by her

view that: *'I guess that the counselling world up here is quite small'*. Peter needed to change his supervisor because his current supervisor was retiring, but he also referred briefly to the death of a supervisor: *'[...] not because I wanted to change, again I was kind of forced to change because my existing supervisor got ill and subsequently died [...]'*. Jane perhaps best summed up some of the issues involved in finding a new supervisor:

Jane: Well, it was difficult in that, I suppose, I didn't (pause). Initially (pause) well, I don't want to have a supervisor where there's any overlap so I didn't want to choose a supervisor from the region that I work in, the geographical region I work in. I didn't want to choose a supervisor who I knew had any ties to any of the different, you know, places I work. And when I'd eliminated those two things, I seemed to come up against an awful lot of, as I say, supervisors who have barely qualified as counsellors really. And that made me have to sort of really widen the net and travel quite a considerable distance.
(Interview 1)

Mary names some of the constraints mentioned by others in that she needed someone who *'[...] was accessible, who could meet me on the days I was free (pause) I rang quite a few people and there was various reasons why they couldn't see me (pause) but so my current supervisor I knew because I had met her on a training course quite a few years before and (pause) I had liked what I'd seen of her, so she knew me vaguely and I knew her vaguely, so it wasn't a completely new relationship.'* Part of her decision related to knowing and liking the supervisor based, in part, on her prior knowledge of the supervisor. Wendy also reflected on her choice of supervisor depending partly on her prior knowledge of them, but also on other factors:

Wendy: Yes. So none of the, when I'm talking to students and I say, you know "phone around, see who you feel comfortable with, go and meet people, don't commit yourself", crap. (Laughter) You know, because I didn't do that at all.

Trish: What you did was at a conference [...]

Wendy: Well I didn't make the decision there but it was a bit later I thought that, and I thought "yeah that, I'll go there". Because I couldn't bear the thought of trying out others and having to do a kind of formal thing, whereas actually this was somebody I knew on a kind of deep level, this was going to be okay.

Trish: And you're pointing to (voice trails off.)

Wendy: I know, it's real kind of visceral (voice trails off.)

Trish: Right, just like heart stuff, it's (voice trails off)?

Wendy: It is heart stuff I think, yes. And then I can, then I think "oh for heaven's sake she's only a supervisor", but actually no she's not only a supervisor, there's a real feeling of connection and huge safety.

Trish: And from quite early on?

Wendy: Instant.

Trish: Instant?

Wendy: I think. But, and the first I went to her for supervision and it was, you know “we’ll meet, we’ll have a chat for an hour and see how we get on” and I got into her hall and I burst into tears, I thought “mm, that’s interesting”. And it was absolutely okay.

Trish: Did you get a sense of what that was about? You say that’s interesting, do you get a sense (voice trails off)?

Wendy: I think I was scared, I felt very vulnerable, but I think as soon as I walked through the door it felt like this was a safe place to be that.

(Interview 1)

Part of Wendy’s decision related to feeling safe enough to be vulnerable with the supervisor, and so experiencing this as an almost immediately safe relationship.

Unfortunately, this was not Lucy’s experience. Moreover, she told a story at the start of the second interview about arriving for a supervision session to find out the supervisor was unwell. As a result the supervisory relationship had ended abruptly, and without notice.

However, Lucy had met someone who she felt might be suitable as a new supervisor:

Lucy: Yeah. And so this lady (pause) I’ve done a workshop, we’ve done a couple of workshops with her in the past and she’s always been somebody who’s sort of been in the back of my mind as somebody that “oh I like what you have to say, I like how you talk, I like how you present yourself” erm (pause) but it was just doing the supervision workshop that I really saw more of her as a supervisor. Because I guess that was my dilemma last time was wonder, well how do I know who to go to because I don’t really know what they’re like as a supervisor and I was let down by my current one, thinking she’s going to be good but actually she’s not what I’m looking for in a supervisor. Whereas I think with this one I’m hoping to move to I’ve had a bit of a taste. I know more what I’ll be getting.

(Interview 2)

Perhaps because of the lack of safety with her private supervisor, having prior knowledge of the potential new supervisor might have held more significance for Alice. In turn, perhaps this knowledge offered some reassurance that the experience with this supervisor might be different. In common with Wendy, Lucy was utilising her professional networks as part of her decision making process for choosing her new supervisor: *‘I know a lot of people, and hear things kind of on the grapevine, which maybe makes me question, well would I really want to go with that person?’* Peter utilised a similar process: *‘Yeah, I think I’ve been quite lucky this time because I haven’t (pause) it hasn’t actually been that difficult, just asked a bit and a certain name kept, names kept coming up so I don’t know that it has been hard this time really because I’ve been a bit, there’s been a bit of good luck in there.’*

The stories told suggest that participants felt some caution around the choice of a new supervisor, hence the use of professional networks as a form of 'quality assurance.' This was perhaps best expressed in Wendy's concern that it can be difficult to 'sack' a supervisor. For Lucy this caution meant that she stayed in an unsatisfactory relationship with her private supervisor, stating that it was 'better the devil' she knew. Furthermore, she expressed fear that despite having carefully chosen her private supervisor, she was *'almost frightened to go to somebody else in case I'm disappointed by them in the same way as I have been with this one.'* Furthermore, Lucy stated that it was easier to stay with her private supervisor because she had a good relationship with her in-house supervisor:

Trish: So if you took the (pause) this one away, the [in-house] one, I'm just wondering what that would be like, then.

Lucy: Then I would be pushed into moving to a different supervisor. Cos I know that what I get from her isn't (pause) isn't what I (pause) isn't what I want from supervision. Isn't what I expect, it isn't what helps me. It doesn't really help me explore kind of either the clients, the work, or what's going on for me. We don't do any of that.

(Interview 1)

Wendy also names her reason for staying with a supervisor who *'came free with a placement'* and was *'playing this expert role'*. In contrast to Lucy, she felt that this poor experienced enabled her to *'really understand the importance of a good relationship'*, and so it was a *'productive poor experience'* which was *'not so dire I couldn't use it'*:

Wendy: It took quite a long time but I think it's probably been quite a key part of my, supervision for what I need it to be because he was quite directive, as he probably thought was appropriate with a trainee supervisee, um. But he wasn't directive in a way that was helpful and I knew it wasn't helpful at the time but that was put down to my resistances.

Trish: Right. So the reason was located in you?

Wendy: The reason was entirely located in me and that made me really wobble and I don't think I'm ever to going to let anybody wobble me quite like that again. But the flip side of course is that I've then become very blind to my resistances which is a bit of a bugger *(laughs)*.

Trish: Blind to your resistances?

Wendy: Well you know if I'm saying the flip side of anything resides in me is that nothing resides in me.

Trish: Right. And yet that's not the sense I got from the tape (voice trails off.)

Wendy: No. I think, well I think I've swanned between the two but I think it's that experience and then particularly seeing him as a, on this demonstration, and recognising that actually, yeah I was okay to trust my gut, that's, my gut was saying "This isn't okay because this isn't helpful, this isn't productive supervision for you". But my head was saying "But you know, who he, you know, he's got a great

reputation, you've only just started, who are you to criticise?" But it's given me more confidence to say "Actually this relationship doesn't feel right, it's not".
(Interview 2)

In contrast, Jane felt that it was better to end with a supervisor when it was not working for her *'[...] I kind of got to really dislike the way she worked with me. But in the end it seemed like there were too many things and because I felt there were too many things I didn't know how to address it with her. And it just felt that actually, for me, the easiest thing to do was to find somebody else and to end that relationship.'* Perhaps, for Jane, some of this lay in the lack of learning, and sheer number of things which were not right with the relationship:

Jane: Yeah. That's right because I just felt, where do I start with all this? There were so many things that didn't feel comfortable for me, even if I'd managed to take some of them back to her and we'd worked on some of them, would that have been enough to have then made that relationship a good one for me or would I be going anyway? And it somehow didn't feel (pause) it didn't feel fair to her, in a way, to take back some of it, knowing that I probably would go anyway. If I'd have felt that by addressing a few things it would have altered the relationship enough to make it a beneficial one and I could have stayed, that would have been different.
(Interview 1)

Participants also told stories about the importance of the supervisor understanding the complexity of their work. Wendy appeared to feel supported by the fact that her supervisor had worked in similar settings:

Wendy: Yeah, to get a sense of proportion about things. I mean she used to be a trainer, she used to run a counselling training business, she's a supervisor, she's a counsellor and I really value the fact she's done training as well because she understands more, my previous supervisor didn't understand the training as well. So there's something about this person who actually I can take all of me.
(Interview 1)

At the time of the first interview, Jane had just met a new supervisor. Here she reflected on her choice being based, in part, on this supervisor understanding the range of her work:

Jane: Yes, Because that was my (pause) that was my main concern, that I was working with someone who had got, I felt, the same experience as me or more than, preferably, more than me, and also a supervisor who had a very varied experience of counselling because I work in several different settings that aren't really related. So I was (pause) it's a big ask from somebody, I know, but I wanted

someone who had got some concept of what it was like to counsel in an FE, HE setting, in Primary Care and in private practice as well. And it's very hard to find someone who has worked across all those fields.

(Interview 1)

She returns to this in the second interview after having 'given notice' to this supervisor, based on the fact that the supervisor appeared not to understand the range of work Jane did, particularly in the specific setting of a Further Education counselling service where she worked with both staff and students: *'[...] for someone who's never worked in that environment, again, it's another difficult thing to grasp really.* Jane also had concerns that there were few counsellors who had supervision experience based on longevity as a counsellor: *'[...] so there seems to be an awful lot of supervisors who have qualified as a counsellor, had a couple of years of counselling and then have started to do supervision training but they have no real sort of substance as counsellors as yet.'*

Stories were also told about the complexity of finding a supervisor with more experience, both in respect of work setting and longevity:

James: Yeah. I think, you know, one of the things, it's like for me now, is, you know, another challenge, and this is something else, it would be really interesting to read your research, actually, because I'd be fascinated if other people have identified this. One of the things, for me, is now, I've been practicing for twenty years, qualified for eighteen years, is that it becomes harder and harder to find somebody more experienced. Does that make sense?

Trish: Yes, it makes, there hasn't been a person who's not said that, everybody has said that, and I think that's one of the big things that's coming out of it. It's, "How do you find a supervisor who's either more experienced or who is clean, in terms of not too many overlaps?", so yeah, that's definitely (voice trails off.)

James: And it's the same, I think that's part of the loneliness, I think, that I feel, because it's the same with therapy as well.

Trish: Yes.

James: You know, I want somebody who's maybe wiser than me. Does that make sense? More experienced than I am, you know, to hold me.

Trish: Would that experience be chronological for you, would it be having more years of experience, or would it be a sense of them having a wide experience of?

James: Probably both. I think I could, well, that's very hard, I'm not sure if I can answer that definitively, because I'm not sure on the answer to it. But maybe a bit of both. But it would depend on the person, it would depend on the person.

(Interview 1)

In the second interview, Peter felt that what he really wanted was someone who was 'big enough' to hold him. As with James 'experience' was a complex mix:

Peter: Part of the package, it was a number of things really isn't it that was, I would say a lesser part, the bigger part for me, and it's the part that's occupying my mind now, is finding someone (pause) who (pause) is big enough, is the phrase I would use, to hold and contain me at the level that I work at with my level of knowledge. I'm aware, as I say that, you know, I feel uncomfortable because (pause) you know it feels like I'm bigging my part up a little bit, but I can't deny the fact that I've got 20 years' experience and quite a high level of training. So you know, so when I look around I think well who do I kind of look up to, it's still important to me I think to find someone to look up to. Now I don't think it's as important as it was.

Trish: Right to you, or?

Peter: To me.

Trish: Right.

Peter: To look up to someone, to have that sense of, well you know the person having the overview being up there somewhere in terms of wow, you know, he or she is so brainy and wonderful and they've written loads of books and stuff. But I do feel that it is important to have a kind of meeting of minds in terms of intellectually, theoretically, not necessarily actually (pause) in terms of model because [current supervisor] is, he's a psychotherapist but he's actually a psychodramatist as well and I've really enjoyed his insights in terms of working in a slightly more active way with him in supervision.

(Interview 2)

Peter appears to articulate the dilemma also named by other participants, albeit differently: that is, the difficulty in finding someone who is 'big enough' to hold you. In respect of experience, Peter observes his move from putting his first supervisor on a 'pedestal' through to a more collaborative and collegiate space. His new supervisor is: *'[...] more experienced than I by quite a margin actually and yet I felt as though there was a real kind of level meeting and I felt as though it could be (pause), you know, all of her knowledge and experience is taken for granted [...]*

Furthermore, Wendy states that she wants a supervisor who has *'[...] at least as much experience as me. That was one of the things I found when I was trying to find a therapist was that a number of people I found were quite intimidated by the fact that (pause) I've got my finger in so many different pies (pause) and I absolutely need somebody who isn't intimidated by that.'* This is in common with other stories told, albeit expressed slightly differently, that supervisors can be intimidated by supervisees with a lot of experience. Arguably, this is embedded in the stories Lucy tells about her private supervisor's lack of acknowledgement of her expertise (and the topic of her PhD) stating that even in this area: *'she's almost like a teacher and I'm the student, and it feels like she's always trying to pick fault and doesn't accept my experience, even in terms of around x she still has to know more than me.'* Jane also told a similar story:

Jane: And I suppose it leaves me wondering because I've never really spoken to another counsellor who's worked in counselling as long as I have about their supervision, about their expectations of something, I've never had that conversation with anybody. So it does leave me wondering is this something about, in general, and it's a huge generalisation this point, in general are supervisors okay working with counsellors who are less experienced than them. Then if you take on a supervisee who's had the same as or more experience, same as or more qualifications, that's when it all can get a bit lost and is that, is then that about a power thing coming in then and is that just sort of *(sighs)* in some way them needing to assert themselves as the supervisor in a quiet sort of a way.
(Interview 2)

Shortly after, Jane reflects on this in respect of her current supervisor and levels of experience. Whilst this supervisor had been an experienced counsellor and trainer, it was from a 'particular field'. Further, she *'[...] began to realise that the majority of her supervision work was done with trainees. I was the only qualified counsellor she was working with and that showed through really strongly after a while. She probably would have suited trainees really well but I didn't want to be told what to do and that was her style of supervision, telling me how to work with a client, telling me what she would do with a client but that wasn't what I needed.'*

There were few references to the expense of supervision, though it is likely many participants did pay their supervisors. Jane referred to the distance she was prepared to travel, as did Wendy. And Peter names the overall 'investment' he makes in attending supervision:

Peter: Hmm (pause) definitely (pause) yeah. Because it's, I mean, you know, apart from anything else it's quite, it's an investment of (pause) because good supervision isn't cheap, it's, I have to travel to get it and so by the time I've done my session and travelled there and travelled back that's half a day out of my week so it's a big investment, it's important for that reason as well that I'm getting, that the time and effort I'm putting into it is really, you know, worth it effectively.
(Interview 1)

Similarly, Angela, as Wendy had done, linked not only payment but the expense of travelling to supervision. She also names what is perhaps a reality for most experienced counsellors, that working for an organisation can mean supervision is covered financially, whereas working in private practice necessitates paying the supervisor directly:

Angela: (pause) when I used to work in x I used to get supervision from um the (pause) like the x I used to work for and so they used to provide supervision. And then when I started working privately I paid for supervision and not only paid for it but had to travel a long way because it was difficult to find anybody that I felt

comfortable working with and that I hadn't some sort of professional relationship with. And the supervisor that I travelled to was excellent but it took me so long to get there. So it wasn't just the money, it was the time as well, and then I just happened to be talking to somebody about it and she was looking for a supervisor and so was I, so we decided to try it and see how it went and it goes really well, it is very well.

(Interview 1)

In contrast, Lucy had 'divorced' payment from the activity of supervision with her private supervisor:

Lucy: I think that's the thing, cos I've never actually thought about it. It's something that I've never really (pause) it's never really crossed my mind. And I don't know if that would make a difference. I don't think the financial side really plays that big a role, cos it's kind of, for me it's part of that I just kind of accept that that's (pause) that I have to pay it, you know. I know as a supervisor, supervisees come and pay me, so for me the financial transaction is kind of outside of it, doesn't play a huge role.

Trish: Curious that they're divorced, that you pay over every month (pause) or I'm sat thinking it's curious they're divorced.

Lucy: Yeah.

Trish: Cos you're paying for something you're not happy with.

Lucy: That's it, yeah. And I think I just don't (pause) it's funny cos I've never really thought about it, but I never really think of the financial side of it. It is, for me it's like I never really think of that financial side of it. It is, for me it's like this supervision just doesn't work, and it's not what I want. (Pauses) but I've never (pause) and it's interesting, I don't know if it's maybe because I still pay her with a cheque, so I never actually sort of see myself handing over cash to her. I wonder if that makes any difference.

(Interview 1)

In conclusion, stories told in this sub-section relate to the complexities of choosing a supervisor when you are an experienced counsellor. Some of this is to be found in the difficulties finding an appropriately experienced person. Moreover, stories were told about the difficulties that ensued when that experience does not match. There is also potential for tension to be triggered by the existence of a gap between the level and type of experience of the supervisor and that of the supervisee.

Discussion

In this discussion section, I will pull together my analysis of the stories constituting the 'Support, transparency and developmental narrative typology' and consider what they mean in relation to the existing research and theory.

Self-care in supervision

All counsellors who are members of BACP must evidence their commitment to working within its ethical framework (BACP 2010; 2016). Much, if not all, of the literature on this subject supports the view that working ethically protects clients and offers the public accountability. For example Davies (2015a) stipulates:

Ethical decision making is the practical process through which clinicians or counsellors base their actions, behaviour and choices on informed, sound judgement. It draws on values, principles and standards of behaviour that inform professional practice (p. 6).

Moreover, Bond (2015) argues that counselling must be offered ethically otherwise 'it ceases to serve any useful purpose' (p. 11). It could be argued that those who took part in this study held the view that ethical working was at the heart of their practice and, in this chapter and the following chapter on career-long supervision, participants repeatedly told stories in which the centrality of ethics is embedded. Bond (2015) links ethics to trust, and the counsellor acting in ways that demonstrate to the client that they are trustworthy. Moreover, he argues that this not only protects the client but also enhances the reputation of counselling.

Support as self-care

One principle in the ethical framework (BACP, 2010) current at the time of the interviews is an expectation of self-respect and self-care on the part of the counsellor. This principle concerns the need to foster 'self-knowledge and care for self', which involves 'an ethical responsibility to use supervision for appropriate personal and professional support and development' (p.4). Further, the ethical framework includes 'Care of self as a practitioner', stating that: 'Attending to the practitioner's well-being is essential to good practice' (BACP, 2010, p. 10). There are similar injunctions in the revised version (BACP, 2016), particularly in respect of the need for self-care as a practitioner. Participants did not make a distinction between self-respect and self-care, and most used the latter term. In fact, it could be argued that when participants discussed self-care they were referring to the ethical principle of self-respect. As will be evident in what follows, much of the literature also uses the term self-care rather than self-respect.

The overarching narrative of support as self-care appeared to be that of participants wanting a space where they could unburden themselves, but also where they could be nurtured and receive care from the supervisor. Stories told by Angela, Wendy and

Jane reflect the desire for a place where they could work through the emotional costs of working as a counsellor. Participant stories therefore are best represented in the restorative, or supportive, function of supervision. That is, Proctor's (1987) third function of supervision, after formative and normative. Carroll (2014) describes this function as the supervisor offering 'a place and space to recoup, revitalise and re-energise' (p. 75). Furthermore, restorative supervision is usually defined as focused on the impact of client work on the supervisee. Additionally, it is seen as promoting the well-being of the counsellor and as an aid to 'mitigate the stresses and impacts of the work' (Creaner, 2014, p. 9). The supervision literature makes links between self-care and the resilience of the counsellor (e.g., Bond, 2015; Carroll, 2014). Henderson (2009), in particular, highlights the importance of the supervisor encouraging emotional resilience.

Creaner (2014) argues that counsellors are 'susceptible to burnout, vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue' (p. 78). Furthermore, Bond (2015) argues that counsellors hold an obligation to take care of themselves, and a responsibility to monitor their own wellbeing. Moreover, Desperser (2011) states that, because of the nature of the work, counselling places inevitable demands on the counsellor such that regular, on-going formal supervision is a 'necessary resource' (p. 2). Whilst some participants were able to make use of supervision in this way, this was predicated on safety in the relationship, for instance, Peter, Wendy and Alice. Lucy and Jane told repeated stories about wanting to be supported and feel restored, though in not feeling safe in the relationship they were unable to avail themselves of this support.

Dunnett et al. (2013) suggest that counsellors may be more comfortable with giving than receiving care. This is also picked up by Carroll (2014), who argues that counsellors might often feel too busy to look after themselves. Certainly, Peter and Angela told stories about supervision acting as a useful reminder of self-care, especially when busy. However, in contrast, when participants did not feel safe in the relationship, they told stories about the need to 'shut down'. Creaner (2014) points to the increasing emphasis on self-care as an ethical imperative, and links this to support for the practitioner. However, evidently this also highlights a dilemma, namely that when supervision is unsafe it might not be possible, or safe, to allow the supervisor to offer care. Furthermore, stories were told about a desire for supervision which did not fit neatly into some of the definitions of restorative supervision. Specifically, that support was not confined solely to working through the emotional costs arising directly from client work. Some participants told stories which suggested a wider sense of 'being looked after', or 'cared for' by the supervisor. It

appeared that what some participants wanted was more all-encompassing, and more therapeutic. Whilst clear that, for her, supervision is not therapy, Lambers (2013) also acknowledges the role of supervision in raising awareness of personal issues, past or present. Tudor and Worrall (2007a) - writing about the ethical principle of self-care - argue that the 'wording suggests, firstly, that personal and professional development are inseparable' (p. 170). It could be argued that participants also held this view. Moreover, as Tudor and Worrall (2007a) argue, in their view this is an arbitrary divide which 'compromises effective supervision' (p. 171).

Support with client work

BACP (2010) are clear that regular monitoring and reviewing of client work is essential to ensuring good practice. Similarly, Bond (2015) argues that the purpose of supervision is that counsellors reflect on and develop their understanding of ethical practice, and that this might include the supervisor monitoring practice. Most participants told stories which suggested that reviewing client work was a helpful aspect of supervision, but Peter was the only one who appeared to offer examples of asking his supervisor to monitor his work. More typically, participants did not offer many examples of client work and, when they did, these were almost exclusively with clients they found challenging.

Savic-Jabrow (2010) reports that the self-care needs of counsellors working in private practice was found primarily through supervision. Jane, Lucy and Peter all had extensive experience of working privately. Furthermore, Etherington (2009) and West (2010) both reflect on the need for the supervisor to attend to the self-care needs of the supervisee when working with traumatised clients, with Etherington (2009) highlighting the need to be mindful of the 'powerful counter-transference responses that frequently cloud relationships with traumatised clients' (p. 185). This was important for Peter who worked with particularly vulnerable client groups. However, when contrasted with Lucy, the link between supervision and support becomes more complicated and, perhaps, less clear cut. That is, support, reassurance and supportive challenge were reported by participants as being valued, when in a safe relationship. Weeks (2002) reported a similar finding: that, in a relationship which was experienced as safe, challenge 'was seen by all as necessary for supervision to be meaningful' (p. 37). In common with Weeks (2002), my participants used the word 'challenge' to mean different things. Peter wanted both supportive challenge *and* to be challenged about potential 'blind spots.' Page and Wosket (2015) write about challenge as shedding 'light on an area currently in the shadows' (p. 100) and, to some

extent, this appears to match many of my participants' narratives. Moreover, Page and Wosket (2015) link challenge to development, or learning, and again, to an extent, some participant stories reflected this: Lucy and Peter for example. However, in general, participants did not tend to value this type of learning.

Participants told stories about the interaction between the core conditions, safety in the relationship, and whether challenge was experienced as supportive.

Weeks (2002) research attests to the importance of safety and equality, as well as challenge, in the supervisory relationship. In common with Wendy, Weeks' (2002) participants equated safety to not feeling judged and the supervisor 'exercising complete acceptance of me' (p.36). The importance of the equality in the relationship will be discussed in the chapter which follows on 'Career-long supervision'. However, it is worth noting here Tudor's (2007) contention that in the 'generic literature on supervision, much is made of the supervisor's tasks' (p. 202) and, in particular, the normative task in supervision which he likens to gatekeeping, social control and conformity. Arguably conceptualised in this way the supervisory relationship is not an equal or collaborative one. Furthermore, in such a relationship it would not either be possible to withstand challenge from the supervisor. Instead, Tudor (2007) argues for a relationship where the supervisor's task is to support and challenge the counsellor to think for themselves.

Affirmation and trust as supportive

Stories were told about the importance of affirmation, trust and respect. Participants also reflected on the importance of the supervisor being attuned, and of being known – relationally – by the supervisor. Weeks (2002) writes that her participants sought affirmation, the difference being that 'affirmation seekers' needed to feel safe and 'have attention' from their supervisors and for the supervisor to be 'constantly and consistently benevolent' (p. 37). However, in contrast, Alice was not apparently seeking this benevolent attention. Rather, she explicitly required a supervisory relationship which was robust enough to withstand mutual challenge as well as affirmation.

Page and Wosket (2015) discuss the need to affirm in supervision as a specific and a general task: specific in the sense that it is important to affirm, and to acknowledge, when the supervisee has done something well; general in that the counsellor needs to feel valued by the supervisor over time. This is linked to therapy as depleting, and moreover, where counsellors often give more than they receive. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Page and Wosket (2015), also relate this to restorative function in supervision. However, the

description in the literature has little fit with the stories told by my participants, particularly in respect of the supervisor affirming that their work had been done well. In contrast, affirmation appeared to be, as for Alice, something which enabled participants to value themselves.

Outside of Page and Wosket (2015) and Weaks (2002), it is hard to find reference to the role of affirmation in supervision. This is also true for trust and respect in general. It would seem, rather, that the focus in the extant literature is on the supervisor being trustworthy. For example, Page and Wosket (2015) refer to the ethical principle of being trustworthy, or to fidelity (BACP, 2010). This is perhaps unsurprising given that much of the supervision literature is written for the consumption of the supervisor. Arguably, the exception is the person-centred literature on supervision. Lambers (2013), for example, believes that the essential components of a collaborative relationship are 'trust, respect, acceptance, empathy and congruence' (p. 465-6). Furthermore, Herwig (2007) suggests that it is important that there is 'mutual trust and a mutual willingness to be open to one another' (p. 13) and, further, that there has to be authentic contact. This does accord with participant stories as told by Lucy, Wendy, Jane, Mary and James. Traynor (2007) also writes about the importance of trust and respect, and the need for the supervisor to be real, congruent and authentic. Similarly, Lambers (2013) highlights the need for the supervisor to accept value and respect the supervisee.

Lucy offers an insight into what can happen when trust and respect is absent: i.e., shutting down to the extent that she needed, at times, to dissociate from supervision because the relationship with her private supervisor was neither collaborative nor safe. In contrast, Lucy learnt to 'trust herself' because of the relationship with her in-house supervisor. Alice was the only participant to use the word 'attunement'. However, other participants described either having or a desire to experience an attuned supervisor. Conceivably, this is similar to the experience of the supervisor offering a high level of empathy. Particularity given Lambers (2013) suggests the empathic presence of the supervisor 'facilitates the supervisee's process of 'tuning in' to whatever is around' (p. 461). Mary wanted her supervisor to tune into her based on her belief that all she took into the counselling room was herself, and not a 'bag of tricks.' It might also be argued that other participants who state a need to be 'known' by their supervisors are also referring to a high level of empathy, for example, Wendy and James. Arguably, therefore, participants drew more on the person-centred, or humanistic, literature pertaining to the counselling relationship to inform their understanding of the relationship in supervision.

To conclude, participants told stories which articulated a desire for supervision as a space where they might unburden themselves. In many respects this accords with the supervision literature pertaining to the restorative function in supervision (Proctor 1987). Furthermore, this was important in respect to the ethical principle of self-respect (BACP 2010; 2016), named as self-care by participants. Moreover, this was only possible when the supervisory relationship was safe, and founded on the core conditions (Rogers, 1951). In turn, participant stories attest to the importance of the 'personal' as much as 'professional' in supervision. Furthermore, stories were told about the value of trust and affirmation. Moreover, participants appeared to draw on the literature familiar to them as humanistic counsellors, rather than the literature on supervision.

Transparency in supervision, taking 'anything and everything'

Participants told stories which suggested support for Webb and Wheeler's (1998) contention that supervision has to be based on transparency, or taking anything and everything - or at least stories were told which assume it *should* be possible to take anything and everything to supervision. However, in reality, stories told reflected a more complex reality, specifically that there were times when it was not possible to be transparent in supervision. Generally, when the supervisory relationship was felt to be safe, participants were able to be honest in supervision. However, when the relationship did not feel safe, participants told stories which appear to suggest it was not possible, even when desirable, to be transparent.

Perceived benefits of transparency in supervision

Creaner (2014) suggests that, in order to get the best out of supervision, the supervisee must disclose any concerns regarding client work. Certainly, for Alice, being honest in supervision was 'good practice' and linked to client safety, and she and Peter both felt that it should be possible to take anything and everything, including mistakes. Likewise, James wanted supervision to be a safe space where he did not feel the need to 'censor' anything. Arguably, therefore, participants are drawing on the Ethical Framework (BACP, 2010), which states that supervisors 'have a responsibility to maintain and enhance good practice by practitioners' (p. 8). Moreover, Despenser (2011) states that supervision is a formal arrangement where counsellors discuss client work with a supervisor who is more experienced both as a counsellor *and* as a supervisor. Hence, in order to discuss client work, and for the supervisor to fulfil the responsibility to maintain good practice, the

supervisee must be honest in supervision otherwise the process highlighted by Webb and Wheeler (1998) cannot function.

Most participants felt that one benefit of supervision was that it offered the opportunity to gain a different perspective on their work with clients. Similarly, Desperser (2011) argues that it is, at times, impossible to be objective about client work, therefore that on-going and regular supervision is important. Wendy felt that it was a useful space in which to sort out what belonged to her, and what belonged elsewhere. In a similar vein, Lucy felt that supervision challenged her to think about client work 'differently' and Creaner (2014) - writing about reflective practice - suggests that in supervision there is the possibility to work out what belongs to the client, and what belongs to the supervisee. Her argument is that this, in turn, benefits both the supervisee and the client. Certainly for Peter, Alice, James and Wendy this was a relatively straightforward benefit of supervision and it was apparent from the stories told that this was what participants expected, and desired, from supervision. No participant questioned this need for transparency in supervision however crucially this was only possible when the relationship felt safe.

