

Stability and perturbation in counselling training: a case study

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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 thesis explores stability and perturbation in learning situated in a counselling training culture that is shaped by humanistic-integrative core theory values.

The case study on which the thesis is based focuses on a group of six students and two tutors on a Diploma in Counselling and Human Relations course. As an integral part of the training programme, the participants were asked to use a conceptual model imported from a psychotherapy context. This model was initially chosen for the purposes of evaluating its effectiveness as a learning tool for use in counselling training. During the study, the emphasis changed to an interest in understanding how use of this model affected the process of learning. The thesis is based on an in-depth analysis of the impact of this model on the learning process in the group.

The case study is shaped by an 'action research' (McCutcheon et al., 1987) model that both reflects the inquirer's position as a tutor and researcher in the counselling community investigated and the professional development dimension of the research.

Data was gathered over a period of seven months, using individual and group interviews, and observations of participants' training practices. The research methodology stems from an interpretivist, or hermeneutic tradition of story telling. Within the qualitative parameters of this philosophical orientation, the data is constructed on the basis of a critical understanding of Wenger's (1998) situated perspective on learning. From this perspective, learning assumes a social, or relational location.

The research suggests that counselling training can be usefully understood as a participatory process that includes both stability and perturbation, and this has implications for counselling training practices that are shaped by a core theoretical model.

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1. Introduction.

My thesis is based on a single case study in which I explore learning in my counselling training community. In particular, the study highlights both stability, which I understand as the continuity of conventional training practices, and perturbation, or disturbance, which was created by the introduction of non-conventional concepts into the training practices.

I carried out my study in a college of further and higher education with participants on a part-time Diploma in Counselling and Human Relations course, which, at the time of my inquiry, I had helped to deliver for the previous eight years. My co-participants in the study comprised my two co-training colleagues and six students in their second year of training. The students ranged in age from their mid thirties to mid fifties. The structure of the course was ‘continuous’ rather than modular, and training was organised in terms of an ‘experiential learning’ model (Kolb, 1984). My thesis is based on data that I collected in this community from January to July 2001.

At the time of my study, my colleagues and I were working towards British Association for Counselling (BAC) course accreditation. Therefore, counselling training practices were broadly organised in terms of their ‘Code of Ethics and Practice for Trainers’ (BAC, 1985) and ‘Code of Ethics and Practice for Counsellors’ (BAC, 1992). (In 2001, the BAC became the BACP – the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, and in April 2002, that is, after I had collected my data, their new ‘Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy’ became effective). According to the then BAC:

‘It is not possible to make a generally accepted distinction between counselling and psychotherapy. There are well founded traditions which use the terms interchangeably and others which distinguish them...’ (BAC, 1992, p. 2).

Their new title (BACP) can be seen as one reflection of their inclusivist position in relation to counselling and psychotherapy. This said, lack of ‘a generally accepted distinction between counselling and psychotherapy’ (BAC, 1992) continues to fuel a long-standing debate about possible distinctions between the two (Syme, 2000), but this debate is not a central feature of my inquiry.

My contention in this thesis.

I start from the premise that counselling training practices are based on a view of learning that is too narrow. This, I suggest, is partly because of the individual location of learning on most counselling training courses. This individual emphasis on learning is compatible with the central BACP requirement for counselling training course accreditation, which insists that training courses: ‘... should provide grounding in a core theoretical model...’ (BACP, 2003, p. 10). In support of this position, the BACP proposes that: ‘... The training methods used should be consistent with the basic assumptions about human beings which underlie the counselling methods taught...’ (BACP, 2003, pp. 10-11). I take the position that this requirement promotes a view of certainty, predictability and hence stability in counselling training, because learning is shaped by an emphasis on a particular set of definitive assumptions about human beings. I suggest that this effectively discounts less certain, less predictable and less stable aspects of human relations, and consequently, also discounts aspects of the social context in which learning is co-created. In my case study, I explore the social dimension of counselling training practice with a view to understanding the place of stability and perturbation in learning in a counselling training culture.

My interest in stability and perturbation was aroused by Wenger’s ‘situated learning’ theory proposition that: ‘... Learning... requires enough structure and continuity to accumulate experience and enough perturbation and discontinuity to continually renegotiate meaning...’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 227). This proposition became meaningful as

my focus of interest shifted part way through my study. My initial interest was in evaluating the learning potential of using a conceptual tool from my psychotherapy practice in my work as a counselling trainer. My interest shifted to wanting to understand the participatory processes that were shaped by the use of this tool in the study.

Layout of my thesis.

In Chapter 2, as a means of providing a context for understanding my position with regard to stability and perturbation, I talk about the approaches to learning that prevailed in my case study community. In doing so, I convey my critical understanding of some of the research influences that helped to shape this learning culture. As part of my critique, I juxtapose socially situated views of learning with conventional learning practices in counselling training in support of my contention that the former offer a more sophisticated understanding of learning. In my critique, I draw on some of the understanding that I gained from my research. Therefore, this aspect of the chapter is shaped by a retrospective account, which reflects the change in direction in my thinking over the course of my study, and which consequently coloured my critique of the counselling approaches to learning that I discuss.

In Chapter 3, I provide details of the interpretivist case study methodology that shaped my inquiry. This includes a discussion of my design of the study, which predates my critique of the approaches to learning in counselling training that I discussed in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 mirrors the changes that took place in my thinking and philosophical position during the course of my study. These changes were enabled by the iterative and dynamic nature of the case study methodology.

In Chapter 4, I convey my understanding of the community in which I carried out my fieldwork. I frame my understanding of this community in terms of Wenger's depiction

of what constitutes a 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998), and, in doing so, highlight some of the similarities and differences between Wenger's depiction of a community of practice and my case study group, who I then go on to introduce.

In Chapter 5, I provide extracts from the data that I collected from my observations of simulated counselling practice sessions that were individually led by my two co-training colleagues. Using these extracts, interspersed with my observations, I describe what I see happening in these sessions. I then move on to a more abstract, analytical level as a means of providing an explanation for the differing patterns of interaction that emerged in the sessions. My analysis consists of an examination of the different relations that participants had with the conceptual tool that mediated participation in the study and the complex set of power relations that existed within the group. In my analysis, I also draw on data that I collected in the individual and group interviews that formed part of the study.

In Chapter 6, I draw on Wenger's (1998) situated perspective on learning in order to interpret the participatory processes that I described and analysed in Chapter 5. In particular, I use Wenger's view of 'communities of practice as economies of meaning' (Wenger, 1998) as a conceptual framework for interpreting those processes that can be understood in terms of 'stability and perturbation' (Wenger, 1998). I then give my critical reflections on the extent to which Wenger's theory provides a convincing explanatory framework for understanding my data.

In Chapter 7, I give my tentative conclusions, closing comments and critical reflections on the study.

The nature and purpose of my study.

The nature of my study is qualitative and, within this parameter, my orientation is interpretivist, or hermeneutic. The purpose of my study is to advance my practice as a

counselling trainer and, in the process, make a contribution to knowledge in the area of counselling training.

The professional development aspect of the study is based on an exploratory ‘action research’ model as defined by McCutcheon and Jung, who describe this approach to research as:

‘... any systematic inquiry, large or small, conducted by professionals and focusing on some aspects of their practice in order to find out more about it, and eventually to act in ways they see as better or more effective...’ (McCutcheon and Jung, 1987, p. 148).

The main thrust of my argument in the thesis arose from the reflexive and iterative nature of my study. Reflexivity, aided by keeping a reflexive diary, shaped my iterative process, which involved moving back and forth between the data that I collected from participants in the study and the intrapersonal data that I gathered from my reflections, and from moving back and forth between this interrelated data and the literature. This part-whole, or hermeneutic process enabled my deeper understanding of the inseparability of interpersonal and intrapersonal features in meaning making. Therefore, the intrapersonal data that I include in the thesis, as part of my journey of evolving understanding in the case study, both reflects and was affected by the data that I collected from participants and my interpretation of this data. This dynamic process generated different research questions from those that had initially informed my explorations in the study. I had formulated the initial questions in order to help me to assess the viability of integrating a conceptual tool from my psychotherapy practice (Ware’s 1983 ‘doors to therapy’ model) into my work as a counselling trainer. However, I moved from this initial interest to wanting to understand the interactive process that use of the model helped to generate.

The originality of my study.

The originality of my study stems partly from its context specific nature (that is, the particular counselling training community in which I collected my data) and partly from

the particular situated learning theory ideas that provided the conceptual framework for understanding the data. Interpreting my data from this theoretical perspective has led to a socially located understanding rather than a psychologically located one. This social location marks a departure from the psychological, individualistic nature of understanding that underpins much of the research and ideas in the field of counselling and psychotherapy.

Whilst my reflexive action research approach is not, in itself, original, it forms part of a relatively small body of 'non-scientific' research in the United Kingdom in the area of counselling training, especially research that has been carried out from a socially situated perspective on learning. Much of the research that has been carried out from this perspective has focused on workplace learning, and has been carried out by researchers who were not part of the work force that they were studying.

In the United Kingdom, where the 'reflective-practitioner' (BACP, 2003) model of training predominates, there seems to have been a general lack of reflexive action research into counselling training practices. Of the action research that has been carried out in the United Kingdom, the main site seems to have been the Counselling Education and Training Unit at the University of Bristol, which was established in 1986. A recent example of reflexive research from this site is Trahar's PhD inquiry into 'researching learning across cultures' (Trahar, 2002). As in my case, Trahar carried out her research with her own students (post-graduate international students studying counselling).

In the United States, counselling education seems to have been mainly based on a 'scientist-practitioner' model (McLeod, 2001a; Nelson-Jones, 2001). This may explain Taylor's (2000) observation about the more general paucity of action research in the area of learning, since 'positivist' (Sparkes, 1992), or 'realist' (Hammersley, 1998)

notions of objectivity may serve to preclude educators from conducting research with their own students.

Commenting on the paucity of ‘non-scientific’ research in the United Kingdom in the area of counselling and psychotherapy, McLeod makes the point that this non-scientific trend does not accord with:

‘... The ethos of the BACP Research Committee... (which)... has been pluralist, inclusive and collaborative and has consistently sought to affirm the diversity of knowledges that exist within counselling and psychotherapy in Britain...’
(McLeod, 2001b, p. 11).

In a similar vein, Lees, in his discussion of the ‘research-practice’ gap in counselling, talks about the suitability of counsellors to conduct reflexive action research because, in counselling training:

‘... the development of reflexivity is incorporated into the training process itself in the form of experiential learning. As Noonan (1993, p. 26) puts it, the primary flow of the students’ learning on such courses is from “inside to outside” as opposed to the usual direction of academic learning which is from “outside to inside”...’ (Lees, 2001, p. 134).

The interpretivist nature of my research, which I discuss in Chapter 3, follows in the tradition of those in the field of counselling and counselling education who are sceptical about the value of ‘evidence-based practice’ (Etherington, 2001; Moodley, 2001; Cayne, 2002; Greenwood and Loewenthal, 2002; Rubaie, 2002; Stevens, 2002) that is shaped by ‘scientific’, or realist principles.

Adopting a ‘non-scientific’, interpretivist emphasis on learning constitutes something of a paradigm shift for me, and, as I discuss in the next section, this shift took place gradually as a result of combining my experience as a counselling trainer with my reading for the MEd and EdD degrees.

A summary of my counselling training history.

I began my work as a counselling skills trainer in the 1980s following completion of a one-year Royal Society of Arts counselling skills course in a college of further

education. I was offered a part-time post (two evenings per week) by the then Head of Department, who had been one of the trainers on the course that I had just completed. This route into the profession was, and still is, typical (Connor, 1994; BACP, 2003). At that time, I combined my work as a counselling skills trainer with my full time post as a Social Welfare Officer situated in the Social Work Department of a hospital.

As a counselling skills trainer, I worked with groups that consisted of more than twelve members. Therefore, consistent with the then BAC guidelines for trainers of groups of this size, the groups that I helped to train were double staffed, and I was 'apprenticed' to a more experienced trainer. Within this 'expert - novice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) context, I learned how to do the job by doing it. Over the six years or so that I worked at this college, I worked with a number of co-trainers, and accordingly, with a range of issues arising from these various interrelationships. At that time (the late 1980s and early 1990s), as Dryden and Feltham (1994) acknowledge, there was very little written about co-training in the counselling training literature. The influential literature that I turned to in order to support my experiential learning came from related fields such as psychotherapy. Examples include the work of Yalom (1985), Benson (1987) and Douglas (1991). From an existential perspective, Yalom talks about how problems in co-working emanate from the relationship between co-workers and from tensions that may arise from differences in their status, especially if there is some confusion about leadership roles. From a psychodynamic standpoint, Benson (1987) speaks about how personal and professional development as a co-worker involves co-workers working through their relationship with one another. Due to inequalities in experience, Benson questions the suitability of beginners operating in a co-working capacity, since he sees co-working as a sophisticated form of practice, whilst Douglas (1991), on the other hand, favours an apprenticeship model of practice. I mention some of these early influences in my journey here because my study has prompted me to revisit them.

During my early co-training experiences, I was offered increasing amounts of work, and, as a result, I gave up my hospital work and decided to combine my training work with formal study in the form of an Advanced Diploma in Guidance and Counselling. Following my completion of this diploma, which was awarded by the University of Leeds, I was offered a teaching post on the Advanced Diploma in Counselling and Group Work in the college where I was working. In addition to this, my Head of Department recommended me for a part time post at another college, and for two years, I worked at both colleges. When I was eventually offered a permanent half-time post at the second college, I gave up my work at the first college and put time into my own training as a transactional analyst psychotherapist and into helping to develop the college counselling training programme that provided the context for my case study.

From my present position, I now seriously question some of the features of transactional analysis that initially appealed to me, namely, its rational, 'scientific' emphasis on certainty, structure and predictability in human relationships. With the benefit of hindsight, it seems that the positive value that I then attributed to these features acquired this meaning because they provided a counterbalance to some of the uncertainty that I experienced in my work as a counselling trainer, especially in my programme development work.

In the early days of my work as a counselling trainer, I had a Bachelor of Arts degree in the humanities but no qualifications in education. Therefore, I decided to read for an MEd degree, which I was awarded by the University of Leeds in 1994. Two years later, I applied to do the EdD degree. Reading for both the MEd and the EdD degrees, together with my training practice and vocational studies (transactional analysis), provided the opportunity for a rich cross-fertilisation of academic and vocational ideas, which I found stimulating. Reading for the EdD disturbed the equilibrium of my training practice by bringing to the fore conflicting philosophical values between a

vocational context, where learning was seen as a means to an end outside of training (that is, becoming a counsellor), and a 'liberal adult education' one in which learning is valued for its own sake. My studies also threw into sharp relief the contrast between the rational and reductionist assumptions embedded in training practices that were shaped by transactional analysis and the more holistic assumptions embedded in the educational context of my MEd and EdD studies. My EdD case study, in particular, has highlighted the 'paternal' culture of learning in counselling training in which developmental assumptions are reflected in, and affected by, use of a core theoretical model.

2. Approaches to learning in counselling training.

I begin this chapter by providing a potted history of the growth of counselling training courses in the United Kingdom. I go on to discuss the general tenor of these courses, which has been influenced by the guidelines provided by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and by the ‘experiential learning’ approach that, in various forms, is associated with these courses. I move from this broader context of counselling training to a discussion about the particular mixture of ideas that collectively comprised the learning approach that prevailed in my case study community, some of the early influences that this approach to learning reflected and some of the tensions inherent in the approach.

I develop my critique of approaches to learning in counselling training by comparing assumptions of learning as the ‘internalisation’ of knowledge (which, I will argue, underpin formative training practices) with views of learning as the ‘appropriation’ of knowledge. In support of the latter position, in which learning is viewed as a potentially transformatory process involving the active construction of knowledge, I present some of the views of activity theorists whose views are compatible with a situated perspective on learning. In relation to some of the views outlined in this discussion, I talk about the relationship that I see between counselling training practices that are underpinned by internalisation assumptions about learning and learning that is tied back to the ‘constitutive meanings’ (Fay, 1975) embodied in a core theoretical model.

My critique on learning in counselling training draws on some of the understanding that I gained from my case study and provides a context for my appreciation of the role of perturbation in facilitating transformative learning, or the appropriation of knowledge, which I talk about in the final section of this chapter. My critique is coloured by the change in direction of my thinking over the course of my study. Therefore, it is a

retrospective assessment of approaches to learning and counselling training that is value laden and can only be understood in relative, rather than absolute, terms.

Brief history of counselling training in the United Kingdom.

Counselling training diploma courses were first offered in the United Kingdom in the early 1960s (Connor, 1994; Johns, 1998). These courses were situated in the Universities of Keele and Reading, and later in Brighton and Exeter (Connor, 1994). It was not until 1988 that the then British Association for Counselling (BAC) formed their Course Recognition Group and devised their own scheme for the recognition of counselling training courses. (The BAC became the BACP - the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy in 2001.) However, considering the great and ever growing number of counselling training courses on offer in the United Kingdom, relatively few are BACP accredited. In the 2003 BACP 'Training in Counselling and Psychotherapy Directory', approximately 1200 training courses are listed, but only 81 are BACP accredited. Under their heading 'What makes an Accredited course?', the BACP include the following:

'The course should provide grounding in a core theoretical model... The course should create balance between theory, skills components and personal development, consistent with the core theoretical model... The course should help students to develop as reflective practitioners...' (BACP, 2003, p. 10).

I have included this statement from the BACP directory in order to provide a context for highlighting the following three interrelated points that are pertinent to my argument in this thesis.

Firstly, the statement typifies my understanding of the constituent elements and main goal of learning on most counselling training courses offered in the United Kingdom.

Secondly, the statement highlights the significance given to a core theoretical model, and this is relevant to a more general understanding of a culture of learning that extends beyond BACP accredited counselling training courses. That is, whether or not they are

BACP accredited, most counselling courses seem to operate in terms of a core theoretical model. This is evident in the listings for the non-accredited courses that are included in the 2003 BACP directory, and is understandable, given that the BACP is the main regulatory (voluntary) body for counselling in the United Kingdom and, as such, is influential in providing a model on which to base counselling courses.

Thirdly, understanding the significance of a core theoretical model is necessary to gaining an appreciation of what constitutes a centrally stable feature in counselling training culture. Use of a core model is an aspect of training that is supported by some in the field of counselling, for example, Wheeler (1999) and not supported by others, for example, West (2002) and Feltham (1997, 1999). Wheeler argues that a core theoretical model provides: ‘... coherence and internal consistency...’ (Wheeler, 1999, p. 196). West (2002) makes a point of using the term ‘counselling education’ rather than ‘counselling training’, which assumes a broader process of learning than use of a core theoretical model would seem to allow. Feltham not only argues against the use of a core model, but is also against the use of theoretical models generally in counselling training. He makes the salient point that:

‘... All core models... inevitably perpetuate the uncritical and untenable assumptions that human life is or should be orderly, can be understood analytically, and that our individual problems in living can be understood systematically, or scientifically, but above all coherently... We delude ourselves by imagining that theories which could have some consistency and predictive capability in natural science will similarly apply to human beings in complex, social and open systems (Pilgrim, 1997)...’ (Feltham, 1999, p. 185).