What helps transparency in supervision

When the relationship was safe, and based on the core conditions, participants were able to be honest in supervision. In particular, congruence, or what Alice described as being 'dead straight', was valued as a helpful factor. However, participants also named UPR, lack of judgment, and the supervisor listening attentively, or empathically. Traynor (2007) suggests that UPR contributes towards an environment whereby it is possible to be open. Hence, it would appear that participants were drawing on familiar resources regarding safety in the relationship and Angela and Wendy told similar stories about the importance of the supervisor offering UPR, or not being judgemental. Page and Wosket (2015) point to the value of the core conditions in supervision, in particular that congruence, empathy and respect enable the building of a safe relationship in which the supervisee can disclose difficult issues. However, this is then linked immediately to a hierarchical relationship and, in contrast, participants almost universally told stories about the importance of equality in the supervisory relationship.

Alice, Wendy, Peter and James told stories which reflected an experience of supervision where it was possible to remain open and transparent. This was evidently within supervisory relationships which were safe, and articulated as such by the participants. Webb and Wheeler (1998) posit that the 'establishment of a supervisory

working alliance is considered by many to be as important as the therapeutic alliance' (p. 511). Here it is interesting to note the use of the word 'alliance' rather than 'relationship'. However, no participant used the word 'alliance', nor was the supervisory relationship described in such terms. Webb and Wheeler (1998) use the term 'rapport', stating that when this is present supervisees can disclose in supervision. Page and Wosket (2015) also explore what makes it possible for supervisees to self-disclose in supervision, and cite the need for a safe working alliance. In common with my participant narratives, Starr et al. (2013) found that supervisees needed to feel safe in the relationship. However, this is still described by them as an 'alliance' and, further, that safety was 'created through the processes of empowerment, support, and joining' (Starr et al, 2013, p. 12).

In contrast, my participants described how the ability to disclose in supervision, for them, was built on the relationship being founded on the core conditions and mutual trust and respect. In this sense, my participants did not appear, again, to be drawing on the generic literature pertaining to supervision. That is, whilst the term 'relationship' is used with greater regularity than 'alliance' in the general literature, the emphasis is not typically on the relationship being founded on the core conditions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the link to the core conditions, the person-centred literature is more in line with my participant narratives. Worrall (2001) links empathy and congruence, with the latter being the outward expression of the former. He argues that the greater the empathy the more able the supervisee is to experience the supervisory relationship as non-judgemental. In turn, the supervisee will be able to 'bring themselves fully and authentically to me' (Worrall, 2001, p. 208). Arguably this is what Alice, Wendy and James describe as an empathic, congruent supervisor. Perhaps, as Worrall (2001) argues there are few risk associated with an empathic stance in supervision. Rather, that the risks are greater when the supervision is 'exclusively, insufficiently or naively empathic' (Worrall, 2001 p. 213). In fact, stories told by my participants attest that it was a lack of empathy which posed a greater risk, particularly in respect of disclosure.

What hinders or gets in the way of transparency in supervision

Stories told about what gets in the way of the supervisee disclosing client issues in supervision also tell a story, in part, about the absence of the core conditions in the relationship. Therefore these stories have something to say about what happens when the relationship feels unsafe. For example, Jane told a story about the negative consequence of not being listened to and so fearing the possibility of a hidden agenda. This is in contrast

to Alice who felt that she never had to wonder what was going on because she trusted that her supervisor would always be honest. West (2003), writing about the culture of supervision, suggests that the supervisee might feel intimidated by the supervisor and so 'hide some aspects of their work fearing a negative reaction' (p. 123). Mary did 'hide' an ethical dilemma from one supervisor because of the power dynamic, and not wanting to 'look bad in front of somebody' who has 'power over you'. Arguably what Mary is alluding to is the role of disclosure in supervision, and the connection to client protection, and so accountability. Furthermore, embedded in Mary's story is also an allusion to her acceptance that supervision is hierarchical and that the supervisor, therefore, has the right to 'tick you off.' Mary appears to be articulating here a commonplace notion of supervision as hierarchical, and one where the supervisor is more experienced, (e.g., Creaner 2014; Henderson, 2009; Page & Wosket 2015).

Jane and Lucy told stories about how their experience of not being listened to had got in the way of them taking anything and everything to supervision. Similarly, Herwig (2007) writes about her need to find a mutually trusting and open relationship because, without this, she tends 'to disappear. I feel invisible and I say less' (p. 13) and, unsurprisingly, cannot explore her client work fully. Webb and Wheeler (1998) argue that 'counsellors' inhibitions about exploring sensitive areas in supervision [...] is of serious concern' (p. 522) and, taken at face value, this leaves experienced counsellors with an ethical dilemma and, potentially, in breach of their ethical codes. Webb (2000) likens this to a 'battlefield' with the counsellor 'striving to be open about her feelings in the service of the client whilst fearing being seen as vulnerable, ineffectual or unlikeable' (p. 69). Whilst neither Lucy nor Jane expressed concerns about being seen as unlikeable, both did suggest they felt vulnerable and deskilled when the relationship felt unsafe. Indeed, supervision as a 'tick box' to satisfy BACP requirements caused Lucy a great deal of discomfort.

In conclusion, participant stories evidence the tensions, for experienced counsellors, inherent in transparency in supervision. Put simply, when supervision was safe it was possible for my participants to 'take anything and everything' to supervision. However, stories also attested to the impact of an unsafe relationship in supervision. Moreover, stories told suggest that my participants also felt it *should* be possible to be transparent with the supervisor. In fact, being honest with the supervisor was stipulated as constituting good practice, ethically. Nevertheless, stories also evidenced that this was, in reality, not always possible, or safe to do so. The presence, or absence, of the core conditions (Rogers, 1951) predicted participant safety.

Developmental aspects of supervision

Participant stories included reflections about the way their needs had changed over time, post-training. Supervision is framed by BACP as developmental across the career life-span. Desperser (2011) states that supervision 'will include elements of training and self development', and that furthermore the supervisor will 'encourage' the 'continued learning' of the counsellor (p. 2). Moreover, the normative and educative (formative) functions of supervision are generally taken for granted in most of the literature. Dunnett et al. (2013), for example, state that supervision is 'delivered through three main functions: educative, supportive and management' (p. 9). In addition, Page and Wosket (2015) argue that, in their view, even experienced counsellors need an educative element in supervision. And Creaner (2014) conceptualises one function of supervision as being a learning environment. Whilst acknowledging that the learning process is complex, she nonetheless frames the supervisee as the learner and the supervisor as the one who facilitates the learning.

Supervision needs over time, from novice to experienced counsellor

Participants expressed a desire that supervision as a qualified counsellor was collaborative and collegiate. In particular, personal learning was valued rather than the supervisor transmitting knowledge or seeking to offer an educative space. With the exception of Mary, all other participants were also experienced supervisors. Some had roles as counsellor trainers, and all held at least a Masters level qualification, with two educated to doctoral level. It could be argued, therefore, that all held a deep commitment to lifelong learning. The tension of highly educated and experienced participants, and supervision framed as educational, or formative, was reflected in all of the stories told in this section. Davies (2016) does acknowledge the difference between supervision for a trainee and an experienced counsellor. Namely, that supervision for a trainee 'prepares students for professional practice', whereas on-going supervision post-training 'provides an effective means of enhancing the quality of counselling' and is a means of 'updating practice by continued professional development' (Davies, 2016, p. 6). However, as, arguably, the latter also applies to trainee counsellors, it is difficult to ascertain precisely the difference.

Moreover, the educative element to supervision is embedded in most, if not all, of the books about supervision. For example, Dunnett et al. (2013) argue that education is central to supervision; Creaner (2014) writes about the need for supervision to reflect life-

long learning; Page and Wosket (2015) link the educative (or formative) function of supervision to developing 'skills, understanding, abilities and professional identity of the supervisee' (p. 60); and Carroll (2014), and Henderson (2009), reflect on the link between the normative function of supervision and the supervisor enabling the supervisee to develop ethical maturity. My participants did tell stories reflecting the general agreement that the educative, or formative, aspects of supervision had been useful in training. Perhaps as Feltham (2000) argues, this reflects the fact that supervision is frequently cited as 'one of the most helpful ingredients' (p. 6) for counsellors during the training period. Furthermore, he cites learning about theory, in particular theory into practice, as one helpful component. However, with experience my participants stipulated that this, in fact, became unhelpful. This was compounded when the supervisor did not acknowledge, or felt threatened by, the expertise of the supervisee.

There appears, in the literature, to be little distinction made between the formative function in supervision and the requirement for Continuous Professional Development (CPD). Bond (2015) offers a commonly used definition of the formative function as 'enhancing the aptitude, knowledge and skills of the counsellor (a form of continuing professional development [CPD])' (p. 230). Furthermore, CPD, as an activity separate to supervision, is mandated by BACP for all members (BACP, 2010; 2016). In order to retain membership it is necessary to evidence 40 hours of CPD, on a yearly basis. Often a search for 'continuous professional development' refers the reader back to issues about supervision, and in particular the formative function. Creaner (2014) links CPD with facilitating supervisees to transition into starting to work as a supervisor. Furthermore, Carroll (2014), writing about the benefits of supervision, lists, among others factors, the opportunity to be updated about professional developments. As a result, the literature appears to position the supervisor as both an expert and an educator. However, my participants appeared not to conflate either the formative, or normative, functions of supervision, nor CPD, with supervision. In contrast, stories told reflected optimal supervision as collaborative and collegiate.

That is not to say participants did not value learning, and this was still seen as valuable by many. However, it was, as Angela reflected, learning about her in relationship with the client and, explicitly for all participants, not educative. Tudor and Worrall (2007a) write about person-centred supervision as continuing personal development, arguing that the 'professional is personal' (p. 170). Furthermore, that to separate out the personal from the professional is '*reductive*, in that it reduces its area of attention from the whole person

of the therapist to one particular, professional persona' (Tudor & Worrall, 2007, p. 171). Stories told by participants such as Lucy and Jane offer support that educative supervision was experienced as reductive. Arguably, however, for both participants, supervision as reductive was not solely located in the supervisor being an educator. Jane, for example, referred to an unhealthy power dynamic, and both participants told stories about these relationships lacking the core conditions, and so being unsafe. Moreover, stories told by participants such as Alice offer an insight into the impact of an attuned supervisor, and attest to both personal and professional learning. Learning as personal development in supervision is arguably best reflected in the person-centred literature on supervision. Tudor (2007), for example argues that for person-centred counsellors there is a 'strong tradition' in this respect. Furthermore, citing Merry (1999), Tudor suggests that effective counselling is something which demands 'a great deal of commitment to an ongoing process of personal development' (p. 171).

My participants whilst not all person-centred counsellors, appeared to have a firm commitment to personal development. In particular, this appeared to encompass what Angela described as a more process- than content-based supervision. This is something echoed by Lambers (2013) who states that supervision offers a space where the counsellor 'can bring into awareness experiences and processes emerging in her in the relationship with the client' (p. 458.) Undoubtedly this was the type, or style, of supervision preferred by participants.

Participants such as Mary, Jane, Alice, Wendy and Peter, all made reference to learning how to use supervision in the intervening period post-training. Carroll (2014) poses a question about whether the supervisee is the forgotten element in supervision. Where I am in agreement with him is that there is little written from the perspective of the supervisee. Carroll (2014) also argues, based on his research, that supervisees, after two years in supervision, 'were still unsure what supervision actually meant' (p. 80). To some extent the stories of my participants do reflect this lack of certainty about how to use supervision. However, arguably, the picture is more complex than that put forward by Carroll (2014), who states that it is about educating supervisees in how to use supervision. Moreover, the examples he offers pertain arguably more to trainee counsellors than those with experience.

Needs, developmentally, as an experienced counsellor

Stories told in this sub-section reflect on supervision as an experienced counsellor. Jane was the only participant who made any reference to the need, or a desire for, a formal contract with her supervisor. This is in contrast to much of the literature about supervision. Creaner (2014), for example, states that a contract is now widely used, and offers examples where guidelines for the content might be obtained. This is also reflected in the advice given to members of BACP, for example Despenser (2011) who offers a list of details which might be included in a supervision contract. In common with the literature Jane felt that a robust contract demonstrated transparency and led to feelings of safety. Furthermore, Henderson (2009) argues that a contract enables the relationship to be built and 'to begin to build the trusting base for safety' (p. 1). However, a contract did not, in reality, lead to Jane feeling safe with her supervisor.

Jane and Mary told stories which evidenced competing, or contrasting, requirements in supervision. That is to say, Mary wanted supervision which she described as 'neutral' and more collegiate. Jane, on the other hand, wanted more rather than less from supervision, as an experienced counsellor. In general, however, participant stories reflected a desire for supervision which would attend to their personal development needs. In reviewing the literature relating to supervision for experienced counsellors, Page and Wosket (2015) conclude that the 'findings support the view that more of an emphasis on the self of the therapist' (p. 195) is required for experienced counsellors. Page and Wosket (2015) acknowledge the fine line between professional and personal issues, as compared to a trainee. However, equally they argue that this should not be 'self-indulgent introspection' (Page & Wosket, 2015 p. 195). Rather the emphasis on personal issues should facilitate a more in-depth exploration of the client work. For most who took part in my study, the focus on personal learning, even when not linked directly to a specific client, was found to be most valuable. Furthermore, stories such as those told by Alice suggest that in focusing on personal issues, there was an associated – and positive – effect on client work.

Angela, Peter, Lucy and Jane felt that the educative aspects of supervision were not helpful as they gained experience. All preferred a more collegiate and equal form of supervision, as did Mary, Alice and James. As Creaner (2014) points out there is a lack of research focusing on the supervision needs of those with experience, particularly as supervision is mandatory. However, in reviewing what has been produced, Creaner (2014) draws out themes of equality and collegiality. In comparison, Page and Wosket (2015)

argue that supervision for experienced counsellors should support the translation of theory into practice. This feels to be an extension of the developmental agenda inherent in most supervision models. Furthermore, this strongly infers a hierarchical relationship. In contrast, no participant in my study expressed a desire for the supervisor to do this. In fact, Jane, Mary, Lucy and Peter all explicitly stated that they no longer found this helpful. Moreover, Lucy in particular, and Jane to an extent, made links between the supervisor seeking to educate the supervisee and unsafe supervision. Whilst Page and Wosket (2015) do acknowledge that the supervisee might well have 'areas of expertise that are greater than those of the supervisors' (p. 194), the relationship appears to be framed as one in which knowledge is imparted.

Lawton (2000) posits that the role of supervision has changed since its original inception as a part of the training of counsellors, and I would agree. In particular, career-long, and mandated, supervision has inevitably resulted in more experienced supervisees, thus changing the dynamic of the supervision relationship. Furthermore, this was evident in stories told by my participants, such as Jane and Lucy who told stories about the supervisor attempting to impart knowledge, and so not acknowledging either experience or expertise. Jane links this to power and Lucy to feeling shut down by, and feeling unsafe with, her private supervisor. West (2009) writing about the culture of mandatory supervision, suggests that one outcome might be that the supervisee feels intimidated and so might 'talk about their work in a very careful and selective way' and furthermore might 'hide some aspects of their work fearing a negative reaction' (p. 123). Arguably, this accurately reflects an outcome of supervision for Jane and Lucy: specifically that, in different ways, neither felt it was possible to be open because they felt unsafe.

Choosing a supervisor

Guidance is offered in the literature about how to choose a supervisor. Desperser (2011), in a BACP Information Sheet, for example, suggests areas to consider include: the difficulty of working with a supervisor from a different theoretical orientation; supervisor qualifications; and levels of experience, specifically that the 'less experience the therapist has, the more experience the supervisor should have' (p. 3). More recent advice from BACP (Bamber, 2016) acknowledges that supervision needs might 'change as your experience develops' (p. 7). It is interesting to note, however, that Bamber (2016) suggests that, with experience, *more* time might be spent on the normative function in supervision. In turn, this should therefore be considered when choosing a supervisor. However,

participant narratives in this chapter reflected a desire for *less* of the normative, and *more* of the restorative function in supervision as they gained experience. Furthermore, it is arguable the advice contained in this GPiA (Bamber, 2016) has more relevance to a trainee than someone with experience. For example, advice is given that in drawing up a list of essential and desirable elements, the supervisee should consider whether the supervisor is used to either working with, or offers a discount to, trainee counsellors. It is noteworthy that the inherent complexity of choosing a supervisor when you have experience, as articulated by my participants, was not reflected in this GPiA (Bamber, 2016).

With some exceptions, Jane for example, participant stories articulated a reluctance to change supervisor - or at least participants did not actively seek to change supervisor unless forced to by external circumstances such as illness, death or the supervisor retiring. Lawton (2000) reports on the high levels of attachment her participants felt towards their supervisors, concluding that this reluctance 'indicated that attachment and comfort are of considerable significance' (p. 36). She also states that participants had concerns that a new supervisor might not be as effective as the current one. Peter's stories reflect the importance of his attachment to, and the impending loss, of his supervisor who was about to retire. Furthermore, Peter wondered whether or not a new supervisor would be 'big enough to hold' him. Arguably Alice and Wendy's stories reflect an attachment to their supervisors. As Lucy's stories attest, this was not only when the relationship was experienced positively. In common with Lucy, one of Lawton's (2000) participants felt unable to leave an unsatisfactory supervision arrangement. Reasons given for this include childhood attachment patterns of the supervisee and the supervisor finding working with experienced counsellors 'highly rewarding' (Lawton, 2000, p. 37), meaning the supervisor is also reluctant to end the relationship. In contrast, Lucy's stated reasons for staying in an unsafe relationship were apparently practical.

Moreover, the reasons for staying with a supervisor, or not actively seeking to change a supervisor, appeared to highlight the tensions of mandatory supervision for an experienced counsellor. The decision to stay, or leave, was complex, varied according to a range of factors, and also reflected idiosyncratic and individual needs. The literature does reflect some of the complexity of choosing a supervisor, though often arguably less so for those with experience. Dunnett et al. (2013), for example, acknowledge that it can be a daunting prospect and suggest drawing up a 'wish list' (p. 25). Furthermore, the table included to aid the drawing up of this list is wide-ranging and detailed. Arguably this implies it is possible to find an 'ideal' supervisor. Whilst this might be true for someone

new to counselling, stories told by my participants appear to suggest the reality is more complicated. Feltham (2000) argues this is a 'logical problem' that occurs when the more experienced the supervisee is 'the fewer will be those practitioners available with similar or greater levels of experience' (p. 15). The stories told by my participants appear to offer support for this contention.

Furthermore, Jane, Wendy and James told stories reflecting experience as a wide ranging term, not solely confined to more years working as a counsellor, and supervisor. Knowing, or not knowing, the supervisor was also highlighted in the stories told. This appeared to be idiosyncratic, for example, neither Jane nor Mary wanted someone known to them. In contrast, Wendy and Lucy based their choice on having met the supervisor. Dunnett et al. (2013) caution against choosing a supervisor on this basis, arguing that this might at first feel appealing but that it can cause problems in the long-term. Moreover, stories told by Wendy, Lucy and Jane reflect a concern that the supervisor might feel intimidated by the experience of the supervisee. There is little, if anything, written about what happens when the experience of the supervisee is either commensurate with, or greater than, that of the supervisor. Arguably, this is a consequence of mandatory career-long supervision, both Feltham (2000), and Wheeler (2000) argue that mandatory, lifelong supervision infantilises members of BACP. Moreover that:

For older, more experienced counselling practitioners, there are no means to validate their experience with senior professional status and exemption from the continued requirement to prove or defend themselves as competent therapists (Wheeler, 2000, p. 205).

West and Clark (2004) do highlight the complexities of choice for experienced counsellors, citing payment and the need to travel as potentially limiting factors. In part, the argument is that this might limit choice to those who are closer geographically and, furthermore, to supervisors who have been recommended. In contrast, my participants, such as Jane, Wendy, Angela and Peter stated that they were prepared to travel some distance to see an appropriate supervisor. In contrast, Lawton (2000) reported that her participants chose supervisors based on convenience and familiarity, though some of her participants were not experienced counsellors. In addition, Peter, Jane, Lucy and Mary all made reference to the expense of ongoing, regular supervision, including the cost in terms of travel and time out of a busy working life. In the literature payment is usually discussed under 'contracting'. Page and Wosket (2015) advise that the supervisor is clear about fees so that the supervisee can make an 'informed decision about accepting the financial cost

inherent in the supervisory contract.’ (p. 51). There are two inherent problems with this. One is that choice for an experienced counsellor is often limited by virtue of their experience. In addition, because supervision is mandated for all by BACP, the reality is that counsellors do not have a free choice about accepting the financial cost, rather it is a given.

With the exception of Feltham (2000), little mention is made of any difficulties in respect of the financial cost of supervision. In fact, BACP (2016) state that that financial difficulties are insufficient to cause a reduction to the baseline of one and a half hours a month, and instead advocate either reducing the amount of clients seen, or stopping working altogether. Therefore, should a counsellor be unable to afford supervision they might also lose their source of income. Whilst the ideal is that employers pay for supervision costs, most counsellors work across a variety of settings, making this difficult in practice. Moreover, many work for third sector organisations, and either work for free, or have low incomes. As Feltham (2000) argues, the financial cost of supervision might, therefore, constitute an indirect discrimination against counsellors on low incomes.

In conclusion, stories told by my participants reflect considerable tensions concerning supervision as developmental. In particular, across all of the sub-sections discussed above, there was arguably little concordance between the literature on supervision and the experience of my participants. This is with the exception of those who offer some critique of mandatory supervision, such as Feltham (2000); Lawton (2000); West and Clark (2004); and Wheeler (2000). The literature is arguably more relevant to either trainee counsellors, or those who are newly qualified. Certainly, the literature on supervision does not appear to reflect the reality, or complexity, of supervision as a mandated career-long activity.

Career-long supervision narrative typology

The stories which follow are concerned with supervision as a professional expectation, namely the impact of career-long supervision. There is, as will be demonstrated, often a fine line between the stories told in the previous chapter and the stories told in this chapter. However, the focus here is on those stories told by participants about the consequences of mandatory supervision for accredited members of BACP. Whilst many other professional bodies stipulate requirements for supervision, BACP state that for accredited members there is a ‘baseline’ of one and a half hours of supervision each month over the entire span of seeing clients (Bond, 2015.) As Means (2008) states,

this is an ‘**absolute** minimum’ and only ‘relevant to the most favourable of circumstances for an experienced, well-trained counsellor’ who is additionally working with a ‘relatively light counselling load with a clientele that is not especially demanding’ (p. 2).

In 2013 BACP introduced a voluntary register for *all* members of BACP post-training. Whilst a voluntary register, continued membership of BACP is conditional on registration. Bond (2015) describes the voluntary register as operating ‘rather like a quality kite mark’ (p. 295). The requirements, or conditions, of both registration and membership are broadly similar, with the exception of supervision. The instruction to registrants is that supervision must be appropriate to overall case load, no minimum or maximum monthly amount is prescribed (BACP, 2014). It is perhaps worth noting here that anecdotally most members – regardless of category of membership – tend to adhere to the baseline referred to above.

This second set of stories in this chapter relate to responsibility for reporting and accountability, which is a fundamental principle, and is the rationale - for BACP - in having career long supervision for all members. As Bond (2015) states: ‘a substantial part of the justification for the supervisory relationship in counselling is one of professional accountability’ (p. 231). This chapter ends with stories concerning power, and the professionalisation of counselling.

This chapter is structured into the following three sections and related sub-sections which outline the career-long narrative typology:

Mandatory and career long requirement for supervision

Mandatory supervision as supportive

Ambivalence regarding supervision as mandatory

Supervisor as responsible for reporting and accountability, and the responsibility of the supervisor

Supervisor as responsible for accountability and client protection

Can the supervisor take responsibility?

Consequences of responsibility and accountability

Power and professionalisation

Power in the supervisory relationship

Counselling as a ‘profession’

Mandatory and career long requirement for supervision

These were the stories told by participants regarding supervision as a career-long requirement for BACP members. In general, participants told stories reflecting the view that supervision as mandatory was helpful as a means of ensuring supervision was attended on a regular, monthly basis. However, contrasting stories were told highlighting tensions. Some, for instance Peter and Lucy, felt the fact that it was mandatory did not matter to them and both stated that attendance was not predicated on their accredited counsellor status. Other participants expressed a more conflicted view, in particular Angela who named her ambivalence about the requirement. At the time of the interviews Jane, Alice, Lucy and Peter had the largest client load; Mary and Wendy were not seeing clients (both were taking a break for personal reasons); James did see clients (though the setting and quantity of clients seen was unclear); and Angela saw clients on an irregular basis and seemingly infrequently. All, however, were working in a supervisory capacity, most seeing a range of supervisees from trainees, to those who were just qualified through to experienced counsellors.

Mandatory supervision as supportive

Supervision as a mandatory requirement for accredited members of BACP was felt to be supportive for some, not least in that it supported in challenging what Wendy and Angela described as their respective 'default mechanisms'. For Wendy, the challenge was to her expressed tendency towards independence:

Wendy: I can't imagine carrying on with therapy just for fun, whereas (pause) supervision is a requirement therefore I don't need to question whether I go.

Trish: So the requirement, the fact that it's a requirement gives you permission somehow?

Wendy: Yeah. But I mean that, that's, yeah, actually sadly that's true. It's because it's a requirement, that's a, means that I'll go, I don't have to decide "do I need this today?" Because my default setting will almost always be "no, I can manage without".

Trish: So actually the fact that this is a requirement, a mandatory requirement, you know what I mean? I'm just being frank.

Wendy: I'm accredited so, you know, if I want to hang onto that I've got to do it.

Trish: Also gives you permission?

Wendy: It does.

(Interview 1)

It is interesting to note that Wendy also stated: '*I'm accredited so, you know, if I want to hang onto that I've got to do it.*' In a similar way Angela felt the mandatory nature

of supervision challenged her default setting, or tendency, of not putting her supervision needs first:

Trish: And what strikes me is, you keep coming back to the (pause) what I'm sat with is it's (pause) and I hope I can put it this way, but it's almost like you don't trust yourself to keep going if you weren't told to go.

Angela: No, you don't, I don't, I mean it's like you know, I know it would be really good for me to keep going to the gym three times a week (laughs), I know it Trish, I know, and I started off really well and went three times a week and then the next week was really busy so I haven't put the time (pause) last week I went umm (pause then laughs).

(Interview 1)

In common with Angela Lucy expressed similar concerns: *'[...] but then I think, it would be easier, you know, when life's busy to not go if it wasn't sort of mandatory.'* For Lucy, this appeared to be bound up with which supervisor she was referring to, private or in-house: *'Yeah, although as I'm thinking about it increasingly I think I would (pause) and if I'd just had that experience with [private supervisor] (pause) I think my answer would be very different.'* I ask what it might be and she says: *'(laughter) it probably just wouldn't be, because what's the point? I don't get enough from it (voice trails off).'* It would appear, therefore, that for Lucy, her desire to attend supervision (regardless or not of mandatory requirements for accredited counsellors) is contingent on her experience of supervision.

Angela's sense of valuing supervision was not predicated on whether or not supervision was safe. However, the similarity is that both do tell ambivalent stories about supervision, albeit differently expressed. Nevertheless, one positive aspect of mandatory aspect for Angela was in being reminded of the value of supervision. It is interesting to note, however, that Angela prefers supervision to be collaborative and feels the name 'supervision' implies a power imbalance.

Trish: Yeah, and you used the word 'value' (pause) I mean again, this feels like a huge question, but is it possible to unpick some of what the value is?

Angela: I think there's a safety in it because (pause) although I am (pause) yeah, I have got a lot of experience, I think there's a danger in knowing that you're experienced because you can then become 'Oh well I've been there before' or whatever and stop thinking you need supervision I think. And then you go to supervision and something happens or it goes somewhere that it's never been expected and that is so useful and then you realise yes, of course, you always need supervision. I think it's a sill word for it really because it's it implies a (pause) I mean I'm a co-supervisor so (pause) but it implies a power imbalance which I don't think should be, I mean I think it should be collaborative.

(Interview 1)

In common with Wendy and Angela, Lucy states that her attendance might 'slip' if it was not mandated. As with Angela, Lucy told stories about the value of supervision, and, in contrast with Wendy who felt she could 'almost always manage without it', Lucy equally articulated her sense of the safety it offered her:

Trish: If BACP took away the mandatory element of it would you still go?

Lucy: (Pauses) I would still ensure that I had (pause) because I'm, I don't know, I would do it actually because I wouldn't want to lose it so I think I would still go. Because I was going, as I say I've got sort of my friend who I would talk to but I'm not sure if that would be enough. It would be easy to let it maybe slip. I think I quite enjoy having that space that I know is sort of diaried in every month. I think that in itself give me (pause) a sense of safety to know that I've always got that, that time and space where I can just sit down and think things through.

(Interview 2)

In common with other participants, part of the value seems to be located in supervision being a space for reflection and feeling supported, perhaps restored, in relation to the work with clients. In common with Angela, Lucy felt that the value was in having a *'space that's a bit separate where we can just completely focus. There's a real purpose for that, you know, hour and a half, however long it is, that this is what I'm here for, let's so I guess I would still want some kind of formal arrangement.'* Wendy expresses a similar view when comparing supervision and therapy:

Wendy: And I guess it's more, more all-encompassing [than therapy] in as much as it's all, it's in the diary, I will go every month. I might be feeling fantastic and everything's going amazingly and I can go and say "do you know what, I've achieved this and I'm feeling so good about the other", or I can go and say "it's awful, it's, there's a whole pile of worms". Whereas therapy's (pause) more I'm going to work on something and I'm just going to hang out with so somebody I like hanging out with.

(Interview 1)

Likewise, Angela also felt that mandatory supervision might facilitate a wider discussion, even in the absence of specific client issues:

Angela: (Pause) I mean if there is something that's bothering us, then we would say you know 'I'm working with this client and I just can't get (pause)' but sometimes there doesn't seem to (pause) you know, sometimes I'll take something to supervision because I've got a supervision session, not because I have a pressing need and I think that's where it's most revealing, often, and most useful. Because there's a supervision session booked and I don't do a lot of client work now so I may have been working with a client and everything seems like it's going fine

(pause) so what am I in supervision for? But because it's booked then I would talk about it and I think that's often (pause) well it's useful if you're taking some particular thing but I think it's also useful just to tell the story of the client. Because I think, certainly my co-supervisor can, can pick up very well on things and wonders about things, yeah, which is useful.