Looking at developments in the field of counselling training from the 1960s to the 1990s, Connor (1994) traces early influences in the field back to the models developed by American theorists such as; Rogers (1957, 1961, 1983), Kagan (1967), Carkhuff (1969), Ivey and Authier (1971), Gilmore (1973) and Egan (1975, 1979). From my own experiences as both a trainee and a trainer, I am particularly familiar with influences

from the work of Rogers (1957, 1961, 1983), Kagan (1967), Ivey and Authier (1971), Robinson (1974), Kolb (1984) and Egan (1990).

Connor talks about the theoretical emphasis of her own training in the 1960s because her course was situated in a university: ‘... so almost every session was a lecture...’ (Connor, 1994, p. 3). My own counselling training course was situated in a university. However, by the late 1980s, experiential learning had become popular, and my training included experiential workshops organised primarily in terms of simulated counselling practice that was theoretically framed in terms of Rogers’ ‘core conditions’ of ‘respect, empathy and congruence’ (Rogers, 1961). Connor speaks of research in the 1960s that:

‘... showed that these core conditions needed to be experienced by the client in order to be therapeutic, but we weren’t introduced to the mechanics of it all... (because)... ideas about experiential learning had not really taken off...’ (Connor, 1994, p. 3).

It seems that, for Connor, experiential learning represents part of the solution to the problem of how to train people in the ‘mechanics’ of counselling. However, I will argue that experiential learning that is shaped by Kolb’s (1984) model may, in itself, be problematic, not least because it promotes too narrow a view of experience, especially when the experience is tied back to the assumptions embedded in a core theory.

Connor’s position seems to reflect part of the wider problem in humanistic-integrative counselling training practice, which is how to integrate a skills approach to learning that is shaped by reductionist assumptions (rooted in behaviourism) into a learning culture where the personal development component is based on assumptions of holism (rooted in humanism).

Most humanistic counselling training courses are underpinned by Rogers’ core conditions. However, when a skills approach is adopted, the emergent product is one that assumes that the interrelated and overlapping parts of a process that includes ‘respect, empathy and congruence’ (Rogers, 1961) can be separated into a number of

discrete 'skills', which can be built up and learned by trainees in a 'mechanistic' way. This cumulative view of learning seems to have originated mainly from early American research into 'microcounselling' (Ivey and Authier, 1971). Other influences that reflect a more subtle form of realism than is evident in Ivey and Authier's approach include; Kagan's work on 'interpersonal process recall' (Kagan, 1967), Robinson's work on 'competency' (Robinson, 1974) and Kolb's work on 'experiential learning' (Kolb, 1984). From my work as a Verifier of Royal Society of Arts counselling skills courses and my professional peer involvement with other counselling trainers, it seems to me that influences from these sources, among others, collectively, and in a variety of forms, constitute the stuff of experiential learning on many counselling training courses.

Viewing experiential learning from a situated learning theory perspective.

Much has been written about experiential learning. Indeed, my search on the Internet revealed over 10,000 citations on this topic. The widespread practice of using experiential learning on counselling training courses is recognised by the BACP in their 2003 training course directory. For instance, under the heading 'Essential information for students', they state:

'... Participants in counselling courses are likely to be involved at times in experiential learning. This learning is designed to heighten awareness of an experience or give consideration to a familiar happening on which workshop members will be asked to reflect, either in their own terms or in the light of an offered framework...' (BACP, 2003, p. 6).

The BACP's position on experiential learning clearly assumes a narrow understanding of this practice. This is evident in their statement that participants in counselling training are only likely: 'to be involved at times in experiential learning' (BACP, 2003).

However, Fenwick makes the salient point that:

'... it seems counterproductive to separate experiential learning as an evolving adult education practice from a broader consideration of learning through experience. Much adult learning is commonly understood to be located in... sites of nonformal education. Many of us believe that... the construction of our

practical knowledge, the know-how that we use in our daily activities and work, are best learned through “doing.”...’ (Fenwick, 2003, p. 1).

From this broad perspective on experiential learning, Fenwick presents a useful overview of five ‘orientations’ on experiential learning in adult education, which are: ‘situative, enactivist, constructivist, critical, and psychoanalytic’ (Fenwick, 2003).

Fenwick’s position on experiential learning is consistent with one of the central tenets in the broad body of knowledge that can be located in a situated learning theory arena.

This is because, by implication, her view reflects a position in which the meaning of a cultural tool, such as Kolb’s (1984) model of experiential learning, acquires its meaning in action (that is, not only is experiential learning mediated by the model itself, but it is also mediated by the particular theoretical orientations of the users of the model). This position is evident, for instance, in Wertsch et al.’s socio-cultural perspective on learning. For these theorists:

‘... while cultural tools or artifacts involved in mediation certainly play an essential role in *shaping* action they do not *determine* or *cause* action in some kind of static, mechanistic way. Indeed, in and of themselves, such cultural tools are powerless to do anything. They can have their impact only when individuals *use* them...’ (original italics) (Wertsch et al., 1995, p. 22).

Cole’s socio-cultural perspective on learning is compatible with Wertsch’s view of the mediating role of conceptual tools in participatory action. For Cole, models such as Kolb’s might be seen as a reification in which: ‘... the cultural past... (is)... reified in the cultural present... (and as one)... that mediates the process of coconstruction...’ (Cole, 1995, p. 193).

From my evolving situated learning theory perspective (the standpoint that I have adopted in my case study), experiential learning in counselling training is problematic. This is because actions and practices that are shaped by the use of Kolb’s model discount the context of training by assuming the non-problematic transfer of ‘abstract

concepts and generalisations' from one situation (that is, training) to another 'new situation' (that is, client work). However, as Wilson states:

'... If we are to learn, we must become embedded in the culture in which the knowing and learning have meaning: conceptual frameworks cannot be meaningfully removed from their settings or practitioners...' (Wilson, 1993, cited in Fenwick, 2003, p. 35).

For Wilson (1993) and other theorists who adopt a situated perspective on learning (Lave, 1988; Brown et al., 1989; Rogoff, 1990; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger 1998; Wenger et al., 2002), learning is located in our experiencing, and our experiences are situated in particular cultures.

Based on a process of abstraction, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model discounts the culture, and hence the context of learning, by assuming the generalisability of a learning process that includes: 'concrete experience', 'observation and reflection', 'formation of abstract concepts and generalisations' and 'implications of concepts in new situations' (Kolb, 1984). Kolb's model also assumes that action (that is, 'concrete experience') and thinking (that is, 'observations and reflections') can be viewed as separate phenomena. This is consistent with Fenwick's understanding of:

'... the term "experiential learning"... (which)... in adult education is usually associated with particular theories and practices based on reflection on concrete experience...' (Fenwick, 2003, p. 1).

This emphasis on 'reflective thought' is evident in Anderson et al.'s depiction of one of the 'defining characteristics of experience-based learning' (EBL). They say:

'... EBL's advocates believe that the quality of reflective thought that the learner brings to any experience is of greater significance to the eventual learning outcomes than the nature of the experience itself. "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience." (Kolb, 1984, 38)...' (Anderson et al., 1995, p. 207).

The notion that 'observations and reflections' on action are not in themselves actions or 'concrete experiences' is contentious. As Hanks, in his foreword to Lave and Wenger's (1991) work, states:

‘... To equate discourse with reflection on action, instead of action itself, would be to fall prey to the very structural views that Lave and Wenger undermine in their approach to learning...’ (Hanks, cited in Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 22).

Experiential learning in my counselling training context.

In my community, deliberate learning was shaped in terms of particular theories that were consistent with the ‘humanistic-integrative’ orientation of the training. This orientation is compatible with the BACP definition of ‘integrative counselling’. The BACP states that:

‘... integrative counselling... is when several distinct models of counselling and psychotherapy are used together in a converging way rather than in separate pieces...’ (BACP, 2003, p. 61).

In a similar vein, the definition of integrative therapy provided by the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) states:

‘... *Integrative therapy* can be distinguished from eclecticism by its determination to show there are significant connections between different therapies which may be unrecognised by their exclusive proponents...’ (original italics) (UKCP, 2003).

Consistent with these definitions of integrative practice, training in my community was mainly organised in terms of the humanistic models of therapy in which my colleagues and I had been separately trained (‘client-centred’ (Rogers, 1951), ‘gestalt’ (Perls, 1969) and ‘transactional analysis’ (Berne, 1961)). In our training practices, we emphasised the similarities in our theoretical positions rather than the differences, and, in its widest sense, experiential learning involved modelling by my colleagues and myself that was shaped by our theoretical specialisms. The purpose of this modelling was compatible with the views on experiential learning expressed by a range of counselling course tutors in a survey undertaken by Hill (2002). Summarising their views, Hill suggests that, in counselling training, experiential learning in its broader sense involves:

‘modelling of aspects of theory... Students experience implicit values and attitudes as a result of this, and go on to develop an emotional affinity with such values and attitudes, which they can, in turn, model with their clients. The suggestion is that the core theoretical model is assimilated by students as a result of their experiences in community...’ (Hill, 2002, p. 219).

Modelling, shaped by a core theoretical model, is a direct response to the central British Association for Counselling (BAC) practice guideline for trainers that:

‘... It is desirable that there should be some consistency between the theoretical orientation of the course and the teaching methods used on it e.g. client-centred courses will tend to be trainee-centred.’ (BAC, 1985, p. 3).

Typically, experiential learning practices in my community matched the practices of a number of teachers and trainers whom Boydell (1976) asked to describe their experiential learning approach:

‘... Some say they actually teach from a certain book, usually Kolb, Rubin and McIntyre (1971)... others talk about non-directive methods, the use of structured exercises, participative approaches, action learning... discovery learning, games and simulations... learning communities, the non-use of lectures...’ (Boydell, 1976, p. 1).

Boydell, who talks about the lack of clarity in this: ‘... jungle of terminology and jargon...’, rather grudgingly acknowledges that these various practices: ‘... probably do represent, in some way, variants on the theme “experiential”...’ (Boydell, 1976, p.1).

Commenting on the lack of clarity about the nature of experiential learning, Malinen (2000) offers the following viewpoint:

‘... “Adult experiential learning is a complex, vague and ambiguous phenomenon, which is still inadequately defined, conceptually suspect and even poorly researched... its theoretical and philosophical foundations are fragmented and confusing... There are too many interpretations and priorities among theorists and practices that no single, clear definition of these foundations could be constructed.”...’ (Malinen, 2000, cited in Fenwick, 2003, p. 5).

Clearly, the organisation of experiential learning in counselling training takes various forms. In my own context, the organisation of experiential learning partly depended upon the size of the training groups. For example, in larger groups (where there were twelve to sixteen participants), trainees often worked in triads (‘counsellor’, ‘client’ and observer), with trainers dipping in and out of these triads for the purposes of offering feedback and guidance. In smaller training groups (six to nine participants - as in my case study group), experiential learning most often involved two students occupying the positions of ‘counsellor’ and ‘client’, and simulating a counselling session (sometimes

videotaped), which would be observed by the remainder of the student peer group and a tutor. In the 'observation and reflection' (Kolb, 1984) phase, immediately following the simulation, 'counsellor', 'client' and observers would evaluate the effectiveness of the skills used by the 'counsellor' in the simulation.

The interventions that my colleagues and I made in both the larger and smaller groups were influenced by a version of Kagan's (1967) interpersonal process recall model. In the reflective process shaped by this model, the tutor and observing student peers were effectively positioned as inquirers. Our task was to help the 'counsellor' and 'client' to debrief and deconstruct their simulation session by asking questions about their thoughts and feelings regarding particular interventions used in the simulation, as a means of identifying the skills used by the 'counsellor' and the impact of the counsellor's use of these skills on the 'client'.

However, one of the problems with Kagan's (1967) model is that it is based almost solely on 'reflection-*on*-action' (Schön, 1983) (own italics) assumptions, which, consistent with an experiential learning approach, imply a distinction between reflective thought and concrete experience. This process effectively discounts any reflection-*in*-action (Schön, 1983) (own italics) that might take place in feedback periods themselves, and hence discounts the context in which recall is co-created. An added problem of using Kagan's model in a context where learning involves skills training is that reflective thought is effectively reduced to a number of discrete microcounselling skills. This microcounselling, reductionist approach is incompatible with the holistic ideology in terms of which humanistic-integrative counselling is premised and with a situated view of learning.

Ivey and Authier's (1971) work on microcounselling, which drew on Strong's (1968) 'social influence theory' and Bandura's (1969) 'behaviour modification principles',

assumes a cumulative view of learning. This approach is based on the selection and definition of particular counselling skills (for example, ‘paraphrasing’ and ‘summarising’). In my training context, these skills were modelled by my colleagues and me, and sometimes highlighted by the use of videotape. Trainees were expected to learn and evaluate their use of these skills on the assumption that each of the defined skills would be internalised and eventually form part of an extended repertoire, or ‘toolbox’ of skills that they could draw on in their work with clients. The most usual way of practising and evaluating the use of these skills, which stemmed from the core model used on the course, was in experiential learning groups that were organised in terms of simulated counselling practice.

Connor (1994) talks about the work of Baker and Daniels (1989), who carried out a ‘meta-analysis’ of 81 courses that used a microcounselling approach. Their conclusion was that this approach was effective for teaching well-defined basic skills, but their work raised questions about maintenance of these skills over time and how trainees developed these skills. They also questioned the effectiveness of the microcounselling approach in relation to training people in the: ‘higher order skills in more complex combinations’ (Baker and Daniels, 1989, cited in Connor, 1994, p. 7). Commenting on the microcounselling approach to training, Connor (1994) talks about how this approach became less popular in the late 1980s because of concerns that it might lead to a:

‘...mechanistic approach to counsellor training and might produce responses in trainees which were specific to the practice situation but which did not become integrated into a total style of counselling...’ (Connor, 1994, p. 8).

Connor says that one of the ways that trainers have addressed this issue is to design their courses ‘developmentally’, which is what she has done. In the first year of the two-year training course that she designed, trainees are:

‘... expected to gain a working knowledge of the core theoretical model and to be able to demonstrate the specific skills which are required at each stage... In the second year... it can be assumed that there is a satisfactory standard of basic skill

development and the focus then turns to the higher order skills...’ (Connor, 1994, p. 8).

However, Feltham:

‘... questions the widespread developmental view that a first training must treat (adult) trainees as babies to be spoon-fed traditional material (however stodgy or toxic), and that only advanced trainees or mature practitioners can handle a rich diet of pluralistic perspectives, real debate and critical analysis...’ (Feltham, 1997, p. 124).

It seems to me that, whether or not a course is developmentally structured in the way described by Connor, the result is mechanistic and reductionist if a microcounselling skills approach is used. This is partly because, underpinning this approach, is a view of learning that is based on internalisation assumptions that serve to locate learning within the individual and therefore discount the context of learning. In a counselling training context, these assumptions do not include a notion of criticality because learning is tied back to a core theoretical model. Also, in so far as learning is deliberately shaped by modelling from trainers, this practice seems likely to invite emulation by trainees rather than critique.

The internalisation model of learning that underpinned both my experiences as a trainee and my work as a trainer was the staged model of learning that was based on the work of Robinson (1974). This model, which provides a framework for understanding trainees’ ‘development’, is very popular on counselling training courses (Clarkson, 1991; Connor, 1994). The model assumes that learners move through four stages of learning, which are: ‘unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence and unconscious competence’ (Robinson, 1974). Stage four is assumed to have occurred when newly acquired skills have been internalised and integrated by learners.

Problems emerge when Kagan’s model is fused with Robinson’s (1974) assumptions about learning, and learning is tied back to the meanings produced by use of a core

model. This is because Kagan's model depends on 'conscious competence', since, by its very nature, 'recall' is a conscious process. In a counselling training context where the 'interpersonal process' that trainees are being asked to 'recall' is supposed to be shaped by interventions that are compatible with the core model, what is produced is likely to be a post hoc rationalisation. However, as Michelson, states: '... "experience exceeds rational attempts to bound it, control, and rationalise it according to pre-existing social categories and sanctioned uses"...' (Michelson, 1999, cited in Fenwick, 2003, p. 27). Also, if the possibility of 'unconscious competence' is assumed, then how is this to be assessed, since, by implication, what is unconscious may not be open to conscious recall, and if, or when, it is open to conscious recall, this takes trainees back to the 'conscious competence' stage of learning in terms of Robinson's model.

As previously indicated, the personal development component of training in my community was underpinned by Rogerian values. However, to a large extent, Rogers' person-centred approach to education is incompatible with the formative, developmental assumptions of adult learning embedded in a transmission model of learning. Also, in and of itself, Rogers' approach to education moves away from a narrow view of experiential learning. This said, it seems to me that when Rogers' egalitarian principles are harnessed to a version of experiential learning that is understood in terms of core model assumptions, these principles acquire a formative quality.

Certainly, Rogers' emphasis on the importance of students' 'freedom to learn' (Rogers, 1983) reflects the same democratic principles that are evident in Wenger's (1998) and Mezirow's (2000) views on transformative learning. Accordingly, the 'top down' approach, or 'jug and mug learning' (Rogers, 1983), is lessened because the role of the tutor becomes that of a facilitator of students' self-directed learning in which: '... the direction is self-chosen, the learning is self-initiated... and the whole person is invested in the process...' (Rogers, 1983, p. 189). This said, as I see it, there are at least two

significant differences between Rogers' approach and Wenger's situated learning theory approach. The first is to do with the greater degree of ontological realism that is evident in Rogers' emphasis on learning 'in which discovery of the real self' (Rogers, 1983) is centrally situated. For instance, according to Rogers, the questions that most of us:

'... are seeking to answer is, "who am I really? Can I ever discover or get in touch with my real self?..." And these questions are not only those of the young, but of countless older men and women...' (Rogers, 1983, p. 33).

For Rogers, education is one of the 'pathways' to 'self-actualisation' (Rogers, 1983).

(The other two are psychotherapy and/or intense 'encounter group' experiences.)

Rogers' individualistic emphasis on learning stands in sharp relief to the social emphasis on learning that underpins Wenger's approach. Secondly, and consistent with experiential learning norms, in Rogers' approach, there is an implicit separation of thought and action in so far as students' self-directed learning aims are tacitly viewed as preceding the actions they take to actualise these aims. In Wenger's theory of learning, learning is located in the doing, so that thoughts and actions are implicitly viewed as inseparable aspects of learning/self, which is negotiated in participation with others.