(Interview 1)

Whilst Jane did not overtly link this to mandatory supervision, nevertheless she expressed a similar sentiment:

Jane: Which, I know, for me, comes from being in different settings and it's just a bit of a jumble, a bit of a tangle. Yeah, and sometimes I have (pause) I mean, I don't make notes prior to going to supervision, I don't make any process notes to take to supervision now. But, I mean, I've got quite a decent car journey to get there so I'm mulling over as I'm driving along, you know, so what is it, you know, what's happened in this last month that's first and foremost. And sometimes I can't think of anything.

Trish: No.

Jane: I can't (pause) I try very hard to sort of even go back over a day's work and think, well, you know, last Tuesday, that was a busy day so what I was left with from that and I can't pinpoint anything and I sometimes feel a bit (pause) Well, panic, I guess, that oh gosh, what am I going to talk about? But, as soon as I get in there and I get sat down, without exception, something comes to me and that something leads on to a very full hour and a half.

(Interview 1)

Jane had a busy private practice and also worked in a Further Education setting and, in contrast to Angela, at the time of both interviews was not seeing many, if any, clients. Angela expressed this tension: *'I don't have the need for it because I'm not doing the work so it doesn't feel (pause) you know, if I don't have clients for two or three months, then why need I be in supervision? So that doesn't feel (pause) no, so again, I think if but if I was working as I used to work, full-time as a counsellor, then it wouldn't be like the gym, it would be an absolute necessity.'* Whilst the only participant to mention this, Angela felt that a further benefit to mandatory supervision was:

Angela: Yeah, but I suppose the other side of that is (pause) or the good thing about that is that because it is mandatory, then employers are much more likely to give people time and maybe pay for it than if it wasn't (voice trails off.)

Trish: Yeah, that embeds a concept of supervision, it embeds the need for (pause) and so people can argue that point really, yeah. Are there any other plus points about it?

Angela: It's hard to find them, isn't it? (Laughs and then pauses). No, I mean I think that is the big plus point, I think, for me, is that it means you can say to an

employer 'I have to have an hour and a half's supervision every month and you need to give me time.'
(Interview 1)

Peter, Wendy and Mary all told stories about the benefit of mandatory supervision. Perhaps this reflected their commitment to supervision regardless of ethical requirements to attend. Peter, for example, stated that:

Peter: Not to me personally. I mean (pause) I do think that, see I'm one of these people that thinks that we do need rules but rules should be for guidance really, not, not (pause) because you can apply a rule rigidly and end up with, with a bad situation. Because, just because someone has to have 90 minutes supervision a month is no guarantee of anything really so (pause) you know I'm in supervision and always have been, not because I have to be, although when I was training and it was quite a bit more than an hour and a half a month that was because I had to be but, you know, I definitely see it as something I would want to do and in fact I do more than the minimum anyway because I'm also a member of a peer support group so, you know, I've got two things going on. And I do, very often, not very often, two or three times a year, I'll ring [current supervisor] and say "Can I fit an extra one in because I've got something I need to talk about?" Or I'll chat to him on the phone about something. So I don't really think about it being a mandatory thing.

Trish: You do it because you want to do it.

Peter: Yeah.

Trish: Because it helps you.

(Interview 1)

In a similar vein, Wendy opened the first interview with: *'I'm not counselling at the moment but it would never occur to me to not have supervision. I regard my supervision as really important. I use it for supporting my, I am supervising so I use it for supporting my supervision. I use it for supporting my teaching and supporting me as a person amongst all of that. And yeah, I would feel very cheated if somebody said "well you don't need that".'* Likewise Mary stated: *'[...] if the BACP turned around next week and said no more mandatory supervision, I would still be doing it. But how I would be doing it, where I would be doing it would open up a lot of opportunities, I think.'* Further that: *'[...]I wouldn't want to not be in [supervision] I think I'd always want somebody around who I could bounce an idea off or ring up or just say, "You know, this happened today and I'm not quite sure how I feel about it," but I would have lots of thoughts about it though.'*

In contrast to his view expressed in the first interview, that rules should be for guidance, Peter stated in the second interview that supervision: *'should be mandatory but*

people should want to do it'. And that it was 'better that we have some rules around it just in case'. His view was as follows:

Peter: Well that does come back to this thing that in, and this is really actually Trish, this is the hub of the whole thing is that when I go to supervision I realise that my perspective on that client and that situation is flawed and I realise, I mean I know the importance of that but I realise quite how important that is, I'm reminded of how important that is. I get, I therefore get something new and fresh which is in, it is in the service of the client, hopefully helps me to be more effective and keeps me out of trouble, so why wouldn't I want to do that?

Trish: Yes.

Peter: You know, it's for me, it's for me not in terms of, you know, nurturing, it is that as well but it's for me in terms of protection as well. And I absolutely cannot conceive of a time when, you know, I could be 75, if I've still got my faculties and I'm practicing I still think I'll need supervision.

(Interview 2)

To conclude this sub-section, it would appear that, for some participants, that supervision is mandatory supports their practice. For example, Jane, Wendy, Angela and Lucy all valued the way that monthly supervision as a requirement means they will attend, regardless of whether or not there are specific client issues to discuss. Part of the value was space to reflect on practice in a busy working life. Angela and Lucy, though, highlight a tension between mandated supervision and trust. Moreover, three participants told stories about the importance of attending supervision, regardless of whether or not it was mandated. However, all participants appeared, to some degree or another, to hold some conflicting views about mandatory supervision.

Ambivalence regarding supervision as mandatory

Stories reflecting either ambivalence, or conflicted feelings, and the impact of supervision as mandatory were told by most participants – with the exception of Jane and James. One issue highlighted by Mary in the second interview was that mandatory supervision had the potential to become: *'formulaic almost, doesn't it? "Today I'm going to talk about A" and we talk about A. Yeah.'* Mary had been reflecting on what her supervision needs might be, on her return to counselling.

Mary: Yes, and similarly at X, if I'm working with students, we don't have a set supervision structure in the team, but we do go to each other and seek it if it's needed. But who you go to, can be very, can just who happens to be there, and it will happen in informal times like over lunch or up a corner in a room. It's not that sit down for an hour and (pause) There's part of me that thinks that would be quite nice, but there's a part of me that knows that I can manage without it I have to. But

I think if you said, "What would be the ideal scenario?" I think the ideal scenario actually is probably to have somebody as a sounding, to use as a sounding board.

Trish: But it sounds like that's what you're doing anyway?

Mary: Oh, perhaps I do. Perhaps I do find it.

(Interview 2)

Wendy articulated a similar sense that, as an experienced counsellor, she can manage without supervision. Wendy stated that it was helpful to know her supervisor was there if needed, however, in reality she did not ever contact her supervisor between sessions:

Wendy: But actually, yeah, it does do me a favour. Because it takes away (pause) the decision of "do I need to talk about this?" Because I'm an experienced counsellor, supervisor, trainer, I nearly always could manage without talking to somebody. I virtually never, well I can't remember phoning, I don't know if I've ever phoned [supervisor] and said "shit I'm, this has happened, I need to talk this through". I know it's available if I needed it, but actually it never happens.

(Interview 1)

Lucy, in contrast, felt that she wanted both the hour and a half with her in-house supervisor and the same with a private supervisor. This was based on her view that this was the ethical position. However, she also acknowledges the potential 'tick box' nature of it:

Lucy: I think it is for me. And yet I also know that my [in-house] supervision, I get an hour and a half, that would kind of satisfy that. But for me, I feel that as a private practitioner, I also need supervision for that private stuff.

Trish: Yes, so there's an integrity there, a professional integrity.

Lucy: Yeah, and I think that's what it's about. So for me it almost is a tick box. But it's more than that, it's a tick box that actually means something.

Trish: I think what I'm hearing is a **hope** that it's not a tick box.

Lucy: It does.

(Interview 1)

An issue identified by Angela and Peter was the lack of flexibility when counsellors are seeing few clients. Peter felt there were situations where some of his supervisees had one client and were '*spending more time with me practically than they are with the client and it does get a little bit tiresome really.*' He also says that he might soon be in that position and would like to see a little bit more flexibility: '*I mean to lose my accreditation over that would be quite a big thing*'. Angela was already in that position: '*for somebody like me who don't see clients that regularly, an hour and a half a month is (pause) probably*

some months I haven't seen anybody, you know, so it's (pause) that degree of mandatoriness (laughs) maybe needs to be a bit more flexible mmm.'

Angela expands this to say that when working with a particularly challenging client it might be necessary to have more than one and a half hours a month and a '[...] *case for it being much more flexible and needs-based than it is.*' However, she ends this by saying '[...] *but then it's very easy to think, when you're experienced, you don't need it.*' I name the balance between supervision keeping 'us all in check' and stopping us from being complacent, or not, followed shortly after by:

Angela: Mmm, and I mean I think complacency is probably the big danger when you're experienced, and I think supervision certainly helps that, certainly, but I think I'm just a bit of a rebel really anyway, so being told that I have to have this, grates a bit.

Trish: So the mandatory nature, for you, is (pause) it's the word really.

Angela: Yeah, I think so, yeah, yeah.

Trish: It's not the doing of it, it's not the whole thing of it, it's the (pause).

Angela: No, no, it's nothing to do with the doing of it.

Trish: It's the phrasing 'mandatory' you must (pause) and that speaks to the rebel in you.

Angela: Yeah, and I think 'so you must have an hour and a half supervision', 'you must have a teaspoonful of castor oil each day' yeah, yeah, I think there is and I think (pause) I mean I think maybe an hour and a half isn't enough if you've got a full client load, no matter how experienced you are, you know. It may be better to have a different sort of arrangement and it's probably too much for somebody like me who doesn't do that much counselling anymore.

(Interview 1)

In contrast, Peter was not ambivalent about mandatory supervision. Nevertheless, he expressed something similar regarding the tension between experience and, in his case, not becoming over-confident:

Peter: I think there's a whole (pause) you know, risk, there's a whole load of risk there around being over confident in what we do (pause) because it's, because the things that can become problems for us can come from anywhere, they could come from someone, you know, from the way I end, with someone who's coming for six sessions for example. So I do think (pause) I am, I do try as best as I can to be really, really mindful of the way I'm working with clients at whatever level. And, you know I see, the day that I think "Oh you know this is just easy" and you know, think there's a danger there for me really so you know I regard that kind of "I know it all" type arrogance as dangerous and I try and remain. I like to, I mean I have the phrase that I like which is sort of quiet competence really, that's what I strive towards really but you know at the same time I have seen sort of getting on for 800 clients now so inevitably there's a lot that I recognise and that I feel comfortable working with.

(Interview 1)

At the start of the second interview Angela is reflecting on the first interview, and in particular her ambivalence about being told to have supervision: *'I think I realised that there is still part of me that's like that'* but that *'equally as valuable, is the part that says well if they didn't tell me to do it maybe I wouldn't'*. Angela's reflects on potential reasons for her ambivalence in the following extract:

Trish: And I said on the first interview, 'So they do you a favour by it being mandatory?' and you went 'No, no, no, they don't'.

Angela: Hmm, I think they probably do, yeah. Yeah, so it makes me do it.

Trish: And you have a sense you wouldn't do it without is that (voice trails off)?

Angela: I have a sense that it would be much harder to do it, yeah.

Trish: To be less likely?

Angela: I don't know, Trish, really. I'd like to say no because I'm responsible, I'm a responsible counsellor and I know it makes my practice better, and I'd like to say that and absolutely, truly believe it, and I'm not sure that I can, so it's better I suppose that I don't have the choice.

Trish: Yeah, so it supports you not having a choice?

Angela: I suppose it does, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Trish: And it felt like that was the position you oscillated between in the first interview, was that supervision has a value, the mandatory nature has a value, but on the other hand don't tell me.

Angela: Absolutely, yeah, and there's still I mean, there's still that type of thing, it's still there, but I can see the value of it being mandatory (pause). Yeah, probably (pause) more because I feel really busy at the moment, so maybe that's why it feels more important at the moment than maybe it did last time. Yeah, that I have to do it.

(Interview 2)

In conclusion, participants at times told stories which reflected a conflicted, and ambivalent, view of supervision as mandatory. Angela, Wendy, Mary and Lucy appear to tell a divided narrative: on the one hand mandatory supervision is valuable and supports their practice with clients; on the other all articulated stories about the complexity of mandatory supervision.

Supervisor as responsible for reporting and accountability, and the responsibility of the supervisor

These were the stories which spoke to the requirement to report unethical practice, specifically that the supervisor is (or perhaps should be) responsible for this. Angela and Peter told stories suggesting that it was clear cut, specifically that the supervisor had an ethical responsibility to protect clients and report unethical practice. Peter was the only participant who felt that there was an argument for *'tighter scrutiny'*

and more guidelines regarding what constituted ethical practice. However, in general, whatever the view held there was recognition that, in practice, reporting was not always straightforward, not least in terms of to whom to report unethical practice. Interestingly, for some participants, what to report and, indeed, accountability, were articulated with greater clarity for counsellors in training - than for those with experience. It would seem that - see Mary, Angela or Peter for example - the pathway for reporting unethical practice is more transparent during training.

Supervisor as responsible for accountability and client protection

With the exception of Angela and Peter, participants did not overtly tell stories about the responsibility of the supervisor as responsible for reporting unethical practice. It is arguable however that this was embedded in other stories told about power and, hence, will be discussed in the final section of this chapter. Furthermore, Alice told stories about the link between client protection and good supervision and, in the second interview, reflected on the tension between ethical guidelines, injunctions and a personal sense of what might be right, or wrong.

During the first interview Angela reflected on her view that the supervisor does have an ethical responsibility to report unethical practice. However, embedded in her story is a dilemma in that, in her experience as supervisee and supervisor, she has, in fact, never reported a supervisee:

Angela: I don't think (pause) yeah, I don't think there should be that sort of power in a supervisory relationship but I think (pause) and I don't know that I've experienced that, maybe with my first supervisor I did, but it's inherent in the name, isn't it, 'supervision'. It infers that the supervisor is making sure (pause) which they are, I mean they have an ethical responsibility to make sure your practice is safe, but it infers something that I think is prob (pause) it's not about that.

Trish: Yeah, so the name implies a hierarchical position of the supervisor to supervisee.

Angela: Mmm, and I suppose, you know, in the way I think about it, I suppose it is because, as a supervisor, you are responsible for the safety of the clients, so I suppose there is that in it and you have to be, you should be (pause) yeah.

Trish: You should be ethically responsible?

Angela: I think ethically you should be responsible, your supervisor has the last (pause) is the guardian, I suppose of what's happening with your clients.

Trish: And I'm curious about how that works in co-supervision.

Angela: Um (pause) it's never arising really (pause) I mean I think we've known each other long enough to be able to be honest about it but it hasn't ever arisen. (Pauses) None of my supervisors has ever felt the need to intervene to protect my clients and to be honest, I haven't felt that need as a supervisor either.

(Interview 1)

Peter was the other participant who was also clear that the supervisor had a responsibility to report unethical practice:

Peter: (pause) You know, but it's someone that, I mean the difference between that good friend and a supervisor is I suppose you know, I know that my supervisor would if I didn't take, pay heed to what he or she was saying would ultimately take some, some severe action (pause) but then maybe a good friend would do that as well, you know if it was a really good friend.

Trish: And when you say 'severe action'?

Peter: Well you know, I try very hard not to go in this direction but you know if I was doing something that was clearly unethical and we spoke about it and I wasn't seeming to pay any attention to it then ultimately I would expect that my supervisor would, you know, may have to, having given me a really good severe talking to about the importance of paying attention to this would, if necessary, act to protect my client if they thought the client was in danger from the way I was working.

Trish: And this is one of the things that comes up again and again about supervision and my constant question is what action do you think your supervisor could or would take if they felt you were acting unethically and clients were (voice trails off)?

Peter: Well they would ultimately (pause) I mean and I suppose as a supervisor myself it's a question for me as well, is that you know, if having spoken to the individual and made, hopefully made them aware of the risks and you know, why I was concerned and why I was unhappy, they still didn't pay attention and assuming there was an organisation involved I'd maybe had a word with their management or something like that then if all else fails and I still feel that a client is at risk then, you know, I would, well depending on the situation, but I'd either contact the BACP or UKCP or if it was maybe a child that was in danger then I might have to let Social Services or the Police know.

Trish: Yeah, so as a supervisor you would be prepared to take action?

Peter: Yeah.

Trish: And you would expect your supervisor equally (voice trails off).

Peter: Yeah.

(Interview 1)

It is interesting to note that Peter was clear about where, and to whom, he would report or take concerns regarding unethical practice. In contrast Angela, whilst feeling the responsibility to report was an important part of supervision, was less clear about the reporting mechanism:

Trish: And I suppose that's one of the things I'm curious about, was the ethical imperative, almost, to protect clients and yet when I'm talking to people, I'm not hearing that anybody ever felt the need, as of yet, to intervene. So that's where the question was coming from, it's that curiosity between (voice trails off.)

Angela: Yeah, and it's an interesting thing, isn't it, because I mean I hold that as one of the tenants of good supervision, you know, but then I think 'well what would I do, actually, if I was concerned about this person's practice?' What (pause)

you know, would I go to their employer? Would I contact BACP? And it's like when you're working with students, isn't it, you talk about confidentiality and you mustn't lock yourself in, so if somebody's suicidal, you always have to break confidentiality, but we often don't go the next step and say how you do that, who do you tell, alright, you know. And I think that's something probably that I haven't properly thought through which I should have thought through as a supervisor, certainly.

(Interview 1)

Alice articulated a further dilemma, or tension, between ethical guidelines and a personal sense of right and wrong. Whilst there are obvious differences between the two stories, the similarity is arguably that both reflect on inevitable tensions when utilising ethical frameworks:

Alice: (pause) The other was the tension between the ethical guidelines and external injunctions against one's own sense of what's right, so I was really (pause) it was quite surprising to me how reassured I was I guess by your kind of statement about 'Well it sounds to me as though it's your supervision helps you practice in a way that's really best for your clients', and that was like 'Oh that's alright then', and yet all these years I've always had a sense that it was kind of (pause) okay but fearing what other people think about it. So it was just something about the tension between what might be the guidelines and the injunctions, against actually the individual sense of what's right.

Trish: Yeah, and that comes across so clearly, this sense that this is right for me, or there might be somebody outside the door going 'Shouldn't be doing this.'

Trish: Yeah, and that comes across so clearly, this sense that this is right for me, or there might be somebody outside the door going, 'Shouldn't be doing this'

Alice: Yea, yeah, yeah, exactly, yes, yes. I was really thinking about that (pause) and that can happen in all sorts of different ways to do with counselling, can't it. You know, it can happen for me as a counsellor, that the ethical guidelines might say one thing but actually (pause) and yet I suppose we do always have to be mindful of the need to be deluding, the possibility of deluding ourselves or colluding or, you know so it's a kind of tricky area, isn't it.

(Interview 2)

Alice here appears to be articulating the challenges, both as a counsellor and in supervision, of ethical responsibility. Specifically, what Alice is potentially referring to is the tension of translating complex ethical decision-making into practice. It is interesting that, in this light, Peter was the only participant who named the pressure of responsibility, and so accountability, for the supervisor:

Peter: And of course it's a hell of a responsibility for them as well because it, you know, and don't forget that, that if I do do something crazy then you know, there's going to be questions asked about them probably as well.

(Interview 2)

In common with Angela, Peter's view nevertheless was: *'I mean these are things that I'd like to think are very, very unlikely to happen but it's like a sort of, I'd far rather my supervisors have that conversation with me than a lawyer or your know, an insurance company [...]'* Furthermore, in the first interview he had expressed the following about accountability in supervision:

Peter: I can't see the point of having, well I can't see the (pause) my supervision would be incomplete, I won't say I can't see the point' I would say that a very important component of supervision would be missing if that safety valve as I'd call it wasn't there.

(Interview 1)

Conceivably this 'safety valve' is also supportive, especially when making complex ethical decisions around client safety and accountability. It is interesting to note that both Peter and Angela held the view that reporting unethical practice was clearer with a trainee counsellor:

Angela: No, it's interesting, isn't it, why doesn't it happen more though? I wonder it if happ(pause) I mean I suppose it happens more with our students than our supervisors, they might contact (pause) well they would hopefully contact us if they were concerned but then that's somebody in training, isn't it, once you're let out, is that it then?

(Interview 1)

James also reflected on the differences in respect of supervision requirements, as set out by BACP, between those with experience and trainee counsellors:

James: Yeah. It's this, and for me, it's away from the notion that you must always discuss every client in supervision, you know.

Trish: Yes well, it sits outside of the BACP notion that, particularly for trainees, that every client, every case must be discussed.

James: I think, I mean, I think it's clearer with the trainee, and now I kind of, because I'm supervising enough trainees here that in my private practice now, I choose not to work with the trainee because of the competing responsibilities and the high level of anxiety, I think, in trainees. And I've had experience, you know, with trainees from some courses that I've ended up having to do the job that should be happening in class, maybe, but, you know, I've no way of proving that. I've forgotten a bit where I was going, where was I going with that?

Trish: You were talking about the (voice trails off.)

(Interview 1)

In contrast, for Angela, the expectation and her experience is that supervisors contact the trainers if there are problems with practice. However, Angela and I agree that it is more complex for an experienced counsellor and agree that this feels like a dilemma. In this extract we talk over each other using the same word 'accountability'. This perhaps signifies our common perspective that accountability is an 'unanswerable question' for both of us:

Angela: Mmm, it's an unanswerable question I think, Trish, isn't it, really?

Trish: I think it's a dilemma and I think it's a dilemma for BACP in terms of notions of supervision (talks over)

Angela: (talks over) and accountability.

Trish: (talks over) and accountability. *(Interview 1)*

Mary expresses something similar when reflecting on where she took a particular ethical dilemma, and why this was not to her supervisor.

Mary: I think when we're training students we probably do say, you know, "Take your ethical things to." As a supervisor, you almost expect the supervisor will say, "yes, you shouldn't" or "you should", "don't you?" I think.

Trish: And it's a wondering whether the mandated nature of supervision for me, for my body, gets in the way of that because then it becomes the repository of everything that's ethical, and so we almost dare not take anything that we think might be on the edge of it. But ethics are not prescriptive, are they?

Mary: No.

(Interview 2)

Alice also tells a similar story when she reflects on her view that ethical issues cannot be prescriptive, and in particular that the relationship she has with her supervisor protects clients, rather than putting them at risk:

Alice: I don't think there's anything about our relationship as it is that puts clients at risk, I don't think there's anything about our relationship that means I'm not working as effectively as I should be or as within awareness of risk that I should have, or I don't actually think there's any collusion about our relationship and now that's probably a bit naïve to say I don't think there's any collusion about our relationship, is that a bit naïve, or idealistic I don't know. But it doesn't feel like there's anything that I'm hiding, well I know there's nothing I'm hiding from my supervisor actually and I don't believe there's anything that she's hiding from me in terms of how she perceives me as a practitioner. So I don't think there's anything happening that would put clients at risk of not getting, either getting a poor service or not getting the service they should be getting from me.

(Interview 1)

Other participants also expressed concerns about the tension between wanting to work ethically, and yet feeling thwarted in so doing because the supervisory relationship

felt unsafe. It was evident throughout both interviews that this caused her a great deal of discomfort. Lucy reported attending regularly for supervision with her private supervisor and seeking to use that space with integrity, rather than as a 'tick box.' Integrity equated, for Lucy, to discussing clients in supervision. However, because the relationship was unsafe she felt unable to do so, hence, her sense of supervision becoming no more than ticking an ethical box. Albeit differently expressed to Alice, this caused Lucy to reflect on the tension between guidelines and client safety:

Lucy: Yeah, yeah, and that the people who genuinely (pause) it's hard to put into words (pause) you know, people who do genuinely want to you know, people who do genuinely want to work ethically and safely probably don't need those guidelines cos they would seek that themselves, knowing that's what they need to keep themselves and their clients safe.'

(Interview 1)

To conclude, two participants stated that it was the responsibility of the supervisor to report unethical practice: namely, that the supervisor should hold accountability for ensuring practice is carried out ethically and in this way so protect clients from harm. However, stories told also highlighted the inherent tensions regarding the difficulties in translating this into practice for experienced counsellors. This will be taken up further in the following section.

Can the supervisor take responsibility?

The stories in this sub-section are those which reflect some of the complexities about the supervisor being responsible for practice. In many respects these stories develop what Alice reported in the previous section. Peter, for example, identifies one barrier as being whether or not the supervisor is prepared to report apparently unethical practice. His story is arguably similar to Angela's in that, in her experience as supervisor and supervisee, in practice such reporting does not happen:

Peter: (Pause) I mean I think that you've probably identified it yourself, one of the potential sort of weak links in all this is if the supervisor doesn't, isn't prepared to take that step then the whole thing kind of, is a bit pointless really, what's the point of having supervision unless there's that, unless we empower our supervisor to do the right thing, you know. I mean I'd like to think that before my supervisor did the right thing they would speak to their supervisor as well, you know, that they'd be really sure that they were doing the right thing or as sure as one can be but no, because I don't want, you know, I'd like, I mean I don't think any supervisor I'd work with would do this, but go off half-cocked and panic and that's part of going (pause) because you know I regularly work with clients who are suicidal and the

last thing I want is a supervisor going off and ringing alarm bells if I'm working with a client talking about the end of their life and I think it's appropriate so to do, I want the client, I want a supervisor who understands that and has worked. And actually one of the things I find reassuring is if my supervisor is someone who has experience of really quite severe mental health conditions, if I can use that word, and knows and understands what it's like working with someone with a personality disorder say, then that's reassuring to me, it's one of the things I'm kind of looking for is that, you know, some of the work I do is a bit scary really, more than a bit scary.

(Interview 2)

In common with Peter, Jane's client work was often with vulnerable client groups and, moreover, in complex and diverse settings. Whilst Peter's fear about what might happen felt, to an extent, hypothetical, in contrast Jane offered a concrete example which had felt dangerous:

Jane: Yeah. Because it is such a dangerous thing, for example the last time I went to my supervisor I took something that was, it was a (pause) just it was something I was kind of struggling with to sort of tease out what, you know, what was happening within the session with a client who dips in and out of the service, well quite frequently really. And by the time we'd got to the end of the supervision session the supervisor had taken us down the track of a person I work with, she was questioning their fitness to practice and telling me what I needed to do. And I thought "well how on earth have we got here?" Because this is just, this is so far from the mark it is ridiculous and I did keep saying "actually no, I think you know, I think you've misunderstood, I don't think I've explained it terribly well". But she just didn't let it go and it was very much she was writing everything down that we said and I came away thinking "what have I missed?" You know what's happening in the work setting I'm in and what am I missing that she's picking up on (voice trails off.)

(Interview 2)

Jane, Lucy and Mary told stories about the need to take client issues so spaces which they experienced as safe, when compared to their individual supervisors. As Jane stated, she did this in part because it: *'quickly seems to become her agenda, her view on it and how she would handle it. And sometimes I feel able to bring it back and say "well actually no, that's not what I meant" or "this is not going down a route that I'm finding particularly useful". But because I have to do that so much there are other times when I can't be bothered, huh! And I just go with it and think "well, you know, I've got somewhere else I can take this so I'll let it go".'*

Arguably, the supervisor can only be accountable if the supervisee discusses clients in supervision. Stories told by my participants suggest that this it is only possible when the supervisory relationship feels safe. This is well articulated in the story told by Mary:

Trish: And I suppose that's the other thing that strikes me. There's a sense that supervision from my professional body is predicated on client safety and yet what you are saying is, "I couldn't take this to the place where I'm meant to have taken it and yet, ethically, I knew I had to. So, I took it somewhere where I felt safe."

Mary: Yes, and I'm sitting here thinking that I did something that I thought was fine for the client and probably a bit selfish on my part. I wasn't sure the organisation would view it. So, I never asked permission. Actually, I think I sort of vaguely asked permission, but it was never put in writing or anything. So, the organisation sort of said to me, "Well, that will be okay, but, you know" and left it at that. I think I sort of discussed around the issue with my supervisor and then almost put my toe in the water and sensed that she wasn't going to go the way I wanted to go, so that was it, and then just really looked at myself and thought, "I don't care. I wouldn't do it anyway," and then did it and then thought, "Oh, I hope I haven't abused this." And when I say "abused this client", I mean in a very loose situation. You know, I gave the clients something that they wanted to do and I thought it was alright to do, but I'm not sure if the organisation or my supervisor would have said it was okay to do. But when I talked about it with other people, they've sort of said, "Well, I don't think there was anything wrong with it." So, that's what ethical dilemma is. If it's black and white then it's straightforward.

Trish: There is no black and white, is there? There just aren't any with ethical dilemmas. I suppose what I'm hearing underneath that as well is something about your perception of what might happen that feels important.

Mary: Yes, exactly, and I think what I'm trying to say to you now is that, as an experienced counsellor, I would say, "The buck stops with me. I'm going to talk it through with you, with perhaps my supervisor. But, ultimately, I will do what I think is right. I'm not going to necessarily take what you say."

Trish: Yeah, see, that's the confidence that you've now got that you might not have had then.

Mary: Yeah, and I'll face the music if I have to face the music and I don't need anybody else to say, "Mary, don't do that."

Trish: I suppose I sometimes wonder whether supervision in a general sense gets set up as an ethical arbiter (voice trails off.)

(Interview 2)

Similarly to Alice's story about the tension between ethical guidelines and personal injunctions about right and wrong, Jane appears here to be articulating the dilemma of ultimately doing what you believe is right ethically. Lucy, on the other hand, told a story about what, in her view, happens when a counsellor does not take ethical issues seriously. It is worth noting that no other participant told a similar story.

Lucy: Mmm. I think there is (pause) guidelines do need to be looked at. And I can kind of, I do understand that (pause) I kind of understand why they need to be there, cos we do need to practice safely and ethically, but I also think that those practitioners who are genuinely (laughs) ethical will seek what they need anyway. It almost feels, is it just a tick box for them? Because, you know I've certainly come across counsellors who I kind of despair of, who never do any sort of personal development (voice trails off).

Trish: Yes.