Rogers' individualistic emphasis on self-actualisation, which has its roots in Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' (Maslow, 1967), reflects his therapeutic background, and has been, and remains, immensely influential in terms of the process of learning how to be a counsellor or psychotherapist. This is evident in research in the late 1980s, for instance, which involved ten prominent psychotherapists reflecting *On becoming a psychotherapist* (Dryden and Spurling, 1989). For these psychotherapists, self-development was seen as central to the process. Commenting on this theme of self-development, in the ten case histories provided by the psychotherapists, Spurling and Dryden (the editors) state:

'... One works on oneself in order to make oneself more responsive to the client... The formulation is simple and, indeed essential to any responsible practice as a therapist...' (Spurling and Dryden, 1989, p. 204).

In their analyses of the underlying theme of self-actualisation in the above ten case histories, Spurling and Dryden pick up the same duality of subject and object that is evident in the subtle distinction between thought and action in Rogers' approach. For instance, they notice that there is a: '... tacit splitting of the self into self-as-subject, that which works, and self-as-object, that which is worked upon...' (Spurling and Dryden, 1989, p. 204). However, they go on to say: '... this objectification of the self is a necessary step in the way the therapist comes to think and feel about himself or herself...' (Spurling and Dryden, 1989, p. 204).

Collating the data from the ten case histories, Norcross and Guy observe that: '... Life and informal training experiences consistently exerted more influence on these therapists than did formal coursework...' (Norcross and Guy, in Dryden and Spurling, 1989, p. 227). They later state: '... We conclude, as have those before us, that the process of becoming a psychotherapist is only loosely organised by the training system...' (Norcross and Guy, in Dryden and Spurling, 1989, p. 227). This view is consistent with their earlier statement that:

'... Second only to the severity of the client's symptomology, the psychotherapist - not theory - not technique - is the most powerful determinant of client improvement...' (Norcross and Guy, in Dryden and Spurling, 1989, p. 215).

Drawing on the earlier work of Norcross, in which he talks about the success of therapy being related to the 'patient-therapist relationship' (Norcross, 1986), Clarkson makes the point that:

'... If, indeed, the therapeutic relationship is one of the most, if not the most, important factor in successful therapy, one would expect that much of the training in psychotherapy would be training in the *intentional* use of relationship...' (original italics) (Clarkson, 1992, p. 294).

Based on this supposition, Clarkson offers five 'modes' of therapeutic relationship; 'the working alliance', 'the transference/countertransference relationship', 'the reparative/developmentally needed relationship', 'the I-You relationship' and 'the transpersonal relationship' (Clarkson, 1992, pp. 294-306). However, in terms of a

situated learning theory perspective, Clarkson's modes of therapeutic relationship are problematic, not least because they are based on a developmental model of relationship that is underpinned by some of the psychopathological assumptions that characterise transactional analysis. Similar developmental and psychopathological assumptions are evident in the transactional analysis writings of Erskine (1989, 1997), for whom the relationship is also seen as a central property of healing in the therapeutic relationship. Erskine's work, in particular, draws on the psychoanalytical ideas of Winnicott (1965) and on Bowlby's 'attachment theory' (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980).

More recently, Schapira, in her book *Choosing a counselling or psychotherapy training: a practical guide* (Schapira, 2000), upholds the notion that: '... It is the quality of the relationship between therapist and client that... (is)... central to the therapeutic work...' (Schapira, 2000, p. 24). However, the same paternalistic emphasis is evident to me in Schapira's understanding of 'quality of relationship' as is apparent to me in the work of Clarkson (1992) and Erskine (1997). For instance, according to Schapira:

'... Therapy is considered a journey of self-discovery, and the individual needs to have the support of someone who has been on, at least, a good part of the journey herself. A therapist can only help someone to the point where she has been... The practitioner is there for the client; the client's welfare, needs and process take priority...' (Schapira, 2000, p. 25).

In essence, this paternalistic view, which I see as an embedded feature of developmental models of learning in counselling training, seems very different from an egalitarian view of relationship in which the meaning that is constructed is recognised by both the therapist and the client as a co-created product that has been negotiated between the two of them in a specific context.

McAuliffe and Eriksen's constructivist approach to counsellor education goes some way towards reflecting egalitarian values in which students are seen as: '... subjects of their own learning, not as objects...' (McAuliffe, in McAuliffe and Eriksen, 2002, p. 16).

However, as I see it, one of the main differences between their approach and a

Wengerian one is that McAuliffe and Eriksen's views incorporate a notion of learning based on a staged model of adult thinking and students' 'readiness' to learn. This: '... general notion comes from the Piagetian developmental tradition of respecting the evolving meaning-making capacities of the learner...' (McAuliffe, in McAuliffe and Eriksen, 2002, p. 5). Overlaying this notion is: '... the social constructionist impulse, in which the social/dialogical nature of human meaning-making is honored...' (McAuliffe, in McAuliffe and Eriksen, 2002, p. 5).

The main thrust of McAuliffe and Eriksen's understanding of constructivism comes from their drive to integrate traditional teaching strategies (on Master degree programmes of counsellor education in the USA), such as lectures, with less traditional teaching strategies ('experiential learning' (Kolb, 1984)) in higher education. Therefore, whilst they advocate the use of Kolb's model, they issue:

'... one proviso... Let us not cast aside the power of the abstraction, the generalizations that help us leave the ground of the concrete... It is... not "mere" experience that is the best teacher. It is the *cycle* of experience, reflection, abstraction, and experimentation that wins the day...' (original italics) (McAuliffe, in McAuliffe and Eriksen, 2002, p. 11).

In this respect too, their views are different from situated learning theory views in which learning is situated in the concrete, that is, in the doing, and doing assumes a meaning that incorporates 'reflection, abstraction and experimentation'.

It seems that McAuliffe and Eriksen are attempting to integrate teaching strategies that emanate from different philosophical roots (realism and interpretivism) in an attempt to avoid a 'dualism' between; 'student and curriculum', 'discovery and transmission' and the 'content and process' of learning. (McAuliffe, in McAuliffe and Eriksen, 2002).

However, as I have argued in this thesis, it remains questionable to me as to whether this integration is viable.

It seems likely, in a United Kingdom counselling training culture that is shaped by a view of experiential learning in which experiences and notions of self-development are narrowly interpreted in terms of the assumptions embedded in a core theoretical model, that learning will assume formative parameters, irrespective of the core theoretical model used. This formative view of learning is antithetical to a view of learning as a potentially transformative process, which is a view of learning that is evident in the situated learning theory literature, and one that is central in the influential work of Mezirow (1978). I present a summary of these views in the next section, since they influenced my critique of counselling training approaches to learning, and because they provide a context for attempting to understand the extent to which perturbation may have a place in facilitating transformative learning on counselling training courses.

Transformative learning.

Mezirow's rationalist, constructivist theory of adult learning is pertinent to debates in the area of situated and activity theories of learning, in which formative learning is distinguished from transformative learning. This distinction is apparent in Mezirow's concepts of learning as a 'habit of mind' (Mezirow, 2000) and learning as a 'perspective transformation' (Mezirow, 2000). Mezirow's distinction has strong similarities to distinctions made by sociocultural learning theorists between learning as 'mastery' and learning as 'appropriation' (Wertsch, 1998). Wertsch's view of appropriation and mastery also gain support from activity theorists such as Billett (2001). Appropriation and mastery are constructed in terms of active (positive) and passive (negative) assumptions, respectively. For example, in support of Wertsch's position, Billett says:

'... Wertsch (1998) uses the terms "appropriation" and "mastery" to make the distinction between individuals' interpretive construction of meaning and those in which external sources are strongly enculturating and result in learning which is unconvincing and superficial...' (Billett, 2001, p. 30).

Rogoff does not uphold this polarised construction. Rather, in her 'three plane analysis' of 'sociocultural activity', she implicitly incorporates a subtle notion of mastery in her

second plane (that is, 'guided participation') of her developmental construction in which she talks about these:

'... three planes of analysis corresponding to personal, interpersonal and community processes. I refer to developmental processes corresponding with these three planes... as apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation, in turn...' (Rogoff, 1995, p. 139).

Rogoff uses the 'metaphor' of 'apprenticeship' in a similar way to Lave and Wenger (1991), that is, as a term to denote 'newcomer' status to participants whose goal is to: '... advance their skill and understanding through participation with others in culturally organised activities...' (Rogoff, 1995, p. 143). For Rogoff, 'guided participation' refers to situations in which participants have structured access, which may enable or limit certain cultural activities. Rogoff's third plane is when: '... individuals transform their understanding of and responsibilities for activities through their own participation...' (Rogoff, 1995, p. 150).

Wenger's view of appropriation as a transformative process is compatible with, among others, those of Rogoff (1995), Wertsch (1998) and Billett (1998, 2001), in so far as, for Wenger, appropriation is to do with the 'ownership of meaning' (Wenger, 1998), and his view of ownership assumes a process of interpretive construction. Like Rogoff, Wenger does not directly engage in debates about learning as either the internalisation of knowledge or as the appropriation of knowledge. Accordingly, he does not discuss, in any detail, the concept of 'mastery', which, in this case, assumes an understanding of learning based on the internalisation, or acquisition of knowledge rather than on learning as the interpretive construction of meaning. Indeed, Wenger only mentions mastery as a rather derogatory aside to his main point that:

'... the term "ownership"... is not new. Teachers talk about students gaining ownership of the curriculum material, and by this they refer to their achieving not only *perfunctory mastery* but personal meaning as well...' (my italics) (Wenger, 1998, p. 201).