Lucy: And they're the ones I've certainly found, in my experience, who don't take supervision seriously, and are quite happy to miss sessions, to cancel at short notice. I had one recently who's just phone to cancel sessions just like that (pause) because other stuff's come up in her life that she's decided she wants to do, but I'm left feeling as her supervisor, 'What's happened with your clients?' And that hasn't come into it for her. So it's almost like the guidelines are there for the people who don't really take them seriously anyway, who aren't as ethical and (voice trails off.)
(Interview 1)

In contrast, Jane, arguably, articulates the potential impact on client work most clearly when trust, and so safety, is not present.

Jane: Hmm. Because you do, you know, you take risks, you take chances in the work you do based on how you know your clients and all different aspects of the relationship you have with the clients, so you take chances if you think you could perhaps help them to move something on a little bit. But if you're working with a supervisor that you can't be honest with, my imagining is you stop taking those chances little by little because you've nowhere you can take them to, either before you take them or after you've taken them and they've not gone as well as you thought. So everybody loses out, your clients are going to lose out, you lose out yourself because you're not moving on in your professional ability.

Trish: Certainly one of the functions of supervision is to keep clients safe, BACP clearly state that as do other ethical codes. What you describe is if the supervisee shuts down then in supervision then they very well might stop taking risks, well the ethical counsellor might stop taking risks and might shut down their work and (voice trails off.)

Jane: Yeah, yeah, just play safe all the time and sometimes it's the risks that you take that bring about, you know phenomenal realisations for a client and you work on and (pause) but you have to have somewhere to go with them and you have to feel that, well I certainly have to feel that I will be heard and I will be encouraged as well.

Trish: And trusted maybe?

Jane: Yeah, yeah, definitely trusted.
(Interview 2)

As Jane states: *'I think it is really dangerous because it shuts you down, because it shuts you down and then one day when, you know you have something that's really difficult and maybe you have nowhere to take it then.'* In respect to her private supervisor, at least, Lucy, arguably, offers a similar story to Jane. Both told repeated stories about the negative impact of supervision when it felt unsafe. Whilst Jane felt she had no choice but to 'shut down' in supervision, Lucy told stories about the need to dissociate.

In conclusion, participant stories reflected some of the ethical tensions pertaining to whether the supervisor can, in practice, be responsible for protecting clients. Furthermore, stories reflected the fact that the supervisor can only be accountable for

practice if the supervisee is able to discuss clients. Stories attest to the need for the supervisee to feel safe with the supervisor in order to disclose and discuss client work.

Consequences of responsibility and accountability

Three participants articulated a range of stories which might best be described as the consequences of the supervisor (or supervision generally) as accountable. Whilst small in number, these stories follow on from, but in some important respects are different to, the stories in the previous section. This is because these stories appear to suggest that, for some experienced counsellors, there is a degree of fear about some aspects of accountability. Arguably, Peter's view that he would expect his supervisor to take 'severe action' should he transgress ethical codes with a client might also be included in stories about the consequences of accountability. In contrast, Jane expressed concern about the consequences of a supervisor perhaps intentionally misunderstanding:

Jane: 'Well I think it's worse than that really, that you know if someone could sort of misunderstand to the point she did the last time, there's quite serious implications of that.'

Trish: Which are?

Jane: Well might she decide to take something forward on the basis of what she believes she's heard.

(Interview 2)

It is interesting to note that Jane could not specify what action the supervisor might take. However, it was clear that this concerned her. Other participants, such as Lucy told stories which appeared to be based on fear. Lucy stayed with her private supervisor, in part, on the basis that, should a client complain, she could evidence attendance at supervision. However, she did not find supervision supportive of her client work, or of her personally. Furthermore, she reported taking client work elsewhere and, so, not to this particular supervisor. Nevertheless, as with Alice, Lucy did not feel that her clients were put at risk:

Trish: Yeah, too much going on. I can just put that to one side because actually around me I have what I need, so my clients and also for my supervisees, don't suffer.

Lucy: Exactly, yeah, and I'm not suffering other than an hour a month (mutual laughter).

Trish: Yeah, well no, I suppose (mutual laughter) it strikes me that you did suffer actually.

Lucy: And I think I would have suffered more if I'd thought about it, but then if I had thought about it more I'd have probably moved on quicker.

Trish: So it becomes very (pause) um, Catch-22 doesn't even seem to, it feels like a rock and a hard place, that's (voice trails off).

Lucy: Yeah, that's exactly how it felt, yeah. And I've had countless sort of conversations with my friend who's a counsellor that that's exactly what it was. It was just I'm stuck between a rock and a hard place so I might as well just stay put (pause) and I'll worry about this at some other point.

Trish: Do you feel your clients, supervisees would have been (pause) at risk had you not had your private supervisor?

Lucy: No, I don't think they would have been. Because I think I always knew (pause) that I would have other support networks out there and I think it's that, and I think I mentioned this last time, of working in x which is a very risk adverse culture, for me having that private supervision there was about having that box ticked so that if anything ever did go wrong I kind of almost had that proof that I've got supervision here.

(Interview 2)

One consequence, for Lucy, appeared to be tolerating an unsafe and unhelpful relationship with her private supervisor. Jane told similar stories in that she wanted supervision almost entirely to afford protection against litigation. Whilst Jane did not have a positive experience of supervision, nevertheless she tells a story about supervision offering security should her work be brought into question:

Trish: As experienced or more than.

Jane: Yeah. Because I want (pause) I want the security of know that if, at any time, my work was brought into question, I would have a supervisor who had got enough experience to stand by me.

Trish: Mm, yeah.

Jane: And that's what I'm looking for and that's what I didn't have with the previous person. Not that I had to take anything (pause) not that anything particular happened in the year I was with her but I had a growing sense of, if I brought to you, you know, if anyone had made a complaint against me or was questioning my work, I don't think she had any sort of substance and would have been able to really support me in that situation. And just having had a few colleagues who have experienced having complaints made against them and the sort of value of supervision at that point in their working lives was huge. In the back of my mind is, I want somebody who I know will be right alongside me and helping me to weather that storm.

(Interview 1)

In common with Peter, who told a similar story about preferring to have difficult conversations with his supervisor, rather than a lawyer, Jane wanted a robust supervisor who could support her through potential complaints. Arguably, and despite repeated

attempts to find a supervisor who could offer her this, Jane, unlike Peter, did not experience this in supervision.

Participants often questioned, or reflected on, their actions during the interviews. During the second interview, for example, Alice reflects on whether or not the relationship with her supervisor was in the best interests of her clients. Stating that it is: *'almost as if my carrying on with my supervisor was a kind of self-indulgent kind of thing, and actually, you know, yes it is self-indulgent in the sense that I get so much out of it, but actually it is absolutely the best thing for my clients that I should carry on with her.'* Alice arrives at the following conclusion:

Trish: Because it is about clients, but it is about us as well.

Alice: Yes.

Trish: And how those two (voice trails off).

Alice: And I think I was only thinking it was about me, so therefore it must be wrong. I think that's actually it, yeah, it was only about me and what I get out of it so therefore it must be wrong, but actually having gone through those questions with you, it helped me to see actually how well served my clients and my practice is.

(Interview 2)

Lucy also reflected on her use of supervision as a 'tick box', which evidently caused her a great deal of discomfort. This tension, or dilemma, was embedded in most of the stories told by Lucy about her private supervisor and is, perhaps, best articulated in the following extract from the first interview:

Lucy: But there's still a part of me that is reluctant because I know that I do value supervision and do want that formal arrangement. *(Pauses)* But I think I would feel more able to leave without necessarily having somewhere to go, to have time to look into where I go. Whereas at the minute it feels that I just, I don't have the time *(pause)* to do all of that.

Trish: So the BACP *(pause)* premise the notion of regular hour and a half monthly supervision *(pause)* or whatever, according to client hours, on client protection. I'm not hearing that that's, and professional accountability, I'm not hearing that that's what you get.

Lucy: No. And I think I kind of do all hold on to a hope that for that, in case anything did go wrong with a private client, I feel that I need to be able to show that I have got a formal arrangement in place, and I think that's probably actually, talking about it, the main purpose that she serves.

Trish: So she's a safety net.

Lucy: Yeah, she is, yeah. Not a very safe one.

Trish: Not a very safe one.

Lucy: She's a safety net in terms of the, what would you call it, the practical side I guess, the ethical requirements, but she's not a safety net for me as a (pause) as an individual.

(Interview 1)

Here, Lucy appears to be naming her desire to work within the ethical framework and her difficulty in so doing because the relationship did not feel safe.

To conclude, participants told stories which suggest that there is an underlying fear about the consequences of the supervisor being accountable for practice. These stories ranged from Peter, whose expected consequence was that the supervisor would - or should - take action, to Jane who feared what might happen should the supervisor misunderstand her behaviour.

Power and professionalisation

Nearly all participants told overt stories regarding the abuse of power in supervision, or hinted at having had experience of it. Furthermore, it is possible to argue that stories about the supervisor abusing power were embedded in narratives regarding the responsibility of the supervisor to report unethical or unsafe practice. Therefore, in the stories which follow, there are echoes of the stories told in the previous section pertaining to accountability. Finally, participants told stories about moves towards counselling as a profession, and whether the supervisory relationship was personal or professional. Power, in these stories, refers, in the main, to power held by professional bodies and the impact of that on members.

Power in the supervision relationship

Lucy's experience with her private supervisor is arguably an example of the supervisor abusing their power. Lucy told repeated stories about the lack of safety in the relationship with her private supervisor. This was to the extent that, at times, she felt the need to 'dissociate' from the whole process of supervision. Lucy's story regarding the supervisor's positioning of their respective seats speaks clearly to this:

Trish: Yeah, so it's disconnected at that level, then. You talk, she talks.

Lucy: Yeah. And it just, that's just dawned on me, as I'm sitting here saying that, that that's how it feels. And it's funny, cos the ways she has her chairs as kind of, I sit like this and she's got hers right here facing that way, so it's like words just cross.

Trish: Something hugely symbolic there about (pause). So you sit at right angles?

Lucy: Yeah. Uhuh. And very close. I find it quite bizarre, kind of her chair would be here, and so I'd have to sort of watch my legs that I'm not sort of touching her. But yeah, it's very much like that, so that there is no (pause) there is no meeting place.

Trish: Symbolically, the positions in which you sit speak volumes.

Lucy: Uhuh, yeah, for me it does, and I (pause) I was aware of that. I was aware that I didn't like the way she has her chairs set, but I hadn't really realised what that actually means for me, and that's what it means to me, is that there is no meeting place.

Trish: 'And I'm aware you're smiling and I'm laughing, but actually what I'm feeling is really quite cross if not angry.'

Lucy: 'I felt very angry with her at times, and it is that "You're not listening."
(Interview 1)

Wendy told a similar story where the supervisor also used the physical space symbolically, stating that: *'it felt like she was the one, she was powerful, well she thought of herself as the powerful one.'* Furthermore, and in common with Alice, Wendy's supervisor appeared to position the chairs as a means of exercising power:

Wendy: Yeah. It was quite symbolic the different chairs. As we're talking about I can still feel that and in my head she was about there and I was about there but it wasn't like that. But she would sit at her desk on a desk type chair and I was sitting in, so it was like if I was sitting there and you were sitting there.

Trish: And symbolically that says a huge amount.

Wendy: And I know this is my office and I have no idea how other people perceive it but I hope the office is over there and this is the place where we meet, but it felt like she was still in her office and I was in her office.

(Interview 1)

However, in contrast to Lucy, Wendy felt able to leave this supervisor, though both describe the impact in similar terms as there being no 'meeting place'. Once again, naming her need to dissociate from the supervision and the lack of relationship, Lucy states that: *'we are just two different people sitting in a room, talking (pause) I can't (pause) I'm struggling even to say talking at each other, I'm not even sure we're talking at each other (laughs). It's two people sitting in a room talking.'* Whilst Wendy did not feel the need to dissociate, nonetheless she felt unable to be receptive to her supervisor:

Wendy: It was a lost opportunity because I expect she had lots of really good stuff that would have been great to have received. But I (pause) I couldn't put myself in a place where I could be receptive to it and she was unable to either hear that I wasn't, because at the end she said how much she'd liked working with me and I thought "shit woman, either you're really dishonest or you're really unobservant and neither are good" (laughs)

(Interview 1)

It is interesting to note that, whilst both Lucy and Wendy do give the supervisor responsibility for their part in the dynamic, they also question themselves. Wendy wondered: *'then I was not so sure whether I, it was what I'd set up [...] I don't like being the one who doesn't know so was there something of that?'* Lucy and Wendy told stories suggesting that both supervisors saw themselves as experts, and neither appeared to find this helpful in respect of safety in the supervisory relationship. Similarly, embedded in Angela's stories about power in supervision is the notion of an expert supervisor. In the following extract Angela, for example, reflects on the mix of power, vulnerability, arrogance and expertise as opposed to being an expert:

Angela: I think we need, we have to acknowledge that, I think we have to know that (pause) but it is the difference between being an expert and expertise, isn't it, and (pause) I will very happily say I have expertise in this area (pause) but I won't say I'm an expert, if I don't say I'm an expert is it then arrogant to say 'Actually I've seen all these clients before and I know what' (pause) you know, there is a tension there I think.'
(Interview 2)

Later, in the same interview, Angela reflected further on the differences between having experience, being an expert, and expertise. In particular, her view was that whilst she was not the expert on the client, nevertheless *'we do have an expertise, and I think it can be really (pause) I think it's really dangerous if we don't accept that, but I think it is quite hard to do that publically.'* Mary also reflects on power in supervision and the counselling relationship and names a paradox in respect of the differences between those relationships in that:

Mary: Yeah, but I'm beginning to see the paradoxes there, that we talk about, you know, having an equal relationship with our clients, we're not patronising our clients, we're you know not being the expert, and yet we live in this culture where we go to supervision that seems almost to be reversed.
(Interview 2)

Hence, Mary is reflecting on apparent power differentials in both relationships, and in particular in respect to who hold the 'expert' status. Wendy was another participant who told stories about the impact when the supervisor is either perceived as, or perceives themselves to be, an expert. In particular, she felt that the supervisor viewing themselves as an 'expert' was at the expense of a safe relationship in supervision:

Wendy: Yeah, and without the starting point, actually it feels like it has built on sand.

Trish: Yes. So I'm going back to the supervisors who were the more expert ones.

Wendy: There was too much sand.

Trish: Too much.

Wendy: Yeah, and not enough relationship. And then actually like how hard it was to take on board the value of their expertness.

(Interview 2)

Similarly, in the first interview, Jane reflected on trying to address her dissatisfaction about a run of supervision sessions which were not: *'terribly good'*. She was *'as honest as I felt I could be and said I didn't know what was going wrong but it felt like something was going wrong and it almost felt as though the supervisor was bored with me [...] and my expectation was that that session would then be focused on us looking at what was happening to our relationship and all they said was "oh gosh, well no that's not how I see things".'* Here again her feeling was that it was *'[...] shut down'* by the supervisor and she felt that it was *'[...] almost I'd been told "don't be silly, you know it's fine".'* Jane reflects on the discrepancy between her experience in comparison to others, power, and the impact of that on her:

Trish: And was that about power?

Jane: Definitely because they were someone who was very well respected, very well respected and it was a bit like well everybody else has a really high opinion of this person's ability as, you know, within their professional world, therefore how can I not be getting what I need from this person.

(Interview 1)

In the second interview, Jane tells a story about another supervisor whom she had just met at the time of the first interview. Her hope had been that this supervisor would prove to be better than the previous one. However, in reality, she experienced the supervisor as *'quite punitive at times and very critical of my ability'* and, furthermore, as *'dogmatic'*. Hence, Jane reported feeling both punished and deskilled and that this experience was the *'final straw really (laughs) and so yeah, so I'll just go twice more and call it a day.'* In the following extract she again names her sense that abuse of power was at the heart of the negative impact on her of both relationships:

Jane: I think I, and I had given a lot of thought to what I said about my current supervisor in that I wanted it to be different and I thought it would be and I don't think it is going to be any different. In fact I've already given notice to her that I'll be leaving within the next sort of three months but it's just, there seems to be with a lot of

supervisors just the power thing is there so much in that they just want to impart upon you their experience, irrespective of where you're at with your counselling, it's about their experience. And yes, that can be really useful at times but at other times it can be very unwelcome but it's hard, it's so hard to stop somebody doing it when they have a real tendency to do it in every session you have.

Trish: So it's the power that sticks out for you?

Jane: It does, it does.

(Interview 2)

Wendy makes a similar observation about the link between status and power in supervision. That is, Wendy and Jane both reported poor experiences with supervisors who are well-known and come highly recommended. For example, Wendy told a story concerning her experience with a well-known supervisor whilst she was training to be a supervisor (and so was already an experienced counsellor):

Wendy: [...]But yeah she, I didn't feel that she respected me as a practitioner. Okay I was a new, I was learning to be a supervisee, sorry to be a supervisor but I had a lot of, I had counselling experience, I had quite a lot of experience as a supervisee and she was talking to me like I was a counselling trainee and that naffed me off. And she'd kind of lecture me on things, like I was thinking "yeah, I know that, actually possibly I know more about that than you do". And then once I'd lost the respect it was really hard to hear the value of the things that she was saying and some of the things were valuable but my drawbridge was up a bit by then.

Trish: Well this is, instantly in my head is power, there's something about the power there that it didn't even enter my head when you were talking about [supervisor]?

Wendy: No. It felt like she was the one, she was powerful, well she thought of herself as the powerful one.

Trish: So more hierarchical relationship?

Wendy: It felt much more, and interestingly we had a half an hour session at the beginning and we both shared quite a lot about where we were at in our lives at the time and I thought "oh yeah, this is good". And then when we started on (pause) the actual supervision it was like "ooh where did that person go?"

(Interview 1)

Lucy tells a similar story about her private supervisor:

Lucy: Yeah, very much so. And it's more of an equal [in-house supervisor] relationship. Whereas with [private supervisor] it is, it's still that she's kind of up on this, I was going to say pedestal but it's not a pedestal, but she's an authority figure.

Trish: Right, and would I be right in thinking when you say that, that she views herself as an authority figure rather than you?

Lucy: I think it is, yeah, yeah, because she has a very good reputation round here, around sort of this local area [she offers details here which might identify the supervisor so I have removed them] but she just doesn't seem to have moved on

from that and it's almost like she still comes from that (pause) sense of who she was.

(Interview 2)

Mary tells a similar story to Lucy, Jane and Wendy, saying that, in her experience, there are 'popular supervisors', describing the hierarchical nature of supervision, and in particular not wanting to:

Mary: '[...] look bad in front of somebody in your (pause) who has a certain amount of power over you, however we look at it. As supervisor, it almost feels as if they're there to tick you off if you need it.

Trish: And I wonder if, professionally, that's embedded in that relationship quite subtly?

Mary: I think it's embedded in the culture. I think it's the culture that the supervisor is traditionally a wiser person, there to oversee the less experienced person.

(Interview 2)

Wendy, too, told a story about expert supervisors, who were playing a 'role' rather than being authentic, and supervisors who were highly recommended. In common with Jane and Lucy, Wendy stated that she felt judged by one of these supervisors:

Wendy: Yeah (pause) and it's interesting, I mean I was thinking I've got three supervisors of experience of supervision that I didn't like, didn't find helpful, took against (laughs) or whatever form of words you want to use and all three of them came highly recommended and had external accolades not just "Oh, I think so and so is really good" but, you know, they were in positions where they ought to be more than that. And all three I found (pause) severely lacking as far as I was concerned. And I guess the bit that I found most, well certainly two of them, the third one I only had one session and it was a, she was supervising a couple of us and we were all co-facilitating a group and after the first (pause) and I felt she was so judgemental about what we were doing that actually I said that I didn't want to do this anymore (pause) where was I going with this (voice trails off.)

Trish: You were saying you had three supervisors where you haven't had a good experience.

Wendy: Yeah and I think that, you know, certainly two of them there's been a lack of authenticity, I think that's the bit that I've really felt actually there was I doing my very best to be a real and they were playing a role.

Trish: Right, a role of?

Wendy: (long pause) possibly the role of a supervisor but some kind of hierarchical, the role of the one who knew.

(Interview 2)

Furthermore Mary, in reflecting on the supervisor having more experience, wonders whether: *'perhaps it's a mark of status that you've got supervisees (pause) you*

start with clients (pause) then you move on to having supervisees' stating that, in her experience, the following was common: 'Oh I don't do client work anymore, I just supervise.' Arguably in the following story Mary is referring to the supervisor as an expert. However, in this story a particular type of expert in that she uses the phrase 'wise woman'.

Mary: Cos I'm getting quite excited thinking about this. Cos I haven't ever thought about it before really, I've just accepted that supervision is supervision and it's what you do and, you know what, I've had this idea of the wise woman, you know. You go [laughing] to the wise woman and sit at her feet and somehow that wisdom will be coming back through a process of osmosis and you'll imbibe it, you know. I think that's probably what I was talking about in the transcript. That would probably be my idea that, you know, supervision's somebody, it doesn't have to be a woman (sentence tails off)

Trish: No, but it's the archetype of a wise woman.

Mary: Yeah. Somebody you sit at the feet of and take in their wisdom and their experience, and in your turn, then you will become that eventually too, that you will have people sitting at your feet and that's the way it goes.

(Interview 2)

Mary ends this story by stating that perhaps these '*wise women*' are given the power, by counsellors: '*It's something we, as counsellors, give to somebody else, don't we, we attribute, we give (pause) we give them the power*'. Arguably in this story Mary is talking about the complexity of power in the supervisory relationship. Giving your power away might infer an unhelpful hierarchy in supervision. In contrast, the archetype of a wise woman might imply a positive use of power.

In a similar sense Angela names the potential for humanistic counsellors to find acknowledging their power difficult. In common with Mary, she links this to the fact that counselling is a predominantly female profession at the practice level. Both participants appear to be telling stories about gender, power and, for Angela, the danger of not acknowledging our expertise:

Angela: And what's that to do with? Is that to do with (pause) because we're counsellors (pause) particularly if we're person centred counsellors (pause) it's hard for us to accept our own power from us?

Trish: I wonder.

Angela: Because we're in the sort of health and giving profession and most of us are women I wonder if there's something about that.

Trish: So something about us, humanistic, person centred counsellors, we're less accepting of our own power.

Angela: Well we don't see ourselves as experts in the same way as a CBT therapist.

Trish: Psychodynamic.

Angela: Yeah, yeah, but I think equally we have to accept that we are experts in terms of experience and ways of working, relationship building and all that sort of

thing; we're not experts on the client because they're experts on themselves, but we do have an expertise, and I think it can be really (pause) I think it's really dangerous if we don't accept that and acknowledge that, but I think it is quite hard to do that publicly.

Trish: It's hard to do it publicly?

Angela: Yeah, because of the (pause) because we're not supposed to be experts.

Trish: Right, that's a tension, there's a huge tension there.

Angela: Yeah, yeah, it is.

Trish: We're not meant to be experts and yet we have an expertise.

(Interview 2)

Angela stipulated her view that power had no place in a supervisory relationship and links this to the word 'supervision' and in turn to an implicit hierarchy. Namely that the supervisor should be responsible for ensuring the counsellor practices safely.

Moreover, her view was that 'supervision' was an unhelpful word because it implied an imbalance of power:

Angela: I think it's a silly word for it really because it implies a (pause) I mean I co-supervise some but it implies a power imbalance which I [do not] think should be there, I mean I think it should be collaborative.

Trish: And so one of the side effects, one of the positive consequences of the co-supervision is the lack of power which you feel shouldn't be in a supervisory relationship.

Angela: I don't think (pause) yeah, I don't think there should be that sort of power in a supervisory relationship but I think (pause) and I don't know that I've experienced that, maybe with my first supervisor I did, but it's inherent in the name, isn't it, 'supervision'. It infers that the supervisor is making sure (pause) which they are, I mean they have an ethical responsibility to make sure your practice is safe, but it infers something that I think is prob(pause) it's not about that.

(Interview 1)

Peter also referred during both interviews to the connotations, around power and hierarchy, attached to the name 'supervision' as being potentially problematic:

Trish: Yeah, so it's that oversight, it's that (voice trails off).

Peter: See I don't like the word oversight because it's we touched on this last time, it's the oversight, the overseer is the boss kind of, of isn't it? And it is that and I think we're debating words aren't we but it, it's that, I think I used the word second look or something on (I interject with 'yes') on there or third perspective or something like that? And we can't, you know we can't can we? We're all, our neurology is such that we're all biased, we're all selective and absolutely we need that.

(Interview 2)

Similarly referring to hierarchy, James also preferred the term consultative support and striving for equality in the relationship:

James: I never, yeah, I mean, I just don't like the word supervision. I'm kind of of that, I suppose, maybe that older generation now, I prefer the term consultative support. Supervisor means that there's somebody looking over your shoulder, that's its literal meaning.

Trish: Yeah, the hierarchy is embedded in the name?

James: Yeah, and that just kind of reminds me of something else about hierarchy as well. I like it when my supervisees go through a teenage phase and start rebelling against me. Does that make sense?

Trish: Yeah, it does.

James: Suddenly I'm not kind of, the thing I say is, you know, I'm not some fountain of wisdom, because I feel then that they're beginning to find themselves. Does that make sense, yeah?

Trish: And when your supervisees rebel and find themselves, what's that like for you? Seems like you enjoy that.

James: Yeah, yeah, because what it means is that they are now no longer deferring to me, and we're moving towards something that's more collaborative and collegiate, and, for me, that feels really important as a supervisor.

Trish: And more equal?

James: Yeah, definitely, yeah, definitely. You know, it's not that I don't want the responsibility of, you know, in the early stages, because I think that's part of the job, that's part of my role and it's important, in some sense. But there's something about creating a, it's really basic person centred stuff, creating a relationship where somebody can take an experience and their own freedom and their own power.

(Interview 1)

In conclusion, power and hierarchy were often stories told concurrently, and often as problematic. Lucy, Jane and Wendy told stories about the supervisor abusing power, and the impact of that on them. Angela and Mary told complex stories about gender, power, hierarchy and the supervisor as expert. Further, stories were told about the impact of the supervisor perceiving themselves as the expert, in particular when the supervisor was well-known or came highly recommended. Finally, stories were told about whether the name 'supervision' implied either an imbalance of power, or a hierarchy in the supervision relationship.

Counselling as a 'profession'

The word 'profession' or 'professional' was used by most participants. Some, such as Wendy and Alice, used this alongside the word 'personal' to describe the relationship. Whilst most participants used the word in a general sense, Peter, Jane, Alice and Angela specifically referred to counselling as a 'profession', either directly or obliquely.

Peter told the most explicit stories about counselling as a profession. Furthermore, that he had been *'trained by some very, or some very able people and that's what I try and train into the people that I teach as well, you know, this is a profession, and we should be proud of it.'* Moreover, Peter, in this story, appears to suggest that professionalisation would bring with it a range of benefits for counsellors, and counselling in a wider sense:

Peter: Well I would hold our profession up for comparison and scrutiny against clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, you know, at our best I think we would hold scrutiny. I think where we would, there are lots of ways we wouldn't and that people would point at and say "well, you know, you can do a part-time certificate and call yourself a counsellor" sort of thing and it's that that, you know, I think we're, and it's the fact that, you know, we don't, I don't get well paid compared to a, these other professions and so on, you know, I think that's why I think we can always tolerate a bit more and probably need a bit more regulation and scrutiny in the registration and so on.

Trish: So if we were more professional, if we were more accountable and if we had tighter regulatory policies that would be a good thing?

Peter: I think so, yeah.

Trish: Because then we could stand alongside the clinical psychologists and the (voice trails off.)

Peter: Yeah, I think what we do is undervalued, underpaid and (I talk over him).

Trish: Yes, I would agree.

Peter: (he carries on) not appropriately recognised with the health service, you know, in, as a teacher yourself who probably done workshops and things like that and, you know, away days or residential or whatever, you know, and you come out feeling "my god, I'm absolutely shattered here". You put your life and soul into it and you think "well I don't think the psychiatrists do very much of this in their training", you know, and like with supervision, that's, I mean that's one thing that does I think, you know, where we're really strong as a profession that we, that isn't necessarily so strong in psychology or psychiatry.

(Interview 2)

Angela's stories were not as explicit; however, both the focus across the interviews was one of counselling as a profession, and the supervisor as accountable. It is worth noting that both compared counselling to allied health professions. Peter's narrative appeared to evidence a less conflicted view of counselling as a profession. In contrast, Angela's narrative was one of ambivalence, in particular about mandatory supervision. On the one hand wanting to be trusted, but on the other concern about whether she could trust herself to attend – if supervision were not mandatory. However, on occasion Angela did appear to express less ambivalence, here about trust:

Angela: (pause) I don't know, I don't know what the answer is (pause) yeah, I think I do want to be trusted to behave professionally and ethically and to seek out supervision as and when I feel I need it or it's appropriate. And then that would be for me, would I be happy with other people have that role, I think I would actually, I think we have to come to a place of trust in ourselves and other don't we?
(Interview 1)

As we were moving towards the end of this interview she says: *'I don't think it (sighs and pauses) I think there is maybe a lack of confidence in counselling as a profession, it's felt it's had to do things to get up with the big boys, whereas psychologists maybe have always been up there (pause).'* It is perhaps interesting to note that Angela is also a psychologist, and perhaps is obliquely at this point referring to counselling not being a regulated profession. Hence, arguably, Angela is here articulating her perception that counselling does not have the same power, position and status as, for example, counselling psychology. Peter was the only other participant to refer to statutory regulation, his view being that counselling should be 'more heavily regulated'. Perhaps, therefore, taking a similar stance to that held by Angela, he states that:

Peter: It's about self-care, yes (pause) but I also think that we (pause) and I feel this quite strongly, that we have to accept that there is a bigger picture or a bigger level which is about the client and the reputation of the work that we do, you know. I think there's something about, you know, I'm part, I'm proud to be part of a profession and I think there is something about upholding the standards of the profession and the public trust and so on. I mean this might sound quite grandiose and I've never ever had to kind of think on this level but I do think it's important that we are able, I mean I would like us to be more heavily regulated than we are actually as a profession, you know, but you know, I think it's important for all of us, we all benefit from there being, you know, really high ethical standards and scrupulous sort of examination of the work that we do. So and as part of (pause) because I consider that, you know, what I do is as important as a doctor or a surgeon or any kind of medical type profession and, you know, I want us to have similar kinds of standards really and I want the public to be able to have trust and confidence in that. So, you know, as part of signing up for that (pause) and paying my membership dues every year is that I accept that there is a level that, you know, if I'm no longer able to or if I'm deluding myself for some reason that someone is going to step in and protect my clients and protect the profession as a whole.
(Interview 2)

Moreover, Peter's reference to the supervisor protecting his clients, and the profession, should he delude himself, hints at supervision as policing. James and Angela were the two participants who referred directly to supervision as policing. In contrast to Peter however, James stated that client protection was to be found in a safe supervisory relationship, rather than the supervisor policing him:

James: Taking, sorry, sorry to, forgive me. So, when I've counselled students, I think that's more straightforward, because I usually only have two or three, and the nature of supervising students is that, you know, they'll bring every client anyway. Because that doesn't mean to kind of say that I'm not curious about who I don't take to supervision and who my supervisees don't bring as well. I'm always curious about that, but I don't feel like any kind of sense that I want to police or be policed, I don't think that's a very grown up way of approaching supervision.

Trish: And yet, it's kind of embedded in supervision for experienced counsellors, it's predicated on public accountability and client protection?

James: I'm not sure, I feel uncertain about that. I feel uncertain about it, I mean, I know it as a concept and I don't dispute that at all. There's something for me about how best can clients be protected, if necessary, how best can poor practice be addressed, and I just think the best way is by having a safe, trusting relationship, not policing relationship. Otherwise, you know, it's, as I say, I go back to the thing about, I don't want, I can only know my supervisees clients, I might say to my supervisor, we can only know it, filtered through, does that make sense?

(Interview 1)

Moreover, Angela highlighted a tension which was, for her, inherent in respect of policing counsellors through supervision. Angela is again discussing trust, this time whether BACP trusts its members. In terms of this being a story about trust, it is interesting to note that before continuing she checks out her right to anonymity. Nevertheless, what follows is a complex story about trust, guilt and innocence, and whether supervision is an effective method of policing members, of BACP.

Trish: And when you said 'trust from your professional body' to you, how do you view that? Do you think they do or they don't?

Angela: No, no, I don't think they do (pause) I, I this is anonymous, isn't it? (Laughs)

Trish: Absolutely, and you'll get the right to take anything out you don't want in.

Angela: Um (pauses) I think a lot, a lot of decisions (pause) I think in BACP you've got to prove you're not wrong before there's an assumption of right, if you know what I mean.

Trish: Yeah, that it actually goes (pause) it's the antithesis of sort of the law of the land in terms of innocent until proved guilty.

Angela: Innocent until proved guilty, yeah, it's how do we stop people who might behave in this way, behaving in this way. Not 'this person is behaving this way therefore we need to do something about it. And I'm a psychologist as well and I work for HPC and their attitude is completely different, they (pause) when they're admitting people to the register (pause) I mean, obviously there's some things they've got to prove (voice trails off.)

Trish: So if you can get people in, you can work with them, you can trust and work with them.

Angela: Well, you can police them.

Trish: You can police them.

Angela: Once they are in your organisation, can't you, but if you're continually trying to keep people out or making them prove (voice trails off).

Trish: So I'm struck by that word 'policing' there's something about how BACP police.

Angela: Yeah, I don't know how effective it is.

Trish: And supervision is definitely one of their ways of protecting clients.

Angela: But it's not policed, is it? I mean it's not (pause) the only way, the way that they police aspects if through the complaints procedures and when we were talking before, we were saying if you're worried about your supervisee if my supervisor is worried about my practice, what do they do? Well one of the things would be to go to BACP and put in a complaint and I mean I (pause followed by a sigh) don't really know how those things work, but presumably, there's an investigation of it so in that sense they would be policing (pause.) But it feels like a lot of the regulation that they have is (pause) to catch the people that (pause) may not be genuine but they do it to everybody, so there's no assumption of innocence, it's prove you're not guilty.

(Interview 1)

Angela was the only participant to offer a story about BACP and whether, as an organisation, trust was afforded to members. Further, Peter was the only participant to discuss overtly counselling as a profession, or the potential to professionalise counselling. In contrast, other participants used the term 'professional' in a wider, and often more general sense. Moreover, stories told reflected tensions in moving between a relationship seen as personal, based on the core conditions, and yet also concurrently a professional relationship. Conceivably this conflation of the personal and professional has contained within it echoes of counselling as a profession, or an expectation at some level that it should be. Alice, for example, often described the relationship with her supervisor as both personal and professional:

Alice: Yeah, so it's kind of, it's caught me by surprise that that actually, and that was the thing that moved me to think that how attuned she must have been that, you know, we moved seamlessly through this transition, that's really moved me and so that sort of, that very personal element of something that is very professional. It's kind of like ooh how does that work.

(Interview 1)

In fact, Alice's overall narrative was of a relationship which was simultaneously personal *and* professional. Similarly Jane wanted a nurturing *and* professional relationship:

Jane: Yes, definitely. Yeah, it's about just nurturing (voice trails off). *(Laughs)* Being nurtured in a professional way, not in a (pause) you know, as I say, not going to them seeking counselling but it's a professional (pause) yeah.

Trish: But I get the feeling it's not professional in a shaking hands way professional.
(Interview 1)

Jane and Alice use terminology inferring that there is a desire for the supervisor to take care of them. Jane wants to be nurtured, and Alice has experienced her supervisor's attunement to her needs. In contrast, Wendy wanted the relationship with her supervisor to be solely personal rather than both personal and professional:

Wendy: Yeah, I think I felt more confident in my assessment of it this, as oppose to the first one was, I didn't know whether this was alright to do. Whereas this time I could say, yeah, I was more able to separate out that she had expertise and I could gain from her expertise and actually form an open, transparent, meaningful personal relationship, you know, well professional but yeah, it's a personal relationship, actually I want to say personal relationship.
(Interview 1)

In contrast, Lucy told stories about the way in which her in-house supervisor had enabled her to foster trust in her professional self. Lucy's story attests to the power of trust in the supervisory relationship. Furthermore, her in-house supervisors' trust of her meant that she was able to be more discerning in respect of her private supervisor:

Lucy: Ah yeah. Yeah, because I guess with [in-house supervisor] I learnt to trust myself as a professional because I think I maybe did still have doubts way back. And [in-house] trust in me (pause) allowed me to trust myself and I do wonder if, again if I hadn't had [in-house supervisor] how that would have worked with [private supervisor]? If I would have, if my trust in myself would have been maybe chipped away, whereas I don't think it was in that whatever she said if I didn't believe it or it didn't sit right for me I was able to think "no, that's not right, I know what I'm doing". (Voice trails off.)
(Interview 2)

However, the support of her in-house supervisor was double-edged in that it also meant she tolerated the relationship with her private supervisor. As a result, Lucy remained in an unsafe relationship, and furthermore one where, arguably, the supervisor abused her power. Similarly, Mary reflects on the dynamics of a supervisory relationship, and in particular why she had not taken an ethical dilemma. As a consequence, Mary realises one reason might lie in the supervisory relationship being a professional one. Arguably, what Mary is articulating is that a personal relationship is preferable to a professional one, in respect of feeling safe to take ethical dilemmas:

Mary: Yeah, and I'm sitting here thinking 'my goodness', what, what, I don't know, and I still don't, I don't know why I couldn't talk about it to her and I think it's the dynamic between the two of us, I don't think it's either me or her, I think there's something there that, yeah, it's in the dynamic.

Trish: You talk about this supervisor in a, and understandably so, in a very different way (voice trails off.)

Mary: Yes, yes.

Trish: (pause) very different, it's noticeably different.

Mary: It's a much more professional relationship (voice trails off.)

(Interview 1)

Participants at times questioned themselves, or reflected on whether something was professional, or not. Alice reflects on whether it was mature and professional, to stay with her supervisor since training. Moreover, she appears to question what it means to be a 'professional' counsellor, and, furthermore, judges herself for her professional immaturity:

Alice: Yes, that's the mature very professional thing to do so the fact that I haven't done that suggests, yeah, that sort of, I suppose childlike attachment. Although it's funny because even though I've identified a way in which my supervisor has mothered me or been attuned to me in the way that my ideal mother would, I feel absolutely fine about that, I have no problem with that and I don't think oh gosh, that's very immature of me to need that, I actually celebrate that, I think wow that's fantastic. But the, but maybe there is alongside that part of me that says, oh well, you know, maybe there's just a part of me that thinks that there's something in me that needs to grow up, maybe there is something and it's not specifically to do with supervision. But that a part of me that, you know, can often feel quite childlike and judge myself for that.

(Interview 1)

Participants such as Alice and Lucy, and to an extent Wendy, also questioned their actions. In the following extract Lucy is questioning whether or not working in a risk adverse culture has led to her fearing being challenged professionally:

Lucy: Uhuh, yeah. Yeah, or fear of (pause) I think I used the wrong word, not criticism, fear of being (pause) leaving myself open to being (pause) what is the word (pause) sort of challenged professionally. And I don't know if a lot of that fear maybe actually comes from working in x where it's all that adverse risk culture now, and you've got to watch your back, and you know, make sure everything's just so, that I think I've maybe taken on board a bit of that.

Trish: So your work setting might lead you to be more risk averse.

Lucy: Yes, I think so. Yeah. And yet I also, what I like about private work is that I can take more risks than I can in the x, but also, I think the impact of the [agency] is of how, of knowing that I still have, OK, I can take more risks but I still have to do it in an ethical way, and it's almost the supervision somehow provides that. (laughs)

(Interview 1)

It was interesting to note that whilst all participants were also supervisors, few referred to either supervision of supervision, or supervision training, in any detail. Jane, Peter and Wendy briefly referred to supervision training and Wendy to supervision of supervision. Mary refers briefly to supervision models, stating that in her view they are ‘a total waste of time.’ All stories told, however, suggest, in different ways, that what participants valued was the person of the supervisor. Furthermore, it might be argued that the brevity, and absence, of stories suggest that participants view supervision as less onerous than counselling. This would seem to offer support for Mary’s view that status as a counsellor was linked to reaching a point where you only saw supervisees, and did not undertake client work. As Alice states, perhaps most participants did not reflect much on their work with supervisees. In considering why this might be, Alice also reflects on the similarities between her as supervisor and her as counsellor:

Alice: ‘[...] I don’t think I’ve reflected terribly much on my work as supervisor actually. I mean, I do much less of it, that’s for sure, I do much, much less of it (pause). Very rarely have I taken my supervision work to supervision, it always felt kind of (sighs) less problematic, more kind of straightforward (pause) but yeah, I’m kind of wondering if I have taken it seriously enough actually (pause) yeah, my work as a supervisor.

Trish: How does that (voice trails off)

Alice: (pause) I feel bad about that, I feel ‘Gosh, yeah, what’s that been about? Why have I not taken it? Why have I not reflected on it more and (pause) though about these kinds of things more?’ I don’t know thinking about it now, I think I am just as present as a supervisor counsellor.

(Interview 2)

Further, Alice ends with her perspective that: *‘[...] in counsellor training you’re all the time told that you are (pause) in therapy you are the tool of, whereas I don’t remember hearing that on supervision training, that who you are really matters [...]’*

Trish: And yet in supervision training what you heard was it’s about doing.

Alice: What you do, and about the relationship, but not about (pause) the person of the supervisor. You hear all about, all the time, in counsellor training then.

(Interview 2)

Alice’s story appears to highlight an important tension, namely that the majority of stories told by my participants attest to the importance of a safe supervisory relationship. However, in contrast training, for Alice at least, focused on the practicalities (the ‘doing’) of supervision. Perhaps this is also what Mary refers to in stating that supervision models are ‘a total waste of time’. Arguably, this small body of stories offers some insight into what

might need to be included in supervision training. Perhaps, as with humanistic counsellor training, it might be wise to focus on the person of the supervisor, as much as the 'doing' of the role. Certainly, this is what stories told by my participants attests to.

To conclude, most participants told stories which suggested that there was a perception of counselling, to some degree or another, as a profession. However, at times this appeared to cause confusion, for some, about whether the relationship was both personal and professional. Peter and Angela told stories about supervision as a means of evidencing professionalism, and client protection. Though stories told by Peter, Angela and James, about supervision as policing also hint at an inherent tension. Working 'professionally' appeared also to cause some participants to question themselves. Power operated at an implicit level in these stories, arguably via BACP as the professional body as a consequence of mandatory supervision, and, furthermore the consequences, and impact of supervision as mandatory.

Discussion

Each section of the analysis will now be discussed in turn, starting with mandatory supervision and the requirement for career-long supervision. This will be followed by a discussion about accountability and reporting in supervision. And, finally, I will discuss power and the professionalisation of counselling.

Mandatory and career long requirement for supervision

Bond (2015) argues that career-long supervision has been 'widely accepted as an essential protection of professional and especially ethical standards in the British Isles' (p. 227). Accredited members of BACP are required to have a stipulated minimum of one and a half hours a month (BACP 2010; 2016). Individual members are also required to have on-going and regular supervision (BACP, 2010; 2016), though a specific amount is not stated. Furthermore, irrespective of membership status, there is a requirement for all members of BACP to be on the Register of Counsellors & Psychotherapists (BACP, 2013). The aim of the Register is to 'protect the public by providing access to counsellors and psychotherapists who are trained, qualified and dedicated to high standards' (p. 2). It is worth noting that the Register does not stipulate requirements for supervision instead stating that: 'different registrants will have different requirements' (BACP, 2013, p. 2). Furthermore, the registrant is advised that it is their responsibility to ensure their own supervision needs are met.

Whilst I did not ask whether participants were accredited, it was evident from stories told that most, if not all, were. Certainly, participants told stories which reflected their desire to adhere to the BACP ethical principle of mandatory supervision. In fact, some, such as Wendy, Angela, and Lucy explicitly felt that mandatory supervision was helpful. However, participants also reflected on the tensions arising out of the requirement for career-long supervision. The stories, as a result, reflect the conflicted nature of supervision over the career life-span for my participants.

Mandatory supervision as supportive

Some participants, Wendy, Lucy and Angela, told stories indicating that mandatory supervision encouraged attendance and, as such, was supportive. However, there was a concurrent fear that if supervision were not mandatory participants might not attend, particularly Wendy, Lucy and Angela. Perhaps this reflects Herwig's (2007) argument regarding the mandatory nature of supervision in the UK. As Herwig (2007) states, for counsellors who want to work ethically, there is 'little or no choice about whether to be in supervision (p. 11). Worrall (2001) takes this further in arguing that the requirement for regular and on-going supervision has unfortunate consequences. One consequence, according to Worrall (2001), is the lack of autonomy to freely choose supervision and, moreover, the freedom to identify the most personally beneficial use of supervision. Feltham (2000) writing about the 'dynamics of the mandatory', makes the distinction between choice to have supervision and the 'insistence that counsellors must have regular, ongoing supervision' (p. 9). Indeed, stories told by my participants reflect this tension. Participants appeared to want to have supervision, and found it useful. Perhaps, as Wheeler (2000) suggests, many counsellors, free from the requirement of mandatory supervision, might nevertheless continue to choose to have supervision. Certainly, some of my participants stated that supervision being mandatory made no difference: they would attend anyway.

In common with research undertaken by Lawton (2000), and Vallance (2005), the value of supervision for some of my participants lay in the emotional support it offered. Arguably, what is being described is the restorative function in supervision. As Henderson (2009) argues, it is important for the supervisor to ascertain what the emotional cost of the work is for the supervisee. Certainly, this was reflected in stories told by my participants. Furthermore, Lawton's (2000) participants also highlighted the main function of supervision as being support for the supervisee. Similarly, Savic-Jabrow's (2010) research

also found that independent practitioners valued the support offered by supervision, partly because of the isolated settings in which they worked. Moreover, Vallance (2005) argued that her participants suggested that emotional support in supervision positively affected client work. My participants valued the support, but did not link emotional support in supervision directly in this way, though arguably it is possible that Jane and Peter's fear of litigation obliquely referred to client protection. This is in contrast to the literature on supervision. Dunnett et al. (2013), for example, argue that supervision does significantly contribute to client welfare. Furthermore, Bond (2015) stipulates that the reason for career-long and mandated supervision is predicated on public accountability, and client protection.

It is worth noting however, that there is little evidence to support the assertion that career-long supervision protects the client. Furthermore, the lack of evidence is often reported in the supervision literature. Crocket (2009), for example, cites two major reviews as highlighting the dearth of research evidence in support of the claim that supervision contributes to client outcomes. As Kavanagh et al. (2002) states, arguably 'the literature on supervision is heavy on opinion, theory and recommendations, but very light on good evidence' (p. 248). However, frequently this is coupled with a stipulation that more research is needed in order to find the evidence (see for example Wheeler & Richards, 2007). Alternatively, a hope is expressed that such evidence, once found, will support the position of mandatory supervision. However, as Bond (2015) states, 'frankly, the evidence is not as convincing as one might hope' (p. 236). This appears to reflect accurately the stories told by my participants, namely that there is a *hope* that career-long supervision has a positive effect on client work. As Feltham (2010) suggests, there is perhaps some truth in the view that 'supervision may aspire to protect clients, but that is all' (p. 97). Spence (2006) takes this further in stating that he does not believe it is possible to ensure that supervision protects the client, or their well-being. Instead, he argues the most that can be expected is to ensure good practice is likely, and that the 'rest, I suspect, is wishful thinking' (p. 3). Lambers (2013) offers the argument that monitoring and evaluating a supervisee's practice does not equate to client welfare, in particular for a person-centred supervisor. In contrast, BACP (2016) appear to have shifted the emphasis from whether supervision is effective, to in what way supervision is beneficial. Furthermore, the argument is put forward that the emphasis on research 'presumes that supervision is necessary and desirable', and moreover, that 'it has been accepted as such in the counselling professions'

(BACP, 2016, p. 9). It is worth repeating that there is no evidence base to support this contention.

Feltham (2000) argues that supervision serves two important functions: the first that of keeping counsellors in order, and the second that it offers evidence to the general public that 'serious steps are being taken to monitor and preserve quality' (p. 17). It is, however, interesting to note that sanctions for non-compliance with supervision requirements are unclear. BACP (2014) does state that if Registered members fail to comply with supervision requirements this 'could lead to removal from the Register' (p. 3). However, it is difficult to know whether any member, or registrant, has ever been sanctioned in this way. A review of complaints made to BACP during the period 1998 - 2007 by Symons, Khele, Rogers, Turner and Wheeler (2011) does not contain reference to such a complaint, or sanction. Nevertheless, my participants did fear this as an outcome should they not comply with supervision requirements. Wendy, for example, stated that she needed to ensure regular attendance at supervision, or lose her accredited member status.

Ambivalence regarding supervision as mandatory

With the exception of Jane and James, participants told stories about their conflicting views of mandatory supervision. For some it was practical Peter, for example, reflected on the difficulty for some of his supervisees who were seeing very few clients. BACP (2008; 2016) is, however, clear on this matter stating that it is only possible to reduce the amount of supervision in exceptional circumstances, and then only for those who are very experienced, and unaccredited. Evidently, therefore, it is not possible to reduce the amount of supervision below the baseline, even when accredited members are seeing very few clients. As Peter and Angela both stated it is possible, and this has been my experience, that you spend more time in supervision than seeing clients. Furthermore, BACP (2016) have added the caveat that any reduction to the amount of supervision must not become a norm, and should be restored as soon as possible. In contrast, Feltham (2010) argues for more flexibility, perhaps combining supervision with personal therapy, or targeted continuing professional development (CPD). In this respect at least, many of my participants used supervision flexibly, in particular, many used supervision therapeutically though were, of course, not able to reduce the amount of supervision, regardless of experience or case load.

Perhaps, as Wheeler (2000) argues, this implies a lack of trust in the membership by what was then the British Association for Counselling (BAC). Furthermore, she cautioned BAC against the infantilisation of members with 'global supervision requirements' (Wheeler, 2000, p. 205). Feltham (2002) has also argued that the disadvantages of mandatory supervision include infantilisation, expense and ritualisation. In fact, Mary expressed concerns that mandatory supervision could become formulaic. Moreover, stories told about power, and the need to attend supervision in order to retain accredited status, attest to infantilisation and, potentially, use of supervision in a ritualistic or formulaic way. In this light it is interesting to note Feltham's (2000) view that supervisees need to attend supervision on a regular basis, regardless of how useful that supervision is. Indeed, Lucy (with her private supervisor), and Jane made strenuous attempts to make supervision 'useful'. Whilst, paradoxically, not, in fact, finding it useful.

Moreover, Wosket (2012) argues that the 'credibility of supervisors and the professional bodies to whom they are accountable rest, to a large degree, on their openness to critical enquiry by those both within and outside their ranks' (p. 170). This does not appear to take place. Instead the literature suggests greater acceptance, and less critique, of the need for ongoing supervision, with few critical voices within the 'ranks'. In fact, many authors now recommend supervision to allied professions (see for example Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). This is in common with BACP (2016), where the Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions recommends supervision to anyone who provides therapeutic services and, in particular, those who are in challenging roles. It is difficult to ascertain why critiques of supervision have diminished in recent years. There appears, instead, to be a general acceptance, in spite of the lack of evidence, that supervision does indeed protect clients. Perhaps, as Feltham (2002) has argued, mandatory supervision is, for BACP, 'a cog in the machine of professionalization' (p. 328). Furthermore, it is conceivable that BACP, as the largest membership body for counsellors, inevitably holds the monopoly view. In turn, therefore, the dominant narrative becomes one of supervision as offering client protection: moreover, one that appears increasingly to go unchallenged. Certainly, my participants appeared to drawing, largely uncritically, on this as a narrative.

Nevertheless, my participants did tell stories about their ambivalence, and so difficulties, with mandatory supervision. However, this is largely absent in the literature on supervision. Whilst many authors (e.g., Creaner, 2014; Dunnett et al., 2013; Henderson, 2009) write about how to deal with ruptures in the relationship, few deal directly with the

difficulties which arise out of supervision as mandatory. In contrast, Crocket (2007; 2009) and West (2003) have written the culture of supervision, and in particular a culture of surveillance. In particular, Crocket (2007) suggests that counselling, and so supervision, can be seen as a self-policing practice. As West (2003) argues, supervision, and in particular the supervision relationship, is one where cultural norms and practices are communicated. Furthermore, West (2003) argues that if there is an insistence that supervision is to be career-long it must be an ethical and safe space. Stories told by participant such as Jane and Lucy in particular, but hinted at by others, suggested that supervision was not always a safe place.

In conclusion, stories told by my participants suggest that mandatory, career-long supervision is not straightforward. Furthermore, there is little evidence to support the claims made by BACP that supervision does, in fact, protect clients. Moreover, my participant stories reflect a conflicted sense of supervision as mandatory. On the one hand supervision was experienced as valuable, largely for the restorative effects it afforded when safe. On the other, more conflicted stories were told, for instance, about the lack of flexibility in mandated supervision.

Supervisor as responsible for reporting and accountability, and the responsibility of the supervisor

Supervision is assumed, by BACP, to be the mechanism which offers the public assurance that counselling is safe. Furthermore, Aldridge (2014) places responsibility on the supervisor for not only the ethical dimensions of client work, but also positions the supervisor as accountable for the 'work of his/her supervisees' (p. 128). Whilst the Ethical Framework (BACP, 2016) states that when supervising qualified and experienced counsellors, the primary responsibility for ensuring client work meets ethical and professional standards, rests primarily with the supervisee. In contrast, the BACP GPiA 043 (2016) states categorically that supervision has a 'gatekeeping' function; furthermore that it is 'one mechanism by which the counselling professions ensure that clients are not harmed' (p. 5). Potentially, therefore, the advice given is somewhat contradictory, or at least confusing.

Supervisor as responsible for accountability and client protection

Participants told stories about the need to report unethical practice and, furthermore, that the supervisor should be responsible for this. This supports those such as Aldridge (2014), for example, who argues that the supervision contract needs to be

specific regarding what action might be taken if the supervisor considers that the supervisee is working either unethically, or beyond their level of competence. Furthermore, Creaner (2014) argues that, even for experienced counsellors, 'the element of 'overseeing' is always present' (p. 26). Wosket (2012) also stipulates that supervision must include a monitoring function, intended to ensure safe and ethical practice, thus safeguarding the welfare of the client. It would appear, therefore, that participants were drawing on recurrent narratives in the supervision literature in this respect. Peter told the least conflicted stories in this respect. However, others, such as Angela told more conflicted stories about accountability, and the responsibility of the supervisor to report unethical practice.

Despite telling stories indicating that the supervisor should be accountable for practice, none of my participants offered examples in their own role as supervisor of reporting, or feeling the need to report, unethical practice. There are very few references in the literature about whether supervisors do report unethical practice, presumably to BACP. One exception is the work of King and Wheeler (1999); and Wheeler and King (2001). King and Wheeler (1998), based on interviews with experienced supervisors, argue that 'the extent of the supervisor's responsibility for the counselling work and the well-being of the client is limited' (p. 225). This would seem to accord with the stories told by my participants. There is evidently, therefore, a tension between the views expressed that supervisors *should* be responsible and whether in practice supervisors take action in the name of protecting clients.

It is interesting to note that supervisory accountability and responsibility for practice was articulated with greater clarity for trainee counsellors by my participants. This is unsurprising given all had experience of supervising trainee counsellors, and some were also trainers. Page and Wosket (2015) suggest that, when a person is in training, the supervisor, training course and agency hold responsibility for client work, however, when qualified responsibility primarily rests with the counsellor. Bond (2015) concurs with this, and refers to the 'working agreement' (p. 233) between course, trainee, supervisor and agency. This is a standard agreement used on many training courses, including the course I am involved with. Participant stories suggested that this was what was being referred to, for instance Angela, Mary, Peter and James discuss reporting mechanisms for trainee counsellors. Most, if not all, of the literature on supervision discusses accountability, and responsibility for the work of a trainee. Dunnett et al. (2013) highlight the way that responsibility for the trainee's client work might not always be evident, but also state that

'there is some agreement that whilst in training, counsellors alone cannot be held fully accountable.' (p. 72). In general, therefore, there is some clarity that at the least responsibility, and accountability, for those in training is shared. It seems apparent that my participants were drawing on both the literature and their personal experience as supervisors and trainers, in this respect.

By comparison, there is little consensus in the literature about the degree to which the supervisor is responsible for the practice of an experienced counsellor. In fact, at times the distinction is blurred, or supervision for an experienced counsellor is conflated with that of a trainee. Creaner (2017), for instance, in asserting that supervision is 'useful and growth promoting' (p. 125) for both trainee and qualified counsellors, cites a study by Wilson et al. (2015) which focused exclusively on the trainee counsellor. Writing about the supervision needs of experienced counsellors, Page and Wosket (2015) do make some distinctions between trainee and experienced counsellors. Nevertheless, included is reference to the need to promote accountability through providing evidence that 'professional consultancy' has been sought for 'high-risk situations' (Page & Wosket, 2015, p. 195). It is difficult, however, to ascertain whether this means that the supervisor is viewed as either responsible, or accountable, for client work. Often the gatekeeping function of supervision is cited as being responsible for ensuring client safety (BACP, 2016). Furthermore, Stainsby (2015) refers to this as an essential professional function of supervision. Without supervision containing a monitoring, and importantly a reporting, function it is difficult to see how it is possible to ensure either gatekeeping, or client safety. It would appear that there is a relative lack of clarity for experienced counsellors about who is responsible (or accountable) for ensuring client safety. Moreover, as King and Wheeler (1998) state, this is compounded if supervisors feel that their responsibility in terms of reporting is limited. With the exception of Peter, my participants whilst feeling the supervisor should report unethical practice were largely unable to say how, or to whom.

Alice and Lucy also told stories about some of the ethical dilemmas embedded in the supervisor being accountable for their practice. Alice, for example, reflected on the tensions of translating ethical guidelines and external injunctions, about her sense of what might be the 'right' ethical decision. House (2011a) cautions against adopting unquestioningly a code of ethics on the basis that it is easier 'to follow an externally derived code of ethics than it is to take full responsibility for creating, owning and embodying one's own' (p. 351). Moreover, he posits that the underlying assumptions

behind a universal code of ethics, such as that espoused by BACP (2016), imply that counsellors are not to be trusted - or arguably might find it hard to be responsible, or perhaps trust, their own capacity to make ethical decisions. In addition, Jenkins (2015) argues that BACP seem to be operating a top-down approach to consultation, in particular about the revisions to the ethical framework in 2015. As a result, he argues that BACP have moved away from the process of deriving ethics 'from the experiences of the members' to 'locating the major drivers for ethical change in external influences' (p. 3). It is interesting to note Jenkins' (2015) argument that medical ethics underpin the changes made to the Ethical Framework (BACP, 2016). Both Jenkins (2015) and House (2011) concur that this reflects the underlying influence being the move towards the professionalisation of counselling. Furthermore, I am in agreement with House (2011a) who argues that there is no evidence that a universal code of ethics offers client protection, particularly as it applies to supervision. Nevertheless, the literature, and to an extent stories told by my participants, appears to suggest that a belief is promulgated that adopting a universal code of ethics does protect clients. As House (2011a) argues, if it was possible to demonstrate that the existence of universal codes of ethics did promote good practice, and protect clients, it would present a strong argument for adoption of such a code. Perhaps more worryingly House (2011a) argues that there is 'abundant evidence that institutional ethical codes often have more to do with public relations and *practitioner* protection' (p. 354) than they do with protecting clients.

Can the supervisor take responsibility?

Participants told stories reflecting the complexities of the supervisor taking responsibility for practice. Peter, for example, identifies the 'weak link' in reporting unethical practice as the supervisor. As King and Wheeler (1999) argue, if the supervisor is reluctant to use a complaints procedure there is potential cause for concern. Additionally, and in contrast to the advice given to trainee counsellors, who must discuss all client work in supervision, no similar advice is offered by BACP to experienced counsellors. In turn, the literature does identify a potential issue with this as Feltham (2010) suggests:

In principle it sounds good to claim that supervision is there in order to protect clients; it seems logical that if you have to discuss all your clients with a supervisor, then any inappropriate work will be picked up and dealt with. This may in fact happen for trainees with low caseloads but is quite unlikely for busy full-time counsellors with high caseloads. However experienced or perspicacious supervisor may be (and there is no way of determining this), how could any of them definitely

know that the supervisee is presenting all aspects of them? In other words supervision cannot guarantee to eliminate or even identify substandard practice or malpractice (p. 96).