However, a view of learning as mastery is implied in Wenger's notion of training as a formative rather than transformative process. According to Wenger:

‘... Education... concerns the opening of identities – exploring new ways of being that lie beyond our current state. Whereas training aims to create an inbound trajectory targeted at competence in a specific practice, education must strive to open new dimensions for the negotiation of the self... Education is not merely formative it is transformative...’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 263).

Wenger's implied notion of mastery is consistent with Mezirow's concept of a ‘habit of mind’ (Mezirow, 2000), which is a phrase adopted by Wenger. For Mezirow, a habit of mind becomes a ‘point of view’ that forms part of our frames of reference, which consist of:

‘... clusters of meaning schemes - sets of immediate specific expectations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes and judgements - that tacitly direct and shape a specific interpretation...’ (Mezirow, 2000, p. 18).

Understood in these terms, learning in a counselling training context can be seen to be based on a formative process that is aimed at facilitating mastery of particular ‘meaning schemes’ that are shaped by a core theoretical model. These meaning schemes are assumed to be internalised by trainees and will: ‘... arbitrarily determine what... (they)... see and how... (they)... see it...’ (Mezirow, 2000, p. 18).

Use of a core model seems to be a peculiarity of British counselling training practice.

As Feltham says:

‘... The British counselling world differs from much of the rest of the world in insisting... on identified core theoretical models in training... In Britain, most BAC-recognised courses are psychodynamic or person-centred, a few are based on transactional analysis or... an acceptable integration of one of these and other humanistic... approaches...’ (Feltham, 1997, p. 121).

Feltham, who challenges the notion of a core theoretical model, outlines some of the assumptions that underpin its use. For instance, there is the assumption that: ‘... Failure to embrace one model in depth results in practitioners who are confused, lacking in rigour, and whose knowledge base is thin...’ (Feltham, 1997, p. 121).

Also there are fears that:

‘... Attempts to learn a mish-mash of skills from various models result in ineffective or dangerous practice by counsellors... theoretically inconsistent counsellors risk transmitting their confusion to clients...’ (Feltham, 1997, p. 121).

In Hill’s (2002) survey of 56 British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) accredited counselling courses, he found that the: ‘... most common core model was integrative (50 per cent)...’. However, the meaning of integrative practice varies. In the case of my community, integrative practice included ‘holistic’ expectations that students would fuse the learning that they had gained in the variety of contexts (for example, supervision and personal therapy) that collectively formed part of the broader configuration of their training. On a theoretical level, the meaning of integrative practice in my community is neatly summed up by Erskine, whose view is that:

‘... For a theory to be integrative, as opposed to merely eclectic, it must also separate out those concepts and ideas that are not theoretically consistent to form a cohesive core of constructs that inform and guide the psychotherapeutic process...’ (Erskine, 1997, p. 21).

In a counselling training culture, the same principles that ‘inform and guide the psychotherapeutic process’ (Erskine, 1997) are intended to inform and guide the training process modelled by trainers. Erskine’s emphasis on consistency and cohesion is compatible with his humanistic concept of ‘empathic attunement’ (Erskine, 1997), which seems to be based on a view of intersubjectivity that implies harmony and stability in therapeutic relationships, and which, in my experience, forms an embedded part of humanistic training practices that are shaped by modelling.

However, there are several criticisms of the practice of modelling, one of which is that there is an underlying assumption that learning simply constitutes the ‘transmission’ of skills from trainer to trainee. As Gillon puts it:

‘... In terms of approaches to learning, “trainings” are generally considered to be one-way activities, where a determined range of skills are passed on from expert to novice. Such determination often robs the “trainee” of any critical...’

engagement with what is learned and how this learning is achieved...’ (Gillon, 2002, p. 24).

Modelling that assumes that the purposes of counselling and training are the same helps to provide continuity, which in turn creates cohesion and stability, because the same ideas are used across the communities of practice that collectively comprise the broader constellation, or field of counselling training (for example, personal therapy and supervision). Indeed, in relation to ‘traditional’ counselling course requirements for trainees to have personal therapy, Dryden: ‘... raises the issue of whether the orientation of trainees’ personal therapists should be congruent with the orientation of the course...’ (Dryden, 1991, pp. 16-17). His conclusion is that: ‘On balance, such congruence is probably advantageous, otherwise trainees may become overly confused...’ (Dryden, 1991, p. 17).

Whilst I recognise that a certain amount of stability is necessary for learning, the degree of stability created by training practices that do not promote the cross fertilisation of ideas, because they are tied back to a core theoretical model, may be too static to promote transformative learning, assuming that transformative learning is a desirable outcome of training. A more dynamic process of learning is one that may include ‘brokering’ (Wenger, 1998), which is to do with the ‘import and export’ (Wenger, 1998) of new ideas from one community of practice to another. This process may well cause a degree of perturbation, which Wenger suggests is necessary to promote transformative learning, and which I go on to discuss in the next section.

The place of perturbation in transformative learning.

It seems to me that the appropriation of knowledge requires critical dissent as well as agreement in order to maintain our sense of self. That is, positioning ourselves in relation to the views of others requires disagreement and agreement, ‘discontinuity and continuity’, ‘perturbation and stability’ (Wenger, 1998). Bruner states, in relation to

openness to learning, we need: ‘... a willingness to construe knowledge and values from multiple perspectives without loss of commitment to one’s own values...’ (Bruner, 1990, p. 30). Therefore, it appears that modelling that is shaped by a core theoretical model is the antithesis of appropriation and hence, of transformative learning.

Wenger’s views on the place of perturbation in learning that is ‘transformative’ rather than ‘formative’ (Wenger, 1998) is compatible with Schön’s view of discomfort as the trigger for ‘reflection-in-action’ (Schön, 1983), and lends support to research that has helped to refine Mezirow’s (1978) influential work on transformative learning. For instance, from a transformative learning perspective, Taylor, under the general heading of ‘Triggering a transformative experience’ (Taylor, 2000), analyses a range of American research papers that follow in the tradition of adult learning proposed by Mezirow. In this research, Taylor analyses the work of Lytle (1989), Scott (1991), Clark (1991, 1993) and Saavedra (1995). By and large, this research, which is reported in the form of unpublished doctoral dissertations, is in the area of what Mezirow terms a ‘perspective transformation’, which he describes as being triggered by a ‘disorienting dilemma’ (Mezirow, 1978). From Mezirow’s standpoint, a perspective transformation effectively constitutes a paradigm shift, which he views as a more global transformation than the transformation of a learner’s ‘meaning scheme’. Some examples of the terms associated with a disorienting dilemma in the research cited by Taylor are ‘dissonance’, ‘conflict’, ‘trauma’ and ‘disequilibrium’ (Taylor, 2000). There are significant parallels between Wenger’s view of perturbation in learning and Mezirow’s view of a ‘disorienting dilemma’ in learning. For Wenger, perturbation, which includes a notion of conflict, seems to be implied in his portrayal of an ‘identity’, which he states:

‘... should be viewed as a nexus of multimembership. As such... identity is not a unity but neither is it simply fragmented... being one person requires some work to reconcile our different forms of membership...’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 159).

It appears that, for Wenger, perturbation may arise from ‘competing demands’ that emanate from our membership of a variety of communities of practice since:

- ‘1) different ways of engaging in practice may reflect different forms of individuality
 - 2) different forms of accountability may call for different responses to the same circumstances
 - 3) elements of one repertoire may be quite inappropriate, incomprehensible, or even offensive in another community.’
- (Wenger, 1998, p. 160).

The implicit rational emphasis on perturbation that is apparent in Wenger’s depiction is more explicit in Mezirow’s position on perturbation. Mezirow effectively challenges the essentialist psychoanalytic view of perturbation as a conflictful process that leads to the emergence of a dilemma to be ‘worked through’ (Fenwick, 2003). Rather, as Fenwick recognises, Mezirow:

‘... acknowledges the perturbation of the unconscious... (but)... asserts the primacy of reason and the need to control and subvert through critical reflection and communicative dialogue those “dysfunctional” habits of mind leading to undesirable action...’ (Fenwick, 2003, p. 33).

There are many parallels between Mezirow’s (1978) transformative theory of adult learning and the learning assumptions embedded in counselling training. This is partly because of Mezirow’s emphasis on freedom, equality, tolerance, empathy and autonomy, and on understanding the beliefs, values and attitudes that help to shape our ‘frame of reference’ (Mezirow, 2000). This emphasis is consistent with the views of Freire (1974) and the person-centred views of Rogers (1983), both of which underpin counselling training practices.

The importance that Mezirow attaches to the ‘personal readiness’ for learning is certainly one that was recognised in my counselling training community and is implicit in others that adopt a developmental approach to learning. I suggest that the reason for this is that the notion of personal readiness has echoes of ‘maturation’, that is, of critical periods for learning, as is evident in the influential views of Piaget (1952) in the area of child development. Indeed, psychologists Atkinson et al. (1983) proffer the

controversial view that: ‘... Although maturation is most apparent during childhood it continues into adult life...’ (Atkinson et al., 1983, p. 63). They go on to suggest that:

‘... Psychologists generally agree that there are orderly sequences in development that depend on the maturation of the organism as it interacts with its environment...’ (Atkinson et al., 1983, p. 64).

Also, consistent with a humanistic counselling training practice, Mezirow’s developmental theory of adult learning is based on a collaborative rather than an ‘argument culture’ (Tannen, 1998, quoted by Mezirow, 2000). In this regard, Mezirow states:

‘... We tend to believe that there are two sides to every issue and only two. We set out to win an argument rather than to understand different ways of thinking and different frames of reference, and to search for common ground, to resolve differences, and to get things done...’ (Mezirow, 2000, p. 12).

According to Mezirow, transformative learning involves the: ‘... bringing of one’s assumptions, premises, criteria, and schemata into consciousness and vigorously critiquing them...’ (Mezirow, 1991, p. 29). Viewed from this perspective, tying learning back to a core theoretical model is the antithesis of transformative learning. This is not least because such a practice does not involve:

‘vigorous critique... (or)... “trying on” other points of view, identifying the common in the contradictory, tolerating the anxiety implicit in paradox, searching for synthesis, and reframing...’ (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 12-13).

From this standpoint, learning that is organised in terms of a narrow set of assumptions about human beings seems likely to promote homogeneity of ideas, in much the same way as always reading newspapers that confirm rather than disturb our view of the world might do.

Schön’s (1983, 1987) views have much in common with the views of Mezirow. As I have discussed in more depth elsewhere (Bresloff, 1992), Schön (1983, 1987), from a constructivist perspective, argues that learners need to ‘suspend their disbelief’ in order to engage with new ideas. This is a view of meaning making that is evident in the work

of Bruner (1990), and in the work of Gadamer (1989), who talks about the need to put our 'prejudices at risk'. For Mezirow:

'... Reflective discourse involves what the Greek Skeptics called *epoche*, a provisional suspension of judgement about the... belief or disbelief in ideas until a better determination can be made...' (original italics) (Mezirow, 2000, p. 13).

In learning that is shaped by a humanistic-integrative core model, learners do not normally get the opportunity to suspend their disbelief in the model and hence to evaluate it critically. This is partly because of the emphasis on similarities between the concepts that are embodied in the particular theories that comprise the model as a whole. On the contrary, students' belief in the model is tacitly encouraged, not least by the practice of modelling that is shaped by the use of the terminology, or jargon associated with the model. I would argue that, by default, adherence to a core model leads to the emergence of a stable view of professional practice based on theoretical certainty. However, as Schön points out, professional life is filled with uncertainty and professional practice is often a messy process, which he refers to as being in the 'swampy lowlands' (Schön, 1987). Therefore, there are no ready-made solutions that can be learned from formal theories. Schön argues that it is the discomfort that professionals experience in their working lives that triggers not only 'reflection-on-action' but also 'reflection-in-action'. For Schön, critical reflection involves questioning the assumptions upon which problems, solutions and actions are shaped. This involves challenging the 'high road' (Schön, 1987) of theoretical knowledge rather than slavish adherence to particular theoretical constructions of knowledge.

In certain respects, the constructivist approaches of Schön (1983, 1987) and Mezirow (1991, 2000) are compatible with Wenger's (1998) situated perspective on learning.

This is possibly because Wenger's approach reflects influences from a range of learning perspectives, including constructivist ones. However, whilst there are parallels between Mezirow's and Wenger's theories of learning, there appear to be at least three main

differences. Firstly, Mezirow's theory is based on a staged model of learning, whilst Wenger's theory is shaped by a more organic view of learning that moves away from developmental assumptions. Secondly, Wenger places more emphasis on the social situation of learning than Mezirow does. Thirdly, Wenger's standpoint on perturbation is shaped by more organic assumptions than Mezirow's 'cause and effect' understanding.

One of the criticisms made by some constructivists in relation to situated perspectives on learning is the emphasis placed on context. Wenger's view of communities of practice as forming parts of 'broader configurations' extends the notion of context and perhaps goes some way towards addressing such criticisms, for instance, those of Anderson et al. (1996), for whom the context of learning only assumes its significance in relation to the type of knowledge that the learner wishes to acquire. The main emphasis of Anderson et al. (1996) is on the importance of learners learning transferable skills. This said, the issue of transferability is a contentious one and one that is central in terms of counselling training, which assumes that learning in one context (training) can be transferred to another (client work). The issue of transferability raises questions that can be located in debates about the retention of self when the focus is social. I provide a few examples here from writers whose views in relation to these debates can be located in the broad arena of situated learning. I do this partly in recognition of some of the viewpoints that played a part in shaping my understanding of my data, and partly to provide a flavour of some of the pertinent issues in the broader context in which I locate my understanding of my data.

From a socio-cultural perspective on learning, Smolka et al. express their concern regarding the location of learning in the following way:

'... when intraindividual functioning is focused on, there is a concern with the risk of a "dissolution of the subject" or of a "dictatorship of the other" in the interindividual functioning; on the other hand, when interindividual functioning is

focused on, the question of the subject constitution is not directly addressed...’ (Smolka et al., 1995, p. 178),

From a ‘socio-cultural and activity theory’ standpoint, Daniels:

‘... questions the mechanism by which that which was social becomes individual and the extent to which that which is individual understanding can transfer from one social setting to another. This debate is ongoing...’ (Daniels, 2001, p. 34).

Billett’s activity theory views are compatible with those of Daniels in so far as Billett problematises the issue of reconciling:

‘... the cognitive and sociocultural theories of knowing and learning... that have sought to understand the reciprocal contributions from within the head with those from outside it...’ (Billett, 2001, p. 21).

Wenger (1998) appears to make a distinction between our ‘identities’ and our ‘identities of participation’. This seems to be an attempt to take account of both the individual and the social. I discuss this distinction in my critique of Wenger’s theory in Chapter 6, since it is pertinent to my understanding of the data that I collected in my study.

Summary.

From a position that reflects a change in the direction of my thinking during the study, in this chapter, I have critiqued the experiential approach to learning in counselling training and conveyed my understanding of some of the early research influences that have helped to shape this approach. I have talked about how the particular cocktail of some of these early influences in experiential learning practices in my counselling training community was used and about some of the problems associated with this use. I have put the case that learning that is shaped by a core theoretical model is too narrow, and indicated that the uncritical modelling by trainers of humanistic-integrative core theory values promotes ideals of stability, harmony and certainty that are not representative of counselling practice. I went on to present my views about situated learning theory, which I see as offering a more sophisticated means of understanding the process of learning. I have attempted to depict some of the connections that I see between Wenger’s situated perspective on learning and those of other theorists whose

views have been influential in the field of transformative learning. I have provided a flavour of some of the interrelated debates in the field of situated learning, to do with the transferability of learning from one context to another, the retention of self when the location of learning is social rather than individual, and learning as the internalisation or appropriation of knowledge. I have mentioned these debates in order to provide a thumbnail sketch of the broader context in which my study was located, and also because, by implication, the way that I have understood my data indicates my position in these debates.

In the next chapter, I describe the methodology that I used in collecting my data.

3. Methodology.

Philosophical perspective.

The main principles that underpin my methodology stem from a hermeneutic, or interpretivist philosophy. Among the key ideas that distinguish this philosophical stance from a realist, or ‘scientific’ one is the notion of truth as a relative, rather than an absolute, concept (Smith, 1998). In terms of my research, this means that I take the position that my data construction, or story, stems from my internal frame of reference. Therefore, my story is value laden and incorporates assumptions that are culturally and historically situated. Also, I accept the inseparability of the subject and the object of knowledge and the inseparability of the interpersonal and the intrapersonal nature of my meaning making. Hence, in the hermeneutic tradition, I understand my fieldwork data as text that forms part of a co-created story that was constructed from both the data that I collected from participants in the study and the data that I collected from my own reflections. I view this data and the situated learning theory ideas that I use to give meaning to my story from the same interpretivist perspective.

Moustakas contends that: ‘... Our most significant awarenesses are developed from our own internal searches and from our attunement and empathic understandings of others...’ (Moustakas, 1990, p. 26). This standpoint forms part of a humanistic tradition.

Rogers, for instance, talks about how:

‘... the very feeling which has seemed to me most private, most personal... has turned out to be an expression for which there is a resonance in many other people...’ (Rogers, cited in Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 1990, p. 27).

The humanistic orientation of the heuristic methodology that I adopted was compatible with the ideology (if not some of the practices) that underpinned learning assumptions in my training community. Indeed, O’Hara talks about how person-centred therapy is:

‘... itself, a heuristic investigation into the nature and meaning of human experience...’

(O’Hara, 1986, p. 174). For researchers such as Douglass and Moustakas (1985), and

West (2001) and Etherington (2001), who assume an ‘internal locus of evaluation’ (Rogers, 1969), heuristic inquiry is a process of ‘disciplined subjectivity’ (West, 1998a, 1998b, 2001) undertaken for the purpose of throwing light ‘on a focused problem, question or theme’ (Douglass and Moustakas, 1985, p.40).

The interpretivist understanding that influenced my critique of the counselling approaches to learning that I discussed in Chapter 2 post-dated the design of my study, which I discuss in the next section. My study design was initially shaped by the ‘neorealist’ (Smith, 1998) principles that, at the outset of my inquiry, underpinned my practice as a counselling trainer. Smith (1998), quoting Bhaskar (1983) describes neorealism as: ‘... “ontological realism and epistemological relativism”...’ (Smith, 1998, p. 27). As my philosophical position gradually changed (from a neorealist to an interpretivist one), so too did my research focus.

My focus of interest at the outset of my study was to attempt to understand the extent to which Ware’s (1983) ‘doors to therapy’ model might be integrated into my work as a counselling trainer. Therefore, this model, which is a transactional analysis artefact from my psychotherapy practice that appealed to me at the time, was initially a central feature in my design of the study. However, as my thinking changed during the process of my research, I became less interested in wanting to understand participants’ direct relations with Ware’s model and more interested in wanting to understand the participatory process that developed around use of the model. To this extent, Ware’s model per se became a subordinate feature of the study design, but one that nevertheless remained influential because it was a mediating feature in the participatory learning process that I was attempting to understand.