Moreover, Mitchels (2015) argues that whilst supervisees might want to rely on the advice of a supervisor, this is only possible when they are made aware of specific problems. Mitchels (2015) also stipulates that supervisees would therefore need to agree to present all clients in supervision, but links this to inexperienced counsellors who might not always recognise that they need assistance. My participants were all experienced, and some had heavy caseloads - Peter, Jane, Lucy and Alice in particular. Mearns (2008) argues that the danger in stipulating a baseline for supervision is that it might be seen as sufficient, even when caseloads are high, or the work is complex. One response, therefore, might be to increase the amount of supervision in order to ensure all clients can be discussed. However, this arguably does what Feltham (2002) has suggested in that supervision becomes ritualistic, potentially infantilising, and furthermore incurs a financial penalty. Moreover, Tudor (2007) also cautions that this stance of protecting clients 'smacks of a patronising and infantilising approach' (p. 31). Perhaps also, as King and Wheeler (1999) argue, this has the potential to infantilise experienced counsellors on the basis that such counsellors should have autonomy to decide what is taken to supervision.

The literature on supervision does not support the notion of experienced counsellors discussing all clients in supervision. For instance, Page and Wosket (2015) suggest that as counsellors gain experience supervision needs 'more of an emphasis on the self of the therapist' and that it is also necessary 'to work more closely at the interface between supervision and therapy' (p. 195). This is a perspective echoed by Creaner (2014). Grant and Schofield (2007) question the validity of 'the claims of quality control, accountability and client protection put forward by the profession' (p. 4) on the basis of the limited number of clients it is possible for an experienced counsellor to take to supervision. Of course, this also requires that the supervisory relationship is a safe space where it is possible to discuss client work without fear of the consequences. My participants did express concerns about the potential for the supervisor to either misunderstand, deliberately or otherwise. Feltham (2002) poses an interesting question in this respect of whether supervision can be at the same time 'egalitarian, non-judgemental, support of and empowering for the supervisee *and* accountability-oriented' (p. 329).

Tudor (2007) argues that supervisor responsibility needs to be deconstructed and, further, that it often 'provokes particular anxiety and fantasies, especially with regard to

legal liability' (p. 26). In particular, Tudor (2007) suggests that responsibility can be confused with accountability. Jenkins (2016) writes about revisions to the BACP (2016) ethical framework and, in particular, supervisor liability within an increasingly legalistic framework. His view is that 'by a gradual process of osmosis, this shifting perspective on supervisor liability is in danger of being transmuted into received and unquestioned professional opinion' (Jenkins, 2016, p. 5). Arguably, this view of supervision was embedded in both Peter and Angela's narratives. Jenkins (2016) and Tudor (2007) raise concerns about whether it is possible for the supervisor to hold a duty of care for clients. Jenkins (2016) from a legal perspective and Tudor (2007) making links to the potential for defensive practice in supervision, and moves towards statutory regulation. The professionalisation of counselling will be taken up further in the concluding section of this chapter.

A small amount of literature challenges directly the notion that it is possible for the supervisor to be responsible for practice. Of note is that this is becoming increasingly difficult to find. Perhaps this reflects the professionalisation agenda highlighted by writers such as House and Totton (2011) and Postle (2007). Totton (2012b) argues that professionalisation has a 'self-motivating dynamic: once a group decides to carve out a niche as a profession it inevitably seeks to make boundaries around itself and to control admission' (p. 11). Accreditation for BACP is arguably an example of a professional body controlling admission, and so setting boundaries such as supervision as offering client protection via mechanisms such as career-long supervision. Nevertheless, authors such as Webb (2001) argue that it is no longer possible to 'delude ourselves into thinking that supervision can adequately ensure the safety of clients or the ethical standards of the work of counsellors' (p. 190). Her argument, in part, is based on the lack of agreement about what constitutes responsibility. Tudor (2007) picks this up, stating that in his view 'too much is made of the power of the supervisor to protect clients and to keep them safe against harmful, unsafe practitioners and poor practice' (p. 31). Stories told by my participants would appear to support both contentions. Mary and Lucy, both of whom took ethical dilemmas elsewhere because their individual supervision was unsafe, is one example. And perhaps Jane's view that one supervisor was 'dangerous' because she appeared to hold an agenda which was not transparent is a further example. In all cases the outcome was that client work was not taken to supervision because the space was not safe.

The impact of responsibility on the supervisor was named by Peter which as Webb (2001) points out, is an under investigated area. Furthermore, she argues that, whilst it would be understandable for the trainee to assume that the supervisor is capable and can take responsibility, she cautions that it is possible that this is something which might 'be a fantasy that lingers beyond the supervision received in training' (Webb, 2001, p. 181). Arguably embedded in my participant narratives was the hope that they were in safe hands, even when they feared that this was not the case. More recently, there appears to be a tension, or some confusion, about whether the supervisor is legally responsible for practice. For example, Jenkins (2016) expresses his concern as being the on-going process of the legalisation of therapy, and in particular as it applies to BACP. And, furthermore, argues that given the discourse is increasingly technical, counsellors might feel unable to launch a challenge, particularly in respect of legal matters. Moreover, legally, he contends that supervisors have a limited liability in respect of supervisee's clients and, perhaps damningly, that this is on 'the basis of limited practice evidence and a very particular reading' of the case law (Jenkins, 2016, p. 7). Arguably, it is possible to draw comparisons between this and the limited evidence base for supervision as providing either client protection, or public accountability. Regardless, it was clear that my participants, such as Jane and Peter, did feel that supervision afforded protection from potential litigation. However, it might be possible to contend that my participants were, therefore, drawing on the legalisation of therapy as a dominant discourse. Jenkins (2007) has a long history of writing about the law as it applies to counselling. It is therefore interesting that he is apparently challenging some of the accepted BACP wisdom in this respect. Indeed, for the first time, BACP have a Good Practice in Action (GPiA) dedicated to legal matters in supervision (Mitchels, 2015). Whilst this starts with a disclaimer - that the information is not legally binding for members, but is intended to support practice by way of offering information – it reads, worryingly, as *if* it is legal advice. I am, therefore, in complete agreement with Jenkins (2016) that this signals a shift, which has gone largely unquestioned, towards 'a statutory model of risk-management' (p. 7). Furthermore, I concur that this shift also signals a 'theme of greater control by professional associations, over the fine detail of our day-to-day therapeutic practice' (Jenkins, 2016, p. 7).

Consequences of responsibility and accountability

Participant stories told about the consequences of the supervisor as responsible for practice, some of which were, arguably, based on fear. This fear was twofold in that Jane

and Peter hoped that supervision afforded protection from litigation and client complaint while, at the same time, both feared the supervisor reporting them to an often unspecified 'other'. Perhaps as Symons et al. (2011) argue, this fear is based on a lack of clarity about the facts of having a complaint brought linking this explicitly to the way BACP publish information about complaints. I would argue further that, in my experience as a counsellor, supervisor and trainer, it is the way in which BACP makes public the outcomes of complaints which instigates this fear. There is both a sense that 'it could be me', and a discomfort in the naming and shaming of members. It is possible also, as Daniels (2000) argues that the role of the supervisor can become confusing when BACP use supervision as a 'penalty for misconduct' (p. 85) as part of the sanctioning process. Moreover, it is worth noting that, as Tudor and Worrall (2007b) observe, BACP is *both* a counsellor's 'professional association' *and* 'receives their clients' complaints' (p. 5). Clearly this conflates two functions: membership and the policing and sanctioning of members. Furthermore, and in common with Tudor and Worrall (2007b), I share with Angela the view that, as a result, members often feel guilty until proved innocent. In turn, it is possible to argue that fear of what *might* happen is, at times, greater than the reality. Postle (2007) argues that this is concerned with the adoption of a *power-over* approach to members by a professional body where 'the force of the state, through statutory regulation' (p. 107) is used to consolidate power and instil fear.

Daniels (2000) contends that the move towards supervisors policing and monitoring counsellors 'on behalf of the profession' (p. 81), might be positive in terms of greater accountability within the profession. However, perhaps unsurprisingly, also argues that this might not have a positive impact on the supervisory relationship. She suggests that one consequence might be that both the supervisor and supervisee engage in defensive practice. Indeed, this was one outcome for Jane and Lucy. Both participants spoke about the need to 'shut down' in order to keep themselves safe in otherwise unsafe supervisory relationships. The literature does include reference to ruptures in the supervisory alliance though, arguably, Lucy and Jane's experiences constitute more than a 'rupture' in the relationship. Nevertheless, Dunnett et al. (2013), Creaner (2014) and Henderson (2009) all discuss how to repair the supervisory relationship after a mistake has been made. Henderson (2009), for example highlights the difficulty for the supervisee in raising this with their supervisor. However, as with much of the supervision literature, this is more from the perspective of the trainee. Creaner (2014) includes a chapter on good and bad supervision and, in particular, supervision which was harmful for the supervisee.

However, the focus is again skewed much more towards the trainee experience. Perhaps because as the research evidence cited by Creaner (2014) demonstrates, there has been little research conducted to explore harmful supervision for experienced counsellors. Moreover, Creaner (2014), and Henderson (2009) both discuss the capacity of the supervisee to make mistakes, rather than supervisor mistakes. I would argue also that the emphasis is on supervision as facilitating learning, Creaner (2014) is most specific regarding this. It is, therefore, difficult to align this with my participants given the extent and range of their experience and, arguably, what is embedded in much of the supervision literature is what Mary described as the archetype of the 'wise woman'.

Henderson (2009) is one of the very few authors to include reference to complaints made against supervisors. Whilst it is a very short section, nevertheless it is a welcome inclusion which focuses on the research undertaken by Khele et al. (2008) into complaints made to the BACP. During the period between 1998 and 2006, 90 complaints were made to the BACP, of which 12 were against supervisors. The largest number of complaints was found in two areas: the first, 'issues of responsibility', the second 'management of work' (Khele et al., 2008, p. 128). An overview of who complained, broken down by occupation and whether the complainant was a member was included. However, it was not possible to discern from the information given who the complainants were in respect of supervisors. Lucy and Jane arguably had cause to complain although neither mentioned this as a possibility. Moreover, participants often sought to take responsibility for their role in any difficulties in supervision which, perhaps, echoes of the notion of supervisees as self-policing (Crocket, 2007). It is conceivable also that my participants were drawing on narratives that, as Feltham (2000) has argued, imply something is wrong with the supervisee on the assumption of the universality of the helpfulness of supervision. Or, alternatively, as Webb (2001) suggests it is possible that supervisors have been 'idealised as good, wise and all-knowing so that the supervisee overvalues them and is blinded to their shortcomings (p. 184). Lucy and Jane, however, did not tell stories which supported this position. In fact, both appeared fully aware of the shortcomings of the supervisors involved. Rather than complain, Jane, for example, chose to leave a number of unsatisfactory supervisors, often without giving feedback about why she was leaving.

In conclusion, my participants told stories which suggested that the supervisor *should* be responsible for reporting unethical practice. However, in practice, stories also reflected the complex nature of the supervisor as accountable, and responsible for practice.

Power and professionalisation

Most participants told stories about power in the supervisory relationship, and in general this was concerned with an abuse of power. Indeed, Stainsby (2015) names the potential for the supervisor to hold power and influence over the supervisee. Furthermore, Creaner (2014) names the inherent power dynamic in supervision as an intrinsic feature of the relationship. Evidently, in the stories told by my participants, this power dynamic was often experienced as problematic. Moreover, Mearns and Thorne (2007) state that 'distrust of experts runs deep' (p. 9) for person-centred counsellors. It was, therefore, unsurprising that participants who were person-centred told stories about difficulties with 'expert' supervisors. The final group of stories relate to professionalism, and questions about the professionalisation of counselling. As Postle (2007) contends power in this sense relates to professional bodies, for my participants BACP, to hold power-over members. Specifically Postle (2007) names this as the 'use, or threat of force/sanctions to ensure compliance' (p. 107), with specific reference to statutory regulation.

Power in the supervisory relationship

In general, the literature assumes a hierarchy in supervision with the supervisor as more experienced than the supervisee. Furthermore, this is often linked to the authority the supervisor holds in terms of responsibility, accountability and as gatekeeper. Creaner (2014), for example, positions the supervisor as the one who has more expertise, experience, qualifications and training. Page and Wosket (2015) also name the power differential, i.e., that the supervisor has more seniority, and link this to the authority held by the supervisor. Likewise, Dunnett et al. (2013), write about the authority of the role bringing an inevitable inequality in terms power and, hence, a hierarchical relationship in supervision. It is difficult to align this with my participants who were all experienced counsellors and, furthermore, many of whom were also experienced supervisors. In addition, two held PhD qualifications, two had almost completed their PhD thesis, and the remainder were qualified to Masters Level. It is possible, therefore, to argue that their experience, in part, accounted for some of the difficulties encountered in supervision. Certainly Lucy - who had almost completed her PhD thesis at the time of the second interview - was more highly qualified than her private supervisor and had more expertise in a particular practice arena than this supervisor.

Power appeared to be a complex interaction between Lucy and her private supervisor. On the one hand, as Creaner (2014) notes, Lucy may have abdicated her power

to the supervisor. I would contend, however, that a more accurate reading was that Lucy abdicated power to BACP, in ethical terms at least. Lucy told complex stories about giving power to her supervisor, as the one who would protect her should a client complain. Arguably, Lucy's description of this relationship as an 'unsafe safety net' articulated the complexity of power in this relationship. Page and Wosket (2015) contend that unless power differentials are explicitly discussed by both parties, there is the potential for the supervisor to abuse their power. In fact, neither Lucy nor her private supervisor discussed the complex power differentials between them. Creaner (2014) argues that it is possible for both the supervisor and supervisee to play 'power games' (p. 90).

Furthermore, Hawkins and Shohet (2007) write about the appropriate use of power and authority, and the power games which supervisors might play if not able to do this. Named are manipulative power games and, arguably, this was what my participants referred to in the stories told. The supervisor Jane described as dangerous, for example, might have been occupying the position of 'remember who is boss', or 'I will tell on you' (Hawkins & Shohet, 2007, p. 55). Certainly Jane was concerned about to whom the supervisor might relay information and what the outcome of that might be. Furthermore, stories told by Wendy attest to the impact of the supervisor positioning themselves as the expert. In this instance, it is arguable that the game being played was one of imparting knowledge as an attempt to make the supervisee feel inferior. In all cases, my participants also questioned their part in the power dynamic. Perhaps this is unsurprising given the focus on the literature often reflects the role of the supervisee, rather than the supervisor in this respect. This is picked up by Creaner (2014) who notes that it is interesting that power games are often labelled as the supervisee being resistant. In contrast, the supervisor is rarely subjected to the same accusation of resistance.

Participants also appeared to have been drawing on other dominant narratives around humanistic counsellors and the notion of the expert, and the discomfort many counsellors feel about personal power. Furthermore, participant stories, in particular Angela and Mary, reference counselling as a predominantly female occupation. Stories told appear to reflect the complexity of the way these intersected for participants. Mearns and Thorne (2007) argue that person-centred counsellors must learn to wear their expertise lightly. Arguably, this is what participants such as Angela and Wendy wanted from their supervisors and, in particular for Wendy, did not want her supervisor to position themselves as an expert. Instead, what she wanted was, as Mearns and Thorne (2007) contend, for her supervisor(s) to trust that she was a competent counsellor and to respect

her experience. Furthermore, she wanted this relationship to be founded on the core conditions (Rogers, 1951) and so be experienced as safe. Mary perhaps best articulates the paradox in respect of the differences between the two relationships: counselling and supervision. On the one hand much of the literature places emphasis on gatekeeping, accountability and the supervisor as the authority (e.g., Creaner, 2014; Dunnett et al., 2013; Page & Wosket, 2015; Stainsby 2015). Whereas, in contrast, my participants appeared to be drawing on literature about the counselling relationship (see Relational Narrative typology for a detailed discussion.)

It is also possible to argue that my participants' view of power was predicated more on their understanding of the counselling relationship and, in particular, how this relates to personal power. The definition offered by Hawkins and Shohet (2007) links personal power to expertise and is, therefore, particularly relevant in terms of stories told by my participants. Power here is seen as that which is 'over and above that given to the person through role or culture. It derives both from the authority of their expertise, as well as from the presence and impact of their personality' (Hawkins & Shohet, 2007, p. 122.) Moreover, Postle (2007) contends that psychotherapists, and I would argue counsellors, prefer to adopt a stance of *power-with* clients. It is conceivable that this was what my participants wanted from their supervisors: specifically that power was shared, and that the supervisor did not position themselves as the expert. Lucy perhaps offers the best comparison here. Her private supervisor appeared to want *power-over* Lucy, whereas her in-house supervisor sought to hold *power-with* Lucy. Hence, the relationship with her private supervisor was experienced as an abuse of power.

As a result, stories told by Lucy, and also Jane, stories offer some insight into abuse in supervision. As Kaberry (2000) highlights, abuse in supervision is an unexplored area. And furthermore, she contends that it is the supervisee who is most vulnerable to abuse of power by the supervisor. This would accord with stories told by my participants. Kaberry (2000) suggests that it is 'difficult to face the fact that members of one's own profession, one's own colleagues even, may behave abusively' (p. 43). Lucy, Jane and Wendy did all tell stories which attest to this, in particular Lucy. Moreover, and in common with my participants, Kaberry (2000) reported a pattern of this being about well-known supervisors. In fact, participants such as Jane, Wendy and Lucy told stories about the difficulties of offering feedback to well-known and well-respected supervisors. In contrast, stories told by participants about safe supervision, also told a story where power was held between the two parties. Or put another way, as Postle (2007) suggests power was held *with* rather

than *over*, the supervisee. Perhaps as Lambers (2013) contends, this is possible when the supervisor respects, values and trust the supervisee, and furthermore communicates this trust to the supervisee. Certainly, participant stories appear to tell stories which attest to the value of a safe supervisory relationship which is built on the core conditions (Rogers, 1951). Moreover, those stories are also marked by a lack of unhelpful power dynamics in supervision.

A few stories were told by James, Peter and Angela, about the meanings implied by the word 'supervision.' In particular, that it implies a hierarchical relationship, and also that the supervisor oversees the less experienced, or junior colleague. Angela, Peter and James all preferred using different terminology such as consultative support. Grauel (2002) offers a useful distinction between supervision and consultation. He states that supervision concerns a hierarchical relationship in which the supervisor is responsible for the work of the supervisee. In contrast, consultation is more collegial where 'a consultee seeks non-binding advice from a consultant' (p. 4). In turn, I would argue that this latter definition is more appropriate for an experienced counsellor. Moreover, it resonates more with stories told by my participants. Arguably, this would also go some way to mitigating the power dynamics, and abuse, experienced by some of my participants. As Speedy (2000) argues the 'very term super-vision' suggests both a positivist and a developmental 'hierarchy of vision and experience' (p. 419). My participant stories reflected no desire for supervision based on these views. In fact, stories told represented a desire for supervision which was egalitarian, and not either hierarchical or developmental.

Counselling as a 'profession'

Debates on professionalisation and, in particular, statutory regulation have been on-going since I trained in 1998. Many of these debates exist more outside than within counselling. In fact, most of the critical debates emanate from psychotherapists - such as House and Totton (2011), Itten and Roberts (2014), or Postle (2007) - or within the person-centred literature (e.g., Tudor 2007). There have been some voices - such as Bondi (2004), Feltham (2000; 2002; 2011) and Jenkins (2015; 2016) - inside counselling, but these are few in number. Reading the literature, in particular that produced by BACP, I would contend that regulation, and so professionalisation, largely goes unchallenged. Hence, the notion of regulation, either voluntary as currently, or as statutory, appears to have become a dominant narrative within counselling. Furthermore, it is a dominant narrative which appears to be accepted as a 'good thing'. As Jenkins (2015) suggests, BACP members often

talk as if regulation is about to happen. In turn, therefore, it is unsurprising that most participants used the word 'profession' or 'professional' frequently. It is important to note that this included me and, in some interviews, both with Jane for instance, I use this terminology most frequently.

However, I would concur with Spence (2006) when he writes that he is 'unhappy with what appears to be a developing trend in the movement to professionalise counselling/psychotherapy; that of seeing our work as being entirely open to measurement' (p. 2). Moreover, as House and Musgrave (2013) contend, it is timely to find the balance between the need to be accountable and not responding with 'fear-driven, knee-jerk responses to regulatory concerns' (p. 25). Furthermore, Feltham (2010) locates the opposition to statutory regulation as having its origins in the nature of humanistic therapy. That is, the focus of humanistic therapy is predicated on the uniqueness of the individual client. And, importantly, therefore the focus cannot be on outcomes, measures and standardisation of therapy. My reservations are allied to theirs specifically that it is important not to generate structures – of which supervision as mandatory is arguably one – which threaten to compromise core therapeutic values, such as the centrality of the relationship. Or perhaps, as Feltham (2000) argues, avoid structures which infantilise, for example, experienced counsellors.

It has been proposed that the focus on outcomes, and an aversion to risk, is part of the rationale for regulation and professionalisation. Beddoe (2010), writing about supervision in health and social care, does indeed argue that there is a link between risk management and the increased focus on supervision. As with counselling, Beddoe (2010) posits that the 'current preoccupation with oversight of practice has arguably strengthened the mandate for supervision' (p. 1280). Bond (2015) cites the Francis Report of 2013 as part of a review of the importance of standards and ethics. However, as Jenkins (2015) argues, the differences between counselling and medical ethics, and practices, are 'more telling than their similarities' (p. 3). I concur with Jenkins (2015) that it is not advisable for counsellors to adopt the conclusions of that report uncritically. As he argues, one important point of departure is that not all counsellors work within the NHS. In fact, only one of my participants worked within the NHS, and that formed only a small part of her work. Totton (2012b) has argued, in fact, that it is not possible to eliminate risk in counselling and psychotherapy, and nor is it advisable. For example, Totton (2012b) writing about therapy being delivered within the NHS, argues that one result has been the negative impact for clients. Specifically, that the therapy offered has been 'pared down to a time-

limited, outcome-focused, defensively structured version of therapy' (Totton, 2012b, p. 3). My experience of working with experienced counsellors in IAPT as part of the BACP project which is Counselling for Depression (CfD) leaves me in complete agreement with him. (My engagement with CfD will be explicated in more detail in the Auto-ethnographic chapter which follows.) Moreover, I would concur with Totton (2011) that the motives were, largely, positive and connected with increasing opportunities for employment. Nevertheless, I also find it hard to bear witness to the impact of an outcome driven environment on both clients, and the counsellors delivering the therapy.

However, Peter's stories demonstrate his commitment to counselling being more heavily regulated, than it currently is. Angela's stories, whilst not as explicit, did suggest she viewed counselling as a profession and, in particular, the supervisor as accountable. Both participants contrasted counselling with allied 'health professionals.' However, whilst use of the word 'professional' was commonplace, most participants did not express a view about counselling as a profession. Arguably, use of the word implies that it was a taken for granted aspect of counselling. Nevertheless, some participants did reflect on the differences in a personal as opposed to a professional relationship with their supervisor. Henderson (2009) writes about professional intimacy in supervision. She suggests that professional intimacy includes 'safety, trust, honesty, risk, openness, respect, psychological contact, and boundaries' (Henderson, 2009, p.30). It is hard to align this notion of professional intimacy with my participant narratives and, in particular, those told by Alice and Wendy. Or, for example, Mary's story about the professional supervisor to whom she felt unable to take an ethical dilemma. In fact, participants articulated a preference for a personal as opposed to professional relationship with their supervisor. Furthermore, this also entailed, and involved, a safe and trusting relationship with that supervisor. However, this did cause Alice to question whether she was sufficiently mature as a professional.

It was interesting to note that few participants referred to either supervision training, or supervision of supervision. Though, in fact, most were experienced supervisors and therefore would have offered *both* supervision for client work *and* supervision to supervisors – that is supervision of supervision. Alice does reflect that her supervision training equipped her to consider more what she did as a supervisor, rather than encourage her to reflect on her personal characteristics. Moreover, stories told by participants such as Jane suggest that many counsellors view working as a supervisor as a mark of status. In part this is supported by Creaner (2014), and Henderson (2009), both of whom write that experienced counsellors might be interested in progressing onto the

supervisor role. Creaner (2014) argues that training to be a supervisor is necessary and that experience as a counsellor alone should no longer be sufficient. However, supervision training is, as highlighted by Milne et al. (2011), a complicated picture, not least in the 'considerable variety in the content of training programmes' (p.64). Furthermore, as Henderson (2009) notes, there is no requirement to have supervision training in order to work as a supervisor and, as Henderson (2009), and Page and Wosket (2015) argue, most supervisors have not undertaken training. This is evidenced by the fact that uptake for the BACP supervisor accreditation scheme is low (Page & Wosket, 2015). In addition, and in contrast to the requirements for accredited counsellors, there is now no commensurate ethical requirement for a supervisor to have mandatory supervision of supervision

There is some support in the literature for Mary's view that working as a supervisor is seen as a mark of status. Henderson (2009) for example, argues that supervision of supervision is more properly named 'consultative support'. This arguably raises some problematic questions, in particular in respect of the developmental and hierarchical nature of supervision for those with experience. Creaner (2014), Henderson (2009), and Page and Wosket (2015), for example, all suggest that the move to supervisor status is connected with experience and counsellor development. Furthermore, all use the term 'consultative support' for supervision of supervision in order to highlight the way in which the consultant has experience. It is conceivable, therefore, that an experienced counsellor might be in a range of competing positions. Specifically, in roles which might be: a counsellor who is required to have mandatory supervision; a supervisor offering supervision; and finally have reached the pinnacle of being engaged in consultative support. Henderson (2009) argues, for example, that consultative support and supervision is marked by more collegiality. Arguably this highlights one tension in career-long supervision for all. Specifically, that it feels difficult to be in supervision for client work that assumes hierarchy and a developmental agenda; *and* yet at the same time so experienced that you can offer consultative supervision. Perhaps, as Feltham (2010) has argued, mandatory supervision for all, regardless of experience and caseload, infantilises the counsellor, contributes to supervision which is ritualised, and furthermore might make it difficult to find a suitably experienced supervisor.

In conclusion, stories told in this section relate to power and professionalisation in counselling. Stories told reflect the inherent complexity of both of these for experienced counsellors. Power was often viewed as problematic by participants, with stories being told about the impact of unhelpful power dynamics in the supervisory relationship.

Furthermore, stories were told which suggested that participants were drawing, largely without question, on dominant discourses around the professionalisation of counselling.

Final discussion

In the first part of this final discussion chapter I will discuss the main analytic points arising out of the narrative typology chapters: Relational narrative; Support, transparency and developmental narrative; and Career-long supervision narrative. My aim will be to review what arose out of my PhD research question: 'What is the meaning and impact of supervision for experienced counsellors?' The first and main portion of this chapter will, therefore, be divided into the following sections:

The importance of the relationship:

The core conditions

Supervision as restorative and the needs of experienced counsellors

Power in the supervisory relationship

The impact of career-long supervision:

Accountability and the responsibility of the supervisor

Mandatory supervision as a professional and ethical practice

In the second and final portion of the chapter, I will turn to look at the strengths and limitations of my research; consider what future research might be undertaken; and offer final conclusions.

The importance of the relationship

In order to address the question of the meaning and impact of supervision for experienced counsellors, this section will explicate the main arguments about the importance of the supervisor-supervisee relationship. As a result, I will develop arguments made across the three typologies of Relational; Support, transparency and development; and the Career-long narrative typology in respect of the relationship in supervision.

The core conditions

In common with other literature (e.g., Crocket et al., 2007; Meekums, 2007; Weaks, 2002; Webb, 2000; Webb & Wheeler, 1998) a significant feature of my research was the importance of the relationship in supervision. Participant narratives suggest that, as Tudor and Worrall (2004) argue, the following core conditions are necessary in supervision: con-

gruence; unconditional positive regard; and empathy (Rogers, 1951). The importance of this is reflected in the person-centred literature (see for example, Bryant-Jeffries, 2005; Lambers, 2001; 2013). Moreover, the importance of a safe relationship in supervision, predicated on the core conditions, was a feature of the other two narrative typologies. Put another way, safety in the supervisory relationship reminded participants of self-care and fostered transparency in supervision. In turn, when the supervisory relationship was experienced as unsafe it was not possible, for example, to be sufficiently vulnerable to receive support, or to be open and transparent.

In contrast, the generic literature on supervision described the relationship as an alliance and, furthermore, one which existed primarily to protect the client. As Wosket (2012) argues, whilst the success of supervision depends on the quality of the relationship, that relationship is 'is not an end in itself, it importantly expedites the task and process in effective supervision' (p. 164). Arguably, this concept of the relationship as a means to an end was true for Peter, and to an extent Alice. However, for the remainder of my participants the relationship was, in fact, the factor on which all else depended. Indeed, a particular type of relationship in supervision was articulated, or desired, by my participants. This was supervision which was capable of being either therapeutic in a broad sense, or, as with James and Wendy, at times able to be used as personal therapy. In contrast, the generic literature on supervision views the use of supervision as therapy as being undesirable, citing the gatekeeping and evaluating aspect of supervision as incompatible with therapy (see for example, Bond, 2015; Creaner, 2015; Page & Wosket, 2015).

However, the person-centred literature conceived of this as a more porous boundary. Tudor and Worrall (2007a) argue, for instance, that for a person-centred supervisor there is a somewhat arbitrary division between the personal and professional in supervision. Furthermore, as Bryant-Jeffries (2005) suggests whilst the supervision relationship is not a therapeutic one, it nevertheless has a therapeutic quality to it. The person-centred literature (e.g. Lambers, 2013) does contend that there is a boundary between supervision and therapy; however, personal development is nevertheless considered a legitimate factor of supervision. In particular, *personal development* is concerned with developing the self-awareness of the counsellor, and can, at times, be more akin to therapy. As Tudor and Worrall (2007a) suggest counsellors can feel unheard when the supervisor 'has decided, usually unilaterally' (p. 171) that a particular issue is personal and cannot be spoken about in supervision. Indeed, this was the experience of some participants, in particular Jane. However, the absence or presence of the core conditions was an important factor in feeling

safe enough to be vulnerable, and so disclose struggles from which personal development could accrue. The person-centred literature reflected participant narratives well in this respect. Lambers (2013), Tudor (2007), and Tudor and Worrall (2007a) for instance, write about the importance of personal development in supervision.

Moreover, stories told in the Relational narrative typology suggested that the optimal relationship in supervision for an experienced counsellor had more similarity with working at relational depth (Knox, 2012; Mearns & Cooper, 2005), than an alliance. This is where a relationship is offered to the client that is marked by a high degree of core conditions such as empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness. Furthermore, Rowan and Jacobs (2002) write about three levels in relationships, instrumental, authentic and transpersonal. In brief: an *instrumental* relationship is more akin to an alliance, and in particular one where a set of skills exist which can be applied; an *authentic* relationship involves a more personal identification with the client, and is most often associated with humanistic therapy; and finally a *transpersonal* relationship is concerned with the 'higher self' or 'soul' of the counsellor is in play (see Rowan & Jacobs, 2002; and the Relational narrative typology). Participant stories suggested that the preferred type of relationship was either authentic or transpersonal. This is in contrast to much of the literature which appears to describe, as Spence (20016) argues, a supervisory relationship offered at the instrumental level. That is a relationship in supervision marked by use of skills, techniques and the functions and tasks of supervision (Proctor, 1987). Furthermore, some participants told stories about the importance of love, compassion and attunement in supervision. As some authors note (e.g., Geraghty, 2016; Spence, 2006; Thorne, 1995; Tudor, 2007), there is an absence of discussions about, in particular, love in either supervision or in the wider therapy discourse. Some, such as Geraghty (2016), link this absence to the increasingly dominant narrative around the professionalisation of therapy: that is, as Thorne (2011) argues, love demands a great deal of the counsellor as a person and is too far removed from what could be considered 'technique'.

Supervision as restorative and the needs of experienced counsellors

My participant narratives suggest that what an experienced counsellor wants from supervision is somewhere to unburden and relieve potential stressors arising out of client work. The importance of self-care and the need for a restorative function is reflected across the literature (e.g., Carroll, 2014; Creaner, 2014; Desperser, 2011; Dunnett et al.,

2013). Proctor (1987) describes the three functions, or tasks, as normative, formative, and restorative tasks, or functions, of supervision. In brief: the *normative* function in supervision is about establishing and protecting ethical and professional standards; and the *formative* is concerned with enhancing aptitude, skills and knowledge, and is often called the 'educative' function in supervision; and the *restorative* function is conceived of as supporting the counsellor to withstand the emotional effects of client work. Tudor (2007) contends that the generic literature makes too much of tasks, and in particular the normative function, in supervision. Indeed, for my participants stories told articulated a desire for the restorative function, but not either the normative or formative functions as both were experienced as indicators of an unhelpful hierarchy in supervision. Moreover, participant stories suggested that it was only possible to access the restorative function of supervision when the relationship was safe, and based on the core conditions. Furthermore, participant stories reflected the importance of equality, collegiality, and therefore supervision which was not hierarchical. In fact, when the relationship in supervision was safe, and based on the core conditions, participant stories articulated the link between self-care and the restorative function in supervision. BACP (2010; 2016) states that self-care, or self-respect is an ethical principle whereby the counsellor is expected to attend to their well-being. The generic literature about supervision does, as Tudor (2007) contends, neglect the restorative function, at the expense of the normative and formative functions. In contrast, the generic literature reflected the need to, as Creaner (2017) argues; balance the three functions of supervision. Furthermore, Creaner (2017) argues that there is a danger that supervisors might be too supportive, or protective of the relationship 'at the expense of appropriately challenging the supervisee or providing corrective feedback as the need arises' (p. 122). However, the research on which she draws (i.e., Heckman-Stone, 2004) is about trainee counsellors. Therefore, arguably, as elsewhere in the literature, what works for a trainee is used to discuss what an experienced counsellor needs (e.g., Creaner, 2014; Dunnett et al., 2013; Page & Wosket, 2015), and stories told by my participants suggest that the needs of an experienced counsellor are different from those of a trainee or newly qualified counsellor. In fact, my research suggests the need for the restorative function in supervision above all else, for experienced counsellors.

Furthermore, participant narratives suggested that factors such as trust, affirmation, and being known relationally by the supervisor were important. The generic literature on supervision is largely silent on trust and affirmation in supervision, with the exception of Page and Wosket (2015), and Weeks (2000) who both write about affirmation. In contrast,

some of the person-centred literature (e.g., Herwig, 2007; Lambers, 2013; Traynor, 2007) does reflect on the importance of trust for the supervisee. And, again, trust and affirmation, and the core conditions were inextricably linked. Moreover, my participants discussed the desire to be known relationally by the supervisor. In this respect, as elsewhere, my participants appeared to be drawing more on humanistic counselling literature than the literature pertaining to supervision. Arguably, as all of my participants had a humanist theoretical orientation this is unsurprising. However, it is nevertheless interesting to note that they were drawing on this rather than the supervision literature. In addition, all were supervisors, and some were humanistic counsellor trainers, therefore, conceivably would have been familiar with the literature about supervision. Mearns and Thorne (2013) offers an example substantiating the impossibility of ‘turning on or off’ the core conditions as a counsellor, as if they were a behavioural technique to be applied as required. My participants appeared to apply the same criteria to supervision and, consequently, wanted in supervision what they offered clients. Put another way, their capacity as counsellors to develop trusting relationships was viewed as central to working within counselling and was, therefore, what they wanted from their supervisor, and expected in supervision. Tudor and Worrall (2007) eloquently sum up the stories told:

The practice of therapy involves the whole person. Practitioners from some orientations may not agree, and the assertion may not hold true across the range of psychological therapies. It is, however, tenable within humanistic therapies in general and person-centred therapies in particular. It’s consistent with this, therefore, and appropriate that a therapist should feel free to bring himself as fully to supervision as he does to his work as a therapist (p. 174).

Most of the literature about supervision assumes that it is a learning environment, developmental, and furthermore is hierarchical (e.g., Creaner, 2014; Despensier, 2011; Dunnett et al., 2013; Page & Wosket, 2015). Moreover, often this same literature uses evidence pertinent to a trainee, or newly qualified, counsellor and applies that to those with more experience, only apparent when the source is followed up and investigated (see for instance, Carroll, 2014; Creaner, 2017). This is evident, too, in the BACP literature (see for instance, Bager-Charleson, 2015; Mitchels, 2015). In contrast, a hierarchical relationship was not valued by my participants. Instead, participant narratives articulated a desire for supervision which was collegiate, mutual and equal. All of my participants were also supervisors, and some were very experienced in that role. Hence, what ran through all of the stories told was a tension between highly educated and experienced counsellors, and su-

pervision which was framed – by the literature – as normative and formative. The normative function in supervision is often perceived as quality assurance, and maintaining ethical standards, and the formative function as educative. Supervision as quality assurance or educative was experienced as hierarchical by my participants. However, this evident tension for experienced counsellors was not either discussed or acknowledged in the literature about supervision.

Power in the supervisory relationship

The supervision literature assumes that the supervisor is the more experienced, and more resourced, partner in the relationship. As a result, the generic literature positions the supervisor as having more power, and inevitably therefore, supervision as a hierarchical relationship. In addition, the literature positions the supervisor as a gatekeeper, for the profession and in terms of client protection (e.g., Bond, 2015; Creaner, 2014; Dunnington et al., 2013; Page & Wosket, 2015). Much of the literature on supervision, including that produced by BACP, assumes a stance in which the supervisor has power-over the supervisee. Arguably, if the supervisor is considered to be accountable for practice, and to have a gatekeeping function, this is the only logical stance to take. However, all of my participants were experienced counsellors, and most were also experienced supervisors. Perhaps as a result, it was unsurprising that the stories told by my participants often reflected a problematic engagement with power in the supervisory relationship. Moreover, as Mearns and Thorne (2007) suggest, distrust of experts runs deep for most humanistic counsellors. Therefore, it was perhaps unsurprising that most participant stories reflected a desire that the supervisor did not position themselves as the expert. In contrast, a collegiate and equal relationship was preferred and, furthermore, one based on the core conditions.

In addition, participant narratives suggested that, in respect of power, there was a tendency to draw more on their understanding of power in the therapeutic relationship. As Postle (2007) suggests, therapists prefer to share power with the client, so a stance of power-with is adopted as opposed to power-over. I have discussed my relationship to power in the Reflexive chapter, and in particular my sensitivity to power. I have, for instance, a preference for a position of power-with rather than power-over being taken in any relationship. Nevertheless, it would appear, from stories told by my participants, that supervision for experienced counsellors would function better if power-over was replaced

by the core conditions, hence constituting a safe supervisory relationship. In fact, when the core conditions were absent, stories were told about the abuse of power in supervision. Moreover, as Kaberry (2000) notes, abuse of power by the supervisor is an under-researched area. It is therefore, interesting to note Creaner (2014) and Hawkins and Shohet (2007) who both refer to the power games which *both* parties might play. Furthermore, as Creaner (2014) observes, the supervisee is often seen as being resistant, whereas this is a charge rarely laid at the door of the supervisor. Arguably, this again implies a hierarchy within supervision with the supervisor perceived as having more power and authority than the supervisee. In addition, participants told stories regarding the name 'supervision' and the association of that name to power and, in particular that the name implies an unhelpful hierarchy. Grauel (2002) argues that supervision does, indeed, imply a hierarchy, whereas in contrast, 'consultation' suggests a more egalitarian relationship. This is taken up by Wheeler and King (2000) who argue that there is a need to describe supervision for experienced counsellors as 'consultative support'. And, perhaps as, Speedy (2000) has suggested the word 'supervision' can be equated to a developmental model of supervision and, therefore, hierarchical. As experienced counsellors and supervisors, my participants did not want supervision that was hierarchical. In fact, my participants valued personal development, in particular developing their self-awareness in a therapeutic sense. However, a distinction was made between this and their professional development, as implied in the normative and formative functions. In particular, participant stories strongly suggested that the educative aspects embedded in the formative function was particularly unwellcome for experienced counsellors.

In conclusion, my participants mediated their understanding of the meaning and impact of supervision through the supervisory relationship. When the supervisory relationship was based on the core conditions, and was, therefore, experienced as safe, it was possible to access self-care, feel restored and experience a relationship which was more therapeutic. In addition, participant stories demonstrated more alignment with the literature on the therapeutic relationship, than that described in the supervision literature. And, as a result, what an experienced counsellor needs is arguably different to a trainee, or newly qualified counsellor. In particular, stories were told about being known relationally, in a similar fashion to what was offered to their clients. In turn, my research suggests that an experienced counsellor requires a non-hierarchical relationship, and furthermore, one where power is replaced by the core conditions.

The impact of career-long supervision

In this section I will discuss the impact of career-long, mandated supervision for experienced counsellors. This section will, therefore focus in the main on arguments made across two of the three narrative typologies: Support, transparency and developmental; and Career-long narrative typology. Nevertheless, the importance of a safe relationship, predicated on the core conditions is also a feature of these two narrative typologies; therefore, the Relational narrative typology inevitably forms part of this section.

Accountability and the responsibility of the supervisor

Accredited members of BACP (2010; 2016) are required to have a minimum of one and a half hours of supervision a month. Bond (2015) argues that mandatory supervision is predicated on public accountability, and client protection. The rationale is that supervision protects clients, ensures good practice, and contributes to client welfare, and this is the position taken in most of the generic literature (see for instance, Bond, 2015; Creaner, 2014; 2015; Dunnett et al., 2013; Henderson, 2009; Page & Wosket, 2015). Furthermore, BACP overtly position the supervisor as responsible for ensuring good practice (e.g., BACP, 2010; 2014; 2016; Dispenser, 2011; Mitchels, 2015). Despite this there is, in fact, a dearth of evidence in support of supervision ensuring client protection, contributing to client welfare, contributing towards good practice ethically and professionally; or the effectiveness of supervision (e.g., Bond, 2015; Feltham, 2010; Kavanagh, 2007; Spence, 2006; Wheeler & Richards, 2007). As Bond (2015) argues, there is a *hope* expressed that research will demonstrate that supervision does, in fact, do this. However, as Wheeler and Richards (2007) state there is no 'robust evidence that would ideally be required to make bold statements about the efficacy of supervision practice' (p. 35).

Nevertheless, my participants believed that it *should* be possible to be transparent in supervision, or to 'take anything and everything'. This was, in fact, only possible when the relationship in supervision felt safe enough to do so, and not when the relationship was unsafe. Given one premise for career-long supervision is that it protects clients, and so the supervisor is accountable for practice, there is an evident tension here. As Webb and Wheeler (1998) point out, in order for the supervisor to be accountable the supervisee must discuss client work in supervision. For an experienced counsellor, however, as Feltham (2010) highlights, it might not be possible, with a large caseload to discuss *all* clients in supervision. Moreover, for supervision to be accountable, and for the supervisor to take responsibility for practice, the supervisee must be able to discuss client work openly

and transparently. Whilst participant stories reflected the desire to be honest in supervision this was not always possible, especially when the relationship in supervision was unsafe. The consequences of the supervisee not feeling sufficiently safe to be honest in supervision are discussed by West (2003), Webb (2000), and Webb and Wheeler (1998). As Herwig (2007) argues, for instance, trust is an important feature in supervision and without it she tends to disappear and, furthermore, she hides from the supervisor.

This, therefore, highlights a further tension in mandatory and career-long supervision. Specifically that if the supervisee feels unable to be transparent, and discuss client work, it might constitute a breach of their ethical codes (BACP, 2010; 2016). As Webb and Wheeler (1998) highlight, this is of serious concern, not least because it leaves experienced counsellors potentially open to a complaint on those grounds. Stories were told suggesting that some participants were fearful that they might be complained against, by a client or a supervisor. However, there is minimal, if any, evidence to support the fear of a complaint (e.g. Symons et al., 2011; Khele et al., 2008). Nevertheless, participants did fear that they might be subject to a complaint. Concerns were raised in the literature about the fear of complaints, and the potential therefore for defensive practice on the part of the supervisee (Daniels, 2000). Moreover, arguably as Tudor and Worrall (2004) assert if 'we frighten trainees and practitioners, we only encourage them to be scared and defensive' (p. 93). Leading on from this, some of the literature advised caution about the culture of supervision (Crocket, 2007; Feltham, 2000; West, 2003) and in particular that supervision is a form of professional self-monitoring, policing and surveillance. In fact, Postle (2007) contends that this is, in fact, what happens when professional bodies adopt a *power-over* stance to their membership, and in turn, use fear to consolidate power and instil fear.

Moreover, there are voices who argue that it is, in reality, not possible for supervision to offer client protection, or for the supervisor to be responsible for ensuring good practice, and/or client welfare (e.g., Feltham, 2002; 2010; Spence, 2006; Lambers, 2013). Perhaps, as Spence (2006) argues, whilst it might be possible to contend that supervision, at most, ensures good practice, the rest is 'wishful thinking' (p. 3). Moreover, Tudor (2007) writes that counsellors (and organisations) might fantasise about accountability and the responsibility of the supervisor, however there is a lack of 'clarity and certainty' (p. 26) about what this actually might be. It is perhaps worth noting that my participants, when I asked directly, found it difficult to offer examples of reporting practice. In fact, with the exception of Peter, no participant was able to describe with clarity how, or to whom, they might report unethical practice. Moreover, no participant, including Peter, knew of any

instance where this had happened. Perhaps as Wheeler and King (2000) propose, either the codes of ethics need strengthening - so that supervisors do report unethical or poor practice - or we need to expect less of supervisors.

It is interesting to note that in contrast, my participants were able to describe good practice, hence, accountability and the responsibility of the supervisor for trainee counsellors with greater confidence. This was also reflected in the literature (see for instance, Bond, 2015; Creaner, 2014; 2017; Dunnett et al., 2013; Page & Wosket, 2015). Moreover, all authors use research pertinent to the trainee which is not necessarily relevant for those with experience. Creaner (2017), for instance, writing about the role of evaluation and feedback in supervision, acknowledges that little is known about the effect of this on the trainee while, in fact, even less is known about the effect on the experienced counsellor. However, she goes on to say that evaluation is an 'ever present phenomenon' (p. 12), citing organisations, such as BACP, who require reports for accreditation and re-accreditation. In contrast, my participants told stories which suggest there is little or no role for evaluation in supervision for an experienced counsellor.

Furthermore, as Lawton (2000) argues, the profile of supervisees has changed considerably over the years, since the introduction of career-long supervision by the then BAC in 1984. Where once a supervisee might have been inexperienced and in training, many are now experienced. Wheeler and Richards 2007 scoping of the literature, it is often cited in support of on-going and so mandatory supervision. Nevertheless, they state that supervision as either protecting clients or enhancing the outcomes of client work 'appears to be an assumption based on its historical importance in the training and practice of psychotherapy and has not been subject to adequate empirical investigation' (Wheeler & Richards, 2007, p. 317). Arguably therefore, as Feltham (200), King and Wheeler (1999), and Tudor (2007) contend, career-long supervision runs the risk of infantilising counsellors. My participants were all experienced counsellors, many were experienced supervisors, and some were experienced trainers. As Lawton (2000) notes experience might alter the dynamics of supervision. One example of this is that some of my participants told stories about abuse of power in supervision, which was possibly related to the supervisor feeling insecure when working with a more experienced counsellor. Indeed, both Jane and Lucy told stories about abuse in supervision based on this.

Moreover, stories told by my participants suggest there are other consequences of career-long supervision such as: a reluctance to leave a 'good' supervisor; finding someone with enough experience (which was more difficult the more years served as a counsellor);

and expense. Information in the literature in general, again, assumed a less experienced supervisee and advice was therefore, offered on that basis. Whilst some aspects relating to the difficulty of finding an appropriate supervisor was reflected in the literature (e.g., Dunnett et al., 2013), the particular difficulty for those with experience was not. Bamber (2016), for example, in a BACP GPiA resource, suggests asking whether the supervisor is used to working with, or offers discount to, a trainee counsellor. It is possible to contend, therefore that the literature, and not only in this respect, does not consider the specific needs of experienced counsellors. Instead, there appears to be an assumption made that what works for a trainee *should* also work for an experienced counsellor.

Mandatory supervision as a professional and ethical practice

Of particular relevance to my research is the way in which BACP position career-long supervision as offering the client protection, and the public accountability. However, there is little, if any, evidence to suggest that supervision over the career-lifespan does afford either of these. Indeed, I agree with Spence (2006) that it is not possible to equate supervision with client well-being. Based on my participant narratives, and the supervision literature, I would argue that it is a mistake to believe that supervision offers the client protection. However, it is perhaps possible to make the claim that safe supervision achieves a different aim, in particular taking care of the supervisee: for example, a space where it is a restorative space, where it is possible to be reminded of their own self-care needs, be that therapy, therapeutic, love, or compassion. And, as Mary and Jane said, the value of supervision was in having a space similar to that which they offered to their clients. As Spence (2006) argues, perhaps the best we can aim for is to support ourselves ‘in such a way as to make good practice as likely as possible’ (p. 3). Nevertheless, BACP do take the stance that career-long supervision should be mandatory for counsellors. Furthermore, supervision in the BACP literature (BACP, 2010; 2014; 2016) is mandated on the basis that it does protect the client. The emphasis, as a result, is more on – as Tudor (2007) argues – the normative and formative functions, rather than supervision as restorative. As I have argued there are a range of, perhaps unintended, consequences for experienced counsellors arising out of that position. Feltham (2002), in fact, is of the view that career-long and mandatory supervision is, for BACP a cog in the machine of professionalisation.

Indeed, stories told by participants and my use of the word ‘professional’ at the time of the interviews, suggest that counselling was viewed, and accepted, as a ‘profes-

sion.’ In particular, Peter overtly wanted counselling to be more professional, and more heavily regulated. I would concur with Tudor (2007) who suggests there appears to be a lack of questioning, and a compliant attitude by many counsellors regarding the development of counselling as a profession. I have discussed my response to counselling as a profession and the professionalisation of counselling in the Reflexive chapter. However, it is worth noting here that, in common with Bondi (2004), I feel ambivalent about professionalisation. Furthermore, as Murphy (2011) states I am not averse to counselling as profession, it is more that I hold concerns about the *form* which it might take (see Reflexive chapter). Moreover, I would contend that, with some exceptions, my participants did not question either professionalisation or whether counselling should be a profession. Peter evidently wanted a more regulated profession, however, Angela, apparently shared some of my ambivalence. Perhaps, as Feltham (2002) and Murphy (2011) have argued the discourse around public protection, and so supervision as accountable has become almost impossible to challenge, such that ‘anyone in opposition to statutory regulation appears[s] somewhat dubious in character’ (p. 229). It is, in fact, increasingly difficult to find voices within counselling, and in particular in BACP, who question the move towards professionalisation (see Aldridge, 2010).

Some of the opposition to professionalisation focuses on the particularities and uniqueness of the therapeutic relationship. In particular, the argument is made that it is not possible to effectively measure qualities such as empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard. Furthermore, questions are raised about whether it is possible to standardise and so measure counselling as a result (e.g., House & Musgrove, 2013; House & Totton, 2011; Itten & Roberts, 2014; Postle, 2007; Spence 2006; Tudor 2007). As Murphy (2011), for example, argues that professionalisation would result in defensive practice which ‘would inhibit the development of deep relational encounter[s]’ (p.228). I remain in agreement with Spence (2006) when he states that he is unhappy with this trend and, furthermore, ‘that of seeing our work as being entirely open to measurement’ (p. 2).

Furthermore, Shohet (2011) and Abernathy (2011) express concerns about fear and the accreditation process, and accreditation is viewed by both as part of professionalisation. Abernathy (2011) argues that we have been ‘conditioned to think that accreditation and registration are the only methods’ (p. 333) to ensure high standards. Moreover, House and Musgrave (2013) contend that it is time for a ‘creative engagement’ (p. 25) with accountability which takes on board more complexity, particularly with regard to humanistic therapy and supervision. Arguably for my participants a more creative engagement might

include recognition of their experience. Whilst Jenkins (2016) does not use the word fear, he raises a similar concern about the increase in legal guidance, in particular as it applies to supervisory liability. Participant stories did raise questions about the nature of ethical codes, and the law as it applies to counselling. The link between prescriptive ethical codes and statutory regulation and, in turn, the professionalisation of counselling was often made in the literature. In turn, this literature was generally critical of accountability and responsibility (e.g., Feltham, 2002; Grant & Schofield, 2007; Tudor, 2007).

In addition, Jenkins (2015; 2106) poses questions about the revisions to the ethical framework (BACP, 2016), and the way in which BACP appear to be adopting a legalistic and medical framework for understanding ethics. Alice, certainly, appeared to question her adoption of external ethical injunctions uncritically, and reflected on the fear she felt as a result. House (2011) contends that prescriptive ethical codes offer a comforting message that the codes will 'take care of it so you needn't grapple with these issues any further' (p. 354). However, as Alice's story attests it was her realisation that she had ignored her own sense of 'right and wrong' which enabled her to still her fear. However, House (2011) also suggests that authorities, in this case arguably BACP, have 'invented the wheel for you, and you needn't bother to invent it again' (House, 2011, p. 354). Arguably this was evident in participant narratives which suggested a general acceptance of supervision as mandatory, and that it should protect clients. This was so even when stories were also told which suggested that the mechanisms, for instance, for reporting were unclear and apparently unused. Furthermore, Jenkins (2016) highlights the way in which the revised ethical framework (BACP, 2016) is underpinned by a 'raft of legal guidance resources, now being issued on a regular basis by BACP' (p. 1). Furthermore, Jenkins (2016) argues this is based on a move towards statutory models, particularly in respect of risk management, stating that there is a 'theme of greater control by professional associations, over the fine detail of our day-to-day therapeutic practice' (p. 7). Perhaps, as Postle (2007) has suggested with respect to statutory regulation, the use, or threat, of sanctions is designed to ensure that members comply.

In conclusion, career-long supervision for experienced counsellors is based on the belief that it offers the public accountability, and protects clients. BACP (2010; 2016), therefore, stipulate that accredited members must have monthly supervision in order to monitor practice, and maintain both professional and ethical standards. However, there is scant evidence to support this position. Stories told by my participants suggest that there are a range of, unhelpful, consequences as a result of this position. Moreover, Feltham

(2002) argues that career-long supervision is about the professionalisation of counselling. The wider debate concerning counselling as a profession, and professionalisation, extends this argument to prescriptive ethics and the increasing raft of legal guidance (e.g., Jenkins 2015; 2016). And, furthermore, concerns are raised about the *form* that professionalisation might take, rather than professionalisation as inadvisable *per se*. In particular, concerns were expressed that this form might include measurement, and the standardisation of counselling which is seen as problematic.

Strengths and limitations

Some of the strengths of my research are also bound up with the limitations; particularly in respect of the length of time it has taken me to complete this research. Since 2009 when I began this research BACP have, for instance, undertaken extensive revisions to the ethical framework (BACP, 2010; 2016). Furthermore, all of the documentation produced by BACP in support of the 2010 ethical framework was also significantly revised and the landscape as regards regulation has shifted during that time: for example, BACP introduced voluntary regulation in 2013. As Jenkins (2016) has argued, this was in response to the mark left on BACP by the failure to achieve statutory regulation. As a result, my research has taken place during a turbulent and fast moving period for counselling. This has necessitated the inclusion of two ethical frameworks and associated documentation and, in turn, therefore, I have been working across two sets of information which has proved problematic at times. This might be viewed as a limitation. However, arguably, the length of time has also enabled me to chart the moves around regulation - statutory and voluntary - and the professionalisation agenda. In turn, this has offered further evidence about the way BACP is positioning career-long supervision as offering client protection over time.

It could be argued that a limitation is found in the small number of participants, and that all those interviewed were drawn from one theoretical orientation. However, I would argue that my design is in keeping with a narrative inquiry (see Methodology chapter for a more detailed discussion of the claims I make in this respect). Nevertheless, it would be interesting to see whether the narrative typologies I propose have veracity for other theoretical orientations, in particular across psychotherapy orientations. The inclusion of psychotherapists in my research would, however, necessitate the inclusion of the membership requirements for UKCP, and in turn, ethical framework for psychotherapists. Of particular note is that UKCP have differently phrased advice for members in respect of supervision. Specifically that the psychotherapist should ensure 'sufficient supervisory arrange-

ments and other necessary support' (UKCP, 2009, p.6), and, in contrast to BACP, no amount is stipulated. Furthermore, and consequentially, the supervision literature for psychotherapy has a different emphasis. Moreover, there are long-standing debates about the degree to which counselling and psychotherapy might be viewed as separate activities (e.g. see Thorne, 1999, & Harvie-Clark, 1999). It is possible to argue therefore, that, whilst it was not a deliberate strategy to exclude psychotherapists, their inclusion might have lent an undue complexity to the research. Arguably this holds true across cognate disciplines, such as cognitive-behavioural therapists, who also have a separate professional body, ethical framework and body of literature pertaining to supervision.

It is possible that another researcher might have arrived at different conclusions, in particular around the accountability, regulation and professionalisation of counselling. Arguably, a researcher who felt that statutory regulation and the professionalisation of counselling were beneficial could have been alert to alternative narratives or to have considered there to be an emphasis in those posited. Moreover, both my 'insider' and 'outsider' positions as researcher warrant inclusion here. As a counsellor, and personally, I am sensitised to power. Furthermore, as a humanistic counsellor I privilege a particular type of therapeutic relationship, and one, moreover, in which I seek to minimise the effect of power. In turn, therefore, my insider position might have led me to read participant narratives through that lens. Alternatively, of course, the reverse might be true and being alert to issues of power allowed me to be more aware of participant narratives about the potential for abuse in supervision (e.g. Kaberry, 2000). In providing a Reflexive chapter I have endeavoured to offer some reflexivity and insights into my motivations in this respect and was clear from the outset that I believe there to be no objective standpoint from which I, as researcher, could approach this work.

As Riessman (2008) contends 'narrative truths are always partial – committed and incomplete' (p. 186). However, she also acknowledges the need to persuade 'audiences about the trustworthiness of their data and interpretations' (Riessman, 2008, p. 186). Furthermore she argues that this necessitates close attention to the methods used to collect and interpret data. Arguably, the rigour with which I have undertaken this research, transparency with which I have articulated my position, methods, and procedures, and detail and persuasiveness of my analysis are relevant quality criteria offered to the reader in judging the worth of my findings (Elliott et al., 1999). For instance, I contend that the inclusion of a Reflexive chapter in which I include, and reflect on my values and assumptions, has enabled me to 'own my perspective' (Elliott et al., 1999, p. 221). Furthermore, I have situ-

ated my sample, and grounded my research in examples of the data (Elliott et al., 1999). Moreover, I am in agreement with Riessman (2008) that the typologies I present are 'told from a point of view that seeks to persuade others to see the events in a similar way' (p. 187). It is, therefore, possible to argue that, as a result, I have been able to meet another of the criteria set out by Elliott et al., (1999), that of coherence. In particular, in using the typologies as 'guides to listening' (Frank, 1995; 2010), or a template, it has been possible to demonstrate my understanding of an 'underlying structure for the phenomenon' (Elliott et al., 1999, Pp. 223) that is supervision for experienced counsellors.

In the Methodology chapter I articulated the desire that my work be evaluated using criteria appropriate for qualitative research. Clearly the criteria proposed by Elliott et al. (1999) is one framework for evaluating and critiquing my research. Tracy's (2010) eight criteria is another, and I will now turn to evaluate my work using this latter framework. Tracy (2010) articulates my position well when she argues that 'applying traditional criteria like generalizability, objectivity and reliability to qualitative research is illegitimate' (p. 838). Arguably it is even less appropriate for a narrative inquiry such as mine, whereas in contrast Tracy's (2010) criteria have more relevance. In particular, it is possible to argue that my research is timely and important, and furthermore that I have questioned taken-for-granted assumptions about supervision. I have highlighted some of the dominant narratives about supervision for experienced counsellors, for instance, that supervision can be conceived of in the same way for an experienced counsellor as a trainee. Arguably therefore, my research is a 'worthy topic' (Tracy, 2010). Furthermore, and in common with Elliott et al., (1999) who articulate the importance of owning your perspective, Tracey (2010) argues that 'sincerity' is 'achieved through self-reflexivity, vulnerability, honesty' and transparency (p. 841). And I would argue that I have achieved this throughout this research, not only by the inclusion of a chapter devoted to reflexivity, but also through owning my values, and endeavouring to be transparent about my strengths and shortcomings (Tracy, 2010).

I have discussed credibility (Tracy, 2010) in the Methodology chapter and in particular about the methodological choice not to return the analysis to participants for member reflections, or checking. In turn, therefore, it is possible to critique decisions made in respect of credibility. (Please see Methodology for a detailed discussion of this.) Nevertheless, it is conceivable that credibility was found in other aspects of my research, for instance in the 'thick description' offered (Tracy, 2010). I would argue, for instance, that I provided the detail needed in order that the reader might 'come to their own conclusion[s]'

(p. 843) about my research. This detail includes, but is not limited to: reflexive contributions about my impact on the research; lengthy participant extracts which include my voice; and contextualising information about participants.

In conclusion, I believe I have been able to address my research question and, in so doing, to shed light on important counter-narratives about career-long supervision. My hope is that the fruitfulness of this is commensurate with Wheeler's (2000) advice to counsellors to continue to critique practice to the benefit of all involved in this important activity.

Future research

I am in agreement with Wheeler and Richards (2007) who call for more research about career-long supervision. Furthermore, I would add that there needs to be more research evidencing the link between mandatory supervision and client protection. Clearly, as I have argued, these two factors are closely linked: that is, mandatory supervision is predicated by BACP on affording the client protection. To paraphrase Bond (2015), there is evidently a *hope* that mandatory supervision does this, but little in the way of evidence. Moreover, it is likely that BACP will continue to argue for more regulation rather than less, and will continue to position supervision as a 'cog in the machine of professionalisation' (Feltham, 2002, p. 328). It feels to be a matter of urgency, therefore, that the link between mandated, career-long supervision and client protection is explored. Without this I am in agreement with Wheeler (2000) that experienced counsellors will continue to feel infantilised.

It is also timely to look at the relationship in supervision with particular emphasis on the needs of experienced counsellors. My research appears to align with other similar research that attests to the importance of the supervisor-supervisee relationship (e.g., Crocket et al., 2007; Meekums, 2007; Weeks, 2002; Webb, 2000; Webb & Wheeler, 1998). In particular, as humanistic counsellors, my participants valued supervision which offered them a relationship based on the core conditions. As I have argued, the literature, and in particular the research undertaken, appears not to recognise that an experienced counsellor might have different needs as they gain experience. Moreover, an experienced counsellor who is also a supervisor, offers supervision of supervision, might have very different needs from supervision than a trainee. Finally, it would be helpful to undertake research with a focus on the particular kind of relationship my participants discussed. In particular, a relationship which was not only predicated on the core conditions, but also had a greater

emphasis on *personal* development. Indeed, if accountability is accepted as a reason for mandatory supervision, it was a focus on personal development within supervision for experienced counsellors that offered the most potential to facilitate client safety.

Conclusions

Experienced counsellors appear to attribute meaning and impact in supervision primarily through the *relationship* they had with their supervisor. If that relationship felt safe, and was based on the core conditions, it appears possible to fulfil the ethical requirements inherent in career-long and mandated supervision. Under those conditions, it is possible to have an egalitarian, non-hierarchical relationship in supervision. In turn, supervision can then facilitate a range of important functions: self-care; restorative; therapeutic; personal development; compassion, and at times love; and, finally, can be free of unhelpful power dynamics. In essence, safe supervision affords the supervisee a place to unburden and to reflect on the rigours of client work – to the benefit of all involved. Unsafe supervision, as, unfortunately, experienced by some of my participants, is precisely the opposite.

Appendix 1 – Information Sheet

Information Sheet

Name of Centre: School of Healthcare, University of Leeds

Title of Study: An exploration of the impact of clinical supervision on experienced counsellors.

I would be grateful if you would consider taking part in the above named study and the following information is included in order that you can make an informed decision about taking part. I am happy to discuss this further with you prior to you making a decision.

Background information and purpose of the study.

This research arose out of my experience as a counsellor trainer and as a practicing counsellor, my experience of supervision both as a supervisee and supervisor. I became interested in the process of supervision and in particular what factors might contribute towards supervision being either helpful or hindering. I am a BACP accredited counsellor, qualified supervisor and work full-time as a lecturer within Higher Education. This Study is being conducted as research which forms part of an educational qualification (PhD) with the University of Leeds where I am a part-time student.

Supervision is an under-researched area in the profession of counselling & psychotherapy. What research has been undertaken is mainly carried out looking at the experience of trainee counsellors and does not focus on those with experience. This means that the needs and experience of experienced counsellors have not yet been adequately reflected in the research. This research seeks to address this and aims to contribute to our understanding as a profession of supervision for those with experience.

I am therefore seeking counsellors or psychotherapists who are a minimum of four years post-qualification or who have a minimum of 800 supervised client hours. Please note that there are some people for whom it would be unethical for me to interview. Therefore, regrettably two groups of people need to be excluded from this research for ethical and professional reasons. They are: any person for whom I was their main tutor and any person who either is on the York St John approved supervisor list or whose supervisor is on that list.

What will be involved if I take part in this study?

Two interviews will take place; the first will last for between one to one and a half hours and the second 30 to 40 minutes. The initial interview will be audio-recorded, transcribed

and sent to you for any comments or revisions. A second interview will be carried out within two to three months of the first interview and also be audio-recorded, transcribed and the transcription sent to you for comments or revisions.

If you decide to take part I will arrange to meet with you for the interview(s) at a mutually convenient location. This might for example be at your place of work or I can book a private and confidential space at my workplace. It would also be possible for me to identify and book an appropriate room in your geographical location.

You are free to withdraw at any time up to one month after receipt of the final interview transcript. All information that you have provided to me will be destroyed.

What will I be asked about?

I am looking at what your experience of supervision is and will be asking questions directly related to that. The second interview will focus on any thoughts, feelings or comments you have had since the first interview regarding your experience and understanding of supervision, and on any questions I have after my initial immersion in listening to our conversation.

I will not ask you to provide information that breaches professional boundaries or to disclose professional malpractice from either you or your supervisor(s). Should you disclose any such information then I will need to seek advice from my supervisor (details below) and may need to report this to a professional organisation. If I feel that the interview may be going in such a direction then I will inform you and offer you the opportunity to avoid such a disclosure.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of taking part?

The benefits are that this research will contribute to an under-researched area of professional practice. It is important that we begin to have some clear understanding of what factors might contribute towards this for experienced counsellors. Particularly as for most practising counsellors and therapists supervision is a mandatory aspect of working life. Also in taking part in the interview process you will be able to take time to reflect on your experience of supervision and so potentially deepen your understanding and perhaps use of supervision.

It is possible that there is a risk that in reflecting on your experience of supervision then there may be an impact on your current or past supervisory relationship(s). This might be either positive or negative and it is important that you consider what the implications of

either might be. It might be that you chose to speak to your current supervisor before taking part in this research.

Will the information obtained in the study be confidential?

All transcripts will be anonymised and no personal details will be kept with transcripts. My supervisors will have access to anonymised transcripts only. No identifying details will be kept with the transcripts or with the audio-tapes, all information will be kept securely and password protected on the N drive at the University of Leeds. All information will be kept for five years post-publication.

What will happen to the results of the study?

It is envisaged that material arising from this study will be published. In any dissemination of this research all participants (and their supervisors) will be anonymised and I will seek to ensure confidentiality throughout. Therefore, I will use pseudonyms; alter ages, qualifications, geographical locations and work settings. It is envisaged that gender may be a factor in this research so gender of supervisor and participant will not be disguised.

What if I have a complaint about the study?

If you have any concerns then in the first instance please raise these with me as the main researcher. However, if you do wish to make a complaint then please contact Dr Bonnie Meekums on b.meekums@leeds.ac.uk.

Who has reviewed this study?

Ethical approval has been sought and obtained from the School of Healthcare Research Ethics Committee of the University of Leeds. This research is also subject to ethical guidelines for research as laid out by the BACP and I also adhere to the BACP ethical framework as an accredited counsellor of that organisation.

If you agree to take part, would like more information or have any questions or concerns about the study please contact **Trish Hobman on either t.hobman@yorksj.ac.uk or 01904876267**. Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

16th May 2012

Trish Hobman
25 Eastfield Crescent
Bardger Hill
York
YO10 5HZ

Dear Trish,

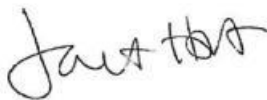
Research Project Amendment for Ethical Approval (SHREC/RP/191) Amendment 1 10.05.12

Thank you for submitting the amendment to your research proposal "*Meaning and impact of supervision for experienced counsellors*" (previously '*An exploration of the impact of clinical supervision on experienced counsellors*') for approval.

This has been reviewed and I can confirm on behalf of the School of Healthcare Research Ethics Committee (SHREC) that ethical approval is granted and the amendment may be implemented.

The committee wishes you continued success with your project.

Yours sincerely



Dr Janet Holt
Chair, School of Healthcare Research Ethics Committee

Appendix 3 – Participant Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Participant Consent Form

Title of Study: An exploration of the impact of clinical supervision on experienced counsellors.

The purpose of this form is to make sure that you are happy to take part in the research and that you understand what is involved. Please confirm each statement by putting your initials in the relevant box.

I have read and understood the participant information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study.	
I have received satisfactory answers to all of my questions and have received enough information about the study.	
I understand that I am free to choose not to answer a question, to end the interview and to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason.	
I agree to the interview being audio-recorded.	
I grant permission for extracts or information from the interview to be used in reports of the research on the understanding that my anonymity will be maintained.	
I understand that any information I provide, including personal details, will be confidential, stored securely for five years after the last publication from the project. Also that access to information will be limited to those carrying out the study, which is the researcher and supervisors.	
I understand that should I reveal information that describes a breach in professional boundaries that would normally require investigation, that the interviewer may be obliged to report this to my professional organisation. I would be informed that a discussion will take place with the team and of any decision to report.	
Participant Signature	Date
Name of Participant	
Researcher Signature	Date
Name of Researcher Trish Hobman	

Appendix 4 – Confidentiality statement for transcription service

Confidentiality Statement for Transcribers

University of Leeds

The meaning and impact of supervision for experienced counsellors.

The British Psychological Society and BACP have published guidelines on ethical principles for conducting research. Both contain the principle that information obtained from participants during a study should be kept confidential.

As a transcriber you have access to material obtained from research participants. We require you to act in accordance with the principle of confidentiality and to sign this Confidentiality Statement so that we are able to demonstrate that we have taken due care to inform you of the need for confidentiality and to protect participants in this study.

General

- I understand that the material I am transcribing is confidential
- The material transcribed will be discussed with no-one
- The identity of research participants will not be divulged

Transcription Procedure

- Transcription will be conducted in such a way that the confidentiality of the material is maintained
- I will ensure that audio-recordings cannot be overheard and that transcripts, or parts of transcripts, are not read by people without official right of access
- All materials relating to transcription will be returned to the researcher
- I will delete electronic files containing data from the study from my computer, email system and elsewhere, after returning the information to the researcher

Signed

Date

Print Name

Researcher

Project Title

Appendix 5 – Sample of analysis

<p>So, it's up to you. Your thoughts on the transcript, any thoughts you've had since the first interview?</p> <p>Yeah, okay. So, perhaps cos I've just been looking at the transcript and it's fresh in my mind, maybe if I just talk a little bit about the things that stood out for me that I've just read and you prompt me along if I lose a little bit of focus. So, reading that, I'm left with the sort of feeling of... Well, I talk about supervisors in the transcript, the first one was my supervisor that I had through my training and into my, the beginning of my professional life as a counsellor, and I'm very aware as I read that transcript how very dependent on her I sounded and how I felt that I really needed somebody who would support me and hold my hand, and I don't feel like that at all now. You know, that's not the sort of supervision, of course it's not, that I would want, and it's a year down the road, although it's obviously much longer since I saw her, and my talking there about how difficult it was to end supervision and how we didn't do a proper ending and how we sort of tried to maintain some sort of contact. And what struck me on that transcript that I had forgotten about was that period of time, I don't know how long it went on for, perhaps between six months and a year, when we met irregularly, almost as friends, as she was quite needy of me.</p>	<p>Yeah, okay. So, perhaps cos I've just been looking at the transcript and it's fresh in my mind, maybe if I just talk a little bit about the things that stood out for me that I've just read and you prompt me along if I lose a little bit of focus.</p> <p>So, reading that, I'm left with the sort of feeling of... Well, I talk about supervisors in the transcript,</p> <p>the first one was my supervisor that I had through my training and into my, the beginning of my professional life as a counsellor,</p> <p>and I'm very aware as I read that transcript how very dependent on her I sounded and how I felt that I really needed somebody who would support me and hold my hand, and I don't feel like that at all now.</p> <p>You know, that's not the sort of supervision, of course it's not, that I would want, and it's a year down the road, although it's obviously much longer since I saw her</p> <p>and my talking there about how difficult it was to end supervision</p> <p>and how we didn't do a proper ending and how we sort of tried to maintain some sort of</p>	<p>Scene 1: Setting the scene, asking for prompts.</p> <p>Scene 2: Orienting herself.</p> <p>Scene 3: Start of professional life and first supervisor.</p> <p>Scene 4: Change over time in support needs – dependent to not needing hand holding.</p> <p>Scene 5: Change in use of supervision over time</p> <p>Scene 6: Difficult to end with her.</p> <p>Scene 7: Didn't do a 'proper' ending, tried to maintain contact.</p>
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Appendix 6 – Alice, Interview 1

Alice P3 Interview 1 – thoughts as analysing data.

Participant

What's evident listening to the interview is that she takes care with what she says and gives thought to her responses. At times the response seems to be thoughtful and at times more rapid. What strikes me is the discomfort she feels about the length of the relationship. On page 9 we get closer to the reasons for that. What was interesting was that (and she is also a trainer) she was unaware at a tacit level that BACP suggest changing supervisors regularly in order to avoid collusion etc. But I wonder whether on a more tacit level if that was what was happening. The way she said we keep reviewing, it's not a cosy relationship. She also referred often in the early stages to it being a challenging relationship, i.e. if it's challenging then it can't be cosy perhaps. Guess this is as much a professional issue.

There is something about reflexivity which is that it can be both a positive and a negative. I wonder also whether this applies more to those from a humanistic (Alice is I think person-centred) perspective. That is to say that those who work from a humanistic orientation have a tendency to look inwards for the source of the problem and so for the solution. It can be a criticism theoretically of humanistic approaches. Why this occurs to me is that when I invite Alice to look outside (page 11/12) to the profession she looks inward. I think this happens with other participants. That is to say that they locate the problem and solution internally. For example, here it might be that the professional voices are saying (either imagined on my part or perception) you should change. However, with that as the starting point she locates the reason in her, i.e. that she needs affirmation perhaps. She offers examples from her experience of supervision to evidence this. I'm starting to wonder whether there is something about the pathologising of experienced counsellors here. Internal, reflexive, problem and so solution located in the individual rather than in the profession. And she talks about maturity, supervisor as mentor/maternal and her need for affirmation from supervisor. Perhaps this is about professionally making children of us? Feltham, infantilisation of experienced counsellors?

Is the surprise that she keeps expressing (and I think this happened with the first participant) about the direction her thoughts are taking (or the interview is taking...) because we don't often think about or talk about our experience of supervision. Is this back to the taken for granted aspect of supervision. That is that it is just something we do,

need to do, as she says have to do? It's the ethical position, has integrity. Which might well be right but perhaps it isn't often exposed to the light, discussed and understood. On page 14 she does say she doesn't often talk about her experience of supervision.

Page 15/16, is there something for her around an affirming challenge? Not sure but want to record it here. Not wanting to go there, or not liking that or not feeling she needs it? Not sure.

Something else also occurs that with this participant I am struggling to keep the number of scenes to a manageable quantity. Though I'm not entirely sure what constitutes manageable as yet! What I am aware of however is the density of each speech act, if that's the right term! The scene analysis seems mainly (to-date anyway – up to page 17) to be confined to one or at the most two sections of speech.

Professional

See above under participant about the potential impact of professional requirements, in this case perhaps more suggestions than requirements! And yet later in the interview (and I haven't got that far as I type this) she says that it's to do with her rather than any professional sense of things.

There was something about the multiple dual relationships which I had a real sense they navigate well. However, she was at points, e.g. page 20, embarrassed about but I also had a sense that this amused her. She is a confident person and one who has lots of experience. The current supervisor is someone who she has been with since training, has worked with, socialises with and exchanges cards and gifts at birthdays and Christmas.

This could equally sit in the section about the participant. However, page 25 – 27 where she is playing around with the impact of the dual relationship to be ambivalent. On the one hand a bit defensive, it isn't collusive, clients not harmed etc., then she seems relieved when I say perhaps clients are protected by it, then on page 27 she says she's wondering whether it is a collusion. I have put this under professional because of reading Feltham and for instance Crockett. With the awareness that it might also sit with the participant and I need to keep that awareness! Page 28, she says something about perhaps the fact that it is a supportive relationship means that it is collusive. That feeling supported and helped to

accept herself, the parts that she finds hard to accept might be collusive. Not sure whether I feel angry or sad.

Again this could sit in the section about the participant. However, from page 30 there is a long section where she is evidently moved (and this forms some of the focus for the second interview) by the recognition of what her supervision has offered, i.e. the supervisor being attuned to her needs. I'm sat with a familiar sense, as with the first participant, of how much might be asked of the supervisor.

Page 39 and 40 she clearly sets out what the current 'attuned' supervisor give her and states clearly also that this supports her practice. In the same segment she goes on to say that this isn't always the case and that at time she has 'done' supervision. I wonder what that means. My interpretation would be that she is going through the motions but it isn't as satisfying as being attuned to, nor as holistic. Perhaps this is also a sense I have based on the interview transcript, but still my interpretation!

Me

I guess the first thing to note is that its page 18 and the first time I start to write about me. Interesting but not yet sure what that means and I recognise that in itself is somewhat of a theme. However, I also am starting to see that the difference between me and Alice is that I do use supervision for therapy at times. Further that I see nothing wrong in that. There is also a difference between Alice and the previous participant. Wendy did use supervision as therapy and was like me fine with that. Alice doesn't want to and whilst sat here that is fine, I also wonder whether – or in what way – that affected the interview. I do know that the focus of the second interview followed on from the end of this interview, i.e. that perhaps supervision was therapeutic rather than therapy.

Page 24, here again I try to take it outside to the professional aspects, i.e. the wagging finger or voices outside the room. Again she takes it back to her and here to her internal supervisor. She seems to be asking herself reflexively whether or not it is alright to have the duality of relationship. There is an ambiguity around, i.e. exchanging cards and presents but it not compromising the supervisory relationship. My feeling is that the default professionally is that it isn't alright to have the dual relationship when experienced. Yet that is the norm for many I suspect, to some degree or another. And again on page 34

where I try to bring in the professional voices, my agenda, she takes it back to her agenda (good!) which is a more reflexive one.

Us

As above it is page 38 of the analysis before I think to write something about the space between us. I think partly because it is also embedded in the section about her and me. However, what strikes me (and did earlier and I have written in the third column of the transcript about this) is that I take her somewhere else, my agenda, and she takes us back. This might be simply about my agenda getting in the way. Or it might be about reflexivity. At this stage I don't have a clue which. Reminded of the chapter in the Narrative Analysis book where the author is interviewing people in NI and they keep taking him back to their agenda rather than his.

Meaning and/or impact of supervision for this participant

Attunement of the supervisor has been significant for this participant. She, or perhaps we, play around with the significance of this in terms of parenting. There is something in here about development, page 34, from trainee to qualified counsellor, from child to adult. She was talking just a little earlier about what felt to me to be reparative aspects of supervision, i.e. the attunement of the supervisor to her needs maternally. What is evident by the end of the transcript is how the way in which the supervisor has been felt to attune to her needs has been extremely important. It has (page 42) she says been lacking in her personal life. So what the supervisor has offered her has been a very personal level of support – we return to this later and it forms the basis of the second interview. What I am playing around with is that supervision is less about the client work and more about support for experienced counsellors. That's not to say that my participants don't take clients but that what they seem to speak about much more clearly is the level of personal support they get which enables them to work more effectively.

Title: The importance of attunement. Sub title: Supervision as therapeutic but not personal therapy

Main characters:

Current supervisor, she is experienced as attuned, supportive, enriching her practice (so feeding directly into client work) and holding.

Dual relationship(s), with this supervisor

Voices outside the room, she attributes these as internal voices.

Attunement, this feels like a central player and key in the positive experience with her current, long-term supervisor.

Reflexivity, at least this is what I think it is. Alice seems to seek to find the reasons within herself rather than externally almost exclusively.

Supporting characters:

Alice's personal life, feels to sit just outside the door of the interview and links with attunement – i.e. that what's she says is lacking in her personal life is provided by the supervisor.

Maternal, think this links to the above. Alice speaks briefly about a mother who wasn't attuned and so is moved by what the supervisor provides.

BACP, but brought in by me rather than Alice.

Who is the storyteller:

Wanting to be a grown up, play with the big girls, reflexive and thoughtful, surprised that supervision is a therapeutic place for her but clear that it is not personal therapy.

The audience:

I'm really not sure about this one. I have a sense that almost the audience was an internal one, e.g. her. Perhaps this is to do with the high level of what I am calling reflexivity.

Sequential, seemingly causal and unfolding:

As with others there is a sense of the fixed point in time being the current supervisor, Alice goes backwards and forwards from that point. Not sure if this is what is meant by this. However, I have a sense that what unfolded was her understanding of what she values in supervision being the personal which support her professionally. What arose out of this was her understanding that supervision is therapeutic. She was clear though that it was inappropriate to use supervision as personal therapy.

Appendix 7 – Alice, Interview 2.

Alice P3 Interview 2 – thoughts as analysing transcript

Alice

She has seen her as supervisor in role terms rather than person terms. In contrast in her own supervision the person of her supervisor is important rather than the role. She says on page 4 that she hadn't realised that the 'me' or who she is was important. I had a sense that this was knowledge that was tacit and understood at some levels and the interview process brought it into focus. There are a few references, e.g. page 9 but also earlier, to greater awareness of her impact as supervisor leaving her feeling she has to 'get it right.'

Page 22 where she is again talking about her modesty and how she holds doubts that her supervisees will find her as important to them as her supervisor is to her. In terms of this participant then she seems to underplay her importance to her supervisees. However, she doesn't do the same with the supervisory relationship as a general thing. Later on the same page she asks what is lost if she downplays who she is and how that might be important to supervisees. Wonder whether some of this is her and some is training, which she and I talk about earlier and some of it is how supervision is seen because of BACP mandatory etc.

Page 24, 25 & 26 where she talking about herself as 'brisk' (i.e. saying it as it is, not softening challenge etc.) there is something about this and how she knows this to be true of her. Linked to how she doubts herself, not quite sure what this means yet but it feels important to put it here.

Me

I feel moved by her modesty and shyness about acknowledging her impact on her supervisees. That she might mean as much to them as her supervisor means to her, pages 14 & 15. Aware I was moved to email her (24/10/13) to tell her how much I admired her. Something about the 'how can I not matter....' on page 14 that felt touching.

Not sure if this is me or more about us. However, there is something about how the interview process changed her view of the relationship in supervision. How it changed her

view and enabled (I think at least) her to see supervision as therapeutic, still not personal therapy however.

Why am I reluctant to accept that it's been a thought provoking experience for her? That's not quite right, but there is something about the in plain sight aspect. Do I somehow buy into the notion that supervision is just a good thing and so doesn't need looking at or exploring? Reflexively this is something I know about myself, i.e. self-doubt is not unusual for me. I also have the feeling that this is not all of it.

BACP (and other external professional voices)

On page 35 she is talking about her surprise regarding one aspect of the interview. My understanding of this at this stage is that it might link to Feltham's view of supervision for experienced counsellors and how this might professionally infantilise them. Perhaps there are also links to Crockett's paper about professional impacts on experienced counsellors. There is something about how she plays around with the ethical guidelines, external voices and her internal sense of what's right. In this instance she recognises that her internal sense of her supervision as a good space and productive is upheld by my affirmation. It resurfaces on page 40 and 41 around the tension between knowing what is right, the internal and yet feeling external voices (professionally I think) would say it isn't, or as in this case you ought to change supervisors after a while. Staying too long is cosy and collusive.

Meaning and impact of supervision for Alice

Relationship: My sense is that what she wants is a deep level of relationship. Akin to transpersonal (Jacobs, Rowan etc.) rather than the instrumental (ibid) or working alliance (Bordin e.g. or see Clarkson's five modalities). When she describes the way in which her supervisor attunes to her this sits more readily in the transpersonal, or person-to-person (Clarkson) than it does at an instrumental or working alliance place. It's there on pages 8 & 9 when she's reflecting on how attuned her supervisor had been and how that had moved her. That, as far as I can see, is not an instrumental relationship. She was moved emotionally by it; it was felt rather than experienced as a technique. Page 20 she talks about experiences which are life enhancing and enriching and says the more the better. This is also where she reflects on the similarity between the counselling relationship and the supervisory one. This participant is person-centred so the relationship is the vehicle

through which change occurs. What she is realising through the interview process is that the same is true of supervision. It has also been her experience of supervision and the relationship has changed over time. So a further factor here is that (page 12 e.g.) she is acknowledging the shift from novice to experienced. In this instance from needing technical (instrumental/working alliance) expertise from supervisor to now needing a therapeutic relationship. There is still for Alice an important distinction to be made between supervision and not personal therapy, i.e. that supervision should not be personal therapy.

Clients

Page 28 (and the previous few pages) she's talking about safety in supervision and the importance of being herself and links this to safety in supervision and how this might benefit clients. Specifically here she makes links between safety, the importance of being who she is and congruence. There are links then between this and a deep relationship, i.e. in an instrumental/working alliance relationship the person of the therapist (or in this case supervisor) is less important than technique. However, in a transpersonal or person-to-person relationship the person of the therapist is important. In person-centred theory, congruence and genuineness are both important in terms of the relationship. Described in other ways in other humanistic theory they are also important, e.g. gestalt and existential theory would also write about the importance of the person of the therapist. She then links this to safety in client work.

On page 37 and 38 (and elsewhere) she speaks about the impact of supervision on clients. Here she is talking about how if she and her supervisor had asked the question, does this support your clients, the answer would have been of course it does. I'm reminded of the conversation with Anna in my last supervision about how it is possible for things to hide in plain sight.

Supervision

Page 13, seems an important recognition that whilst the goal in supervision is development as a counsellor the outcome might be development as a person. My response at the time was that it is almost inevitable as a humanistic counsellor. I still hold to that and would add the relationship reflection in the previous section to that now.

She talks about (e.g. page 20 but elsewhere too) not having taken her work as supervisor to supervision. Elsewhere she talks about finding it (page 17) less problematic than counselling. I wonder whether there is something here about it feeling more straightforward as a supervisor, or at least not the same level of responsibility, than counsellor. You are working with someone who is generally less vulnerable and so it might be more straightforward. You are also not directly responsible for the client, whatever BACP say! So we might give it less attention? Might it also be that supervision is less tightly prescribed than counselling by BACP? So there is no mandatory requirement to be in supervision, unless you are an accredited supervisor, for supervision. I'm not seeing a supervisor and have two supervisees. Not seeing a supervisor because I'm not seeing clients. Rarely took supervisees to supervision even when I was. I do view it as more straightforward!

Page 27 where she's reflecting on whether being honest in supervision and so supervision being a safe place somehow benefits clients. Therefore perhaps it's less to do with the length (which was a focus of the first interview) and more to do with how safe supervision is. This does links to some of the research (Webb and Wheeler spring to mind) where if supervision feels safe the supervisee can bring anything. There may then be links to the benefits to client work, e.g. if you can take your mistakes, worries and concerns supervision might enable supervision to be more productive.

On page 32 and previously we are discussing the difference in needs between experienced counsellors and trainees. It is clear that she does have a sense of the different needs, and I guess this links to attunement and development of the counsellor.

Supervision training

Page 16 and 17 she's talking about training and how counsellor training (for PC counsellors anyway) has a focus on the person of the counsellor. In contrast she doesn't remember this on her supervision training. And she says a couple of times she says this intrigues her. Is there something about how supervision training at some times has a focus on developmental models and so might be more geared to trainees? Therefore the focus in supervision training would be on developing the counsellor (Alice's goal) rather than the person of the counsellor (Alice's outcome).

She returns to this in a different way and not linked directly or overtly to training. However, there is something on page 31 (and page 30) about what an experienced counsellor might need as opposed to a trainee. She concludes that perhaps it's about being rather than doing. In particular that the trainee might need different things, e.g. more affirmation and might not be as able to withstand stronger challenges as the more experienced counsellor. There is also something in the attunement for me, i.e. that the supervisor might need to be attuned in order to change as the needs of the supervisee changes developmentally. She doesn't word it in this way but that is what it feels like to me!

Data analysis or narrative aspects of

There's something about how she talks about something general, e.g. page 26/7 where she's talking about supervision being safe, and then moves to offer a specific example. In this instance, offering at the bottom of page 27 and into page 28 an example from her supervision practice.

Title: The importance of the person of the supervisor, a relational enterprise and a surprising tale.

Main characters:

Supervisory relationship and in particular this is at a deep level akin to transpersonal or person-to-person rather than instrumental or working alliance.

Supervision training and the impact of it on her, e.g. that she feels it didn't equip her with an understanding of how important the person of the supervisor might be.

The interview process, though I am reluctant to put it here it does also seem to fit.

Without the opportunity to discuss this she would presumably have sat with the same notion of staying for this length of time with the same supervisor was a bad thing.

Clients do feature in this interview and in particular how a good experience of supervision can support and aid work with clients.

Ethical issues and in particular the way in which these can become entangled with or at least separated from her judgement of what is right and wrong.

Supporting characters:

Alice's supervisees do get referred to as vehicles for exploring how she might be as a supervisor.

The other parts of her, e.g. counsellor and tutor are present and she makes links between her as supervisee, supervisor, and counsellor and once as tutor.

Transition from trainee to experienced counsellor and the different needs in supervision.

BACP and other external professional voices are present. Again BACP is a kind of shadowy figure referenced by me towards the end.

The ways in which we are similar, for example we both appear to be strong, assertive and capable of speaking our minds (all of which is true) but we also are capable of self-doubt and can lack confidence.

Who is the storyteller?

Reflexive, self-aware, has doubts and can lack confidence. Surprised at the centrality of the relationship in supervision and doubting that this is what she provides, or at least that this is what her supervisees find to be important.

Who is the audience?

As with the first interview I'm not really sure about the answer to this. In a sense again I think it was an internal one but also this time perhaps to an extent it was me.

Sequential, seemingly causal and unfolding:

I think I'm struggling with this one. Again perhaps what had unfolded, by the time of the interview at least was a sense of how important the relationship is for her.

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