However, for now, I need to begin at the beginning, as it were, by going back to my pre-case study position, when I was far less critical of the approaches to learning in

counselling training than I currently am (or as my critique in Chapter 2 might suggest). I start by providing a description of Ware's model (the deliberate learning focus for participation in the study) and then move on to talk about my then rationale for using the model.

Ware's (1983) doors to therapy model.

Ware's (1983) model is a diagnostic tool designed for use in transactional analysis psychotherapy and is taught in transactional analysis psychotherapy training. It is based on a model of 'cure' that is compatible with 'classical' transactional analysis theory (Berne, 1957, 1961, 1963, 1964, 1966, 1972; Groder, 1976; Woollams and Brown, 1978; Erskine, 1980; Stewart and Joines, 1987; Stewart, 1989, 1992 and Clarkson, 1988, 1992).

In an abstract of his article on his doors to therapy model, Ware describes the essence of his model as follows:

'Personality types and psychotherapeutic approaches for each are presented in the conceptual framework of personality adaptations and "doors" to therapy... the author describes the respective approaches for making contact (the Open Door) and those to avoid (the Trap Door) with the client. He also suggests the ongoing direction for change (the Target Door) with each of the personality adaptations...'
(Ware, 1983, p. 11).

Ware gives a table (Figure 3.1. below) listing the six personality adaptations (Schizoid, Hysterical, Obsessive-Compulsive, Paranoid, Antisocial, Passive-Aggressive), their corresponding 'characteristics' and 'description' and associated concepts from transactional analysis (that is, 'drivers' and 'injunctions'). Ware suggests that each of us has one or more of these personality adaptations.

Adaptation	Characteristics	Description	Drivers	Injunctions
Schizoid	Withdrawn Passivity Daydreaming Avoidance Detachment	Shy Overly Sensitive Eccentric	Be Strong Try Hard or Please Others	Don't Make It Don't Belong Don't Enjoy Don't Be Sane Don't Grow Up Don't Feel (Love, Sex, Joy) Don't Think
Hysterical	Excitability Emotional Instability Over- Reactivity Dramatic Attention-Getting Seductive	Immature Self-Centered Vain Dependent	Please Me Try Hard or Hurry Up	Don't Grow Up Don't Be Important Don't Think
Obsessive- Compulsive	Conformity Conscientiousness	Perfectionist Overly Inhibited Overly Conscientious Overly Dutiful Tense	Be Strong Be Perfect	Don't Be a Child Don't Feel (Joy and Sex) Don't Be Close Don't Enjoy
Paranoid	Rigidity of Thought Grandiosity Projection	Hypersensitive Suspicious Jealous Envious	Be Strong Be Perfect	Don't Be a Child Don't Be Close Don't Feel Don't Enjoy
Antisocial	Conflict with Society Low Frustration Tolerance Need for Excitement and Drama	Selfishness Cynical Irresponsibility	Be Strong Please Others	Don't Make It Don't Be Close Don't Be a Child Don't Feel
Passive- Aggressive	Aggressive Personality Resentment	Obstructive Stubborn	Try Hard Be Strong	Don't Feel Don't Be Close Don't Enjoy Don't Make It

Figure 3.1. Personality adaptations (Ware, 1983).

In another table (Figure 3.2. below), Ware links the six adaptations to particular sequences of behaviour, thinking and feeling, which he calls 'doors' to therapy.

Adaptations	Doors		
	Contact Door	Target Door	Trap Door
Schizoid	Behavior (WP)	Thinking	Feeling
Antisocial	Behavior (AA)	Feeling	Thinking
Paranoid	Thinking	Feeling	Behavior
Hysterical	Feeling	Thinking	Behavior
Obsessive-Compulsive	Thinking	Feeling	Behavior
Passive-Aggressive	Behavior (AP)	Feeling	Thinking
(WP) - Withdrawn Passivity (AP) - Active Passivity (AA) - Active Assertion			

Figure 3.2. Personality adaptations and therapy doors (Ware, 1983).

Ware's personality adaptations are modifications of personality types taken from the 1980 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM III) produced by the American Psychiatric Society. This manual was revised in 1987, reproduced in 1994 and continues to be used in the United States and United Kingdom by mental health professionals and psychotherapists from a range of modalities, including psychodynamic and gestalt (the psychotherapy specialisms of my two colleagues and co-participants in the study).

My rationale for using Ware's model as a conceptual learning tool in the study.

Within the context of my counselling training community, I considered that Ware's model was an appropriate tool for use in the study. This was because this tool provided a deliberate transactional analysis focus for learning in a deliberate learning environment in which transactional analysis was one of the three main theories in a humanistic-integrative approach to training. (The other theories were client-centred and gestalt, and, to a lesser extent, psychodynamic theory.) Ware's model comes within the category of humanistic-integrative, since it is a transactional analysis artefact, and

transactional analysis is listed in the ‘Humanistic-Integrative Psychotherapy Section’ (HIPS) of the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) register. More particularly, the appropriateness of the model stems from Ware’s emphasis on empathic contact, or harmony in the therapeutic relationship, which is seen by him as the catalyst for change in the client. Having said this, the model is constructed in terms of Ware’s attempt to integrate concepts from psychiatry (that is, the personality adaptations) with concepts from transactional analysis (the ‘drivers’ and ‘injunctions’ shown in Figure 3.1.). To this extent, I place the model in the ‘classical’, or Bernian school of transactional analysis, and, as such, the model has links with psychoanalysis. This link between psychoanalysis and transactional analysis becomes pertinent to understanding features of stability and perturbation in the simulated counselling practice sessions that one of my co-training colleagues (Jo) led as part of the study. This is because Jo’s theoretical preference was psychoanalysis, and this preference seemed to have mediated his use of Ware’s model in these sessions. Therefore, it seems appropriate for me to provide a brief outline of how I see the similarities and differences between psychoanalysis and transactional analysis that are pertinent to understanding the data obtained from Jo’s sessions.

Similarities and differences between transactional analysis and psychoanalysis with respect to Ware’s model.

Ware presupposes a pathological view of human development; in his case, to do with the early life fragmentation of thinking, feeling and behaving. Therefore, on an ontological level, his pathological assumptions about human beings are compatible with those that shape psychoanalytical assumptions about the nature of existence. However, on an epistemological level, Ware’s emphasis on contact and collaboration differs from psychoanalytical therapy practices. In psychoanalytically shaped practices, the client’s presupposed ‘resistance’ to therapy provides the main focus for the work, and the

therapist's understanding of the nature of 'conflict' (which the therapist's confrontation of the client's resistance is intended to highlight) is a central part of the process. In Ware's case, although his model is premised on a similar presupposition of client resistance to therapy, his deliberate aim in constructing his model is to provide a non-confrontational means of going with the client's resistance rather than against it, which reflects his humanistic emphasis on achieving empathic attunement with clients. This is evident in the following excerpt from his article on the model, which he describes as being:

'... valuable for individuals training to become therapists and for practising therapists who have reached an impasse with their client... (the model will enable them)... to make effective initial contact and to "go with the resistance"...' (Ware, 1983, p. 11).

Thus, Ware's aim in constructing the model marks an epistemological departure from therapy practices that are shaped by classical psychoanalytical principles.

Ethical and epistemological considerations regarding use of Ware's model.

The appropriateness of using Ware's model as a central feature of the study involved ethical and epistemological considerations. I framed my ethical considerations in terms of the same principles that, in essence, helped to shape my work as a counselling trainer and therapist. These principles are as follows:

'Beneficence: a commitment to promoting the participants' well-being
 Non-maleficence: a commitment to not doing harm to participants
 Autonomy: respect for the participant's right to be self-governing
 Justice: the fair and impartial treatment of all participants
 Fidelity: honouring the trust placed in the researcher.' (Bond, cited in Etherington, 2001, p. 121).

From an ethical perspective, it was important that participants in the study had sufficient knowledge of the concepts used by Ware, since this had implications for the 'justice' of my decision to use the model. For instance, I needed to satisfy myself that it was fair to ask my colleagues, whose theoretical specialisms were different from mine, to organise learning in terms of the model, and that students had enough knowledge about

transactional analysis to use the model and to benefit from its use. From an epistemological perspective, what I counted as valid data was directly related to the main purpose of my study, which was to understand participants' perspectives on the model from their frames of reference rather than from mine. This meant that participants (colleagues and students) needed to have enough familiarity with some of the concepts incorporated in the model to use it without my having to teach it to them, since teaching it to them would have been inconsistent with the main purpose of my investigation. This consideration influenced my decision to ask second-year students to participate in the study, since they had knowledge of some of the transactional analysis concepts used by Ware. Of course, I recognise that students' understanding of the transactional analysis concepts with which they were familiar will have been partly shaped by my teaching input in the first year of their training.

My choice of second-year students also had implications for the 'credibility' (Miles and Huberman, 1994) of my study, since, as a criterion for judging the 'goodness' (Miles and Huberman, 1994) of my research, I considered that credibility required my 'prolonged involvement' (Robson, 1993) with students. Being involved with this second-year student group since the beginning of their first year of training had enabled my understanding of the 'culture' of our particular community and my ability to 'build trust' (Robson, 1993) with them. These considerations were important because they had implications for 'depth', both in terms of the richness of the data that I was able to collect and my interpretation of this data. The small size of the student group (six) also proved to be advantageous in terms of depth, since I was able to spend more time in data gathering activities with each participant than would have been practicable with a larger group.

Following the above considerations, which involved my discussions with colleagues and students, I was satisfied that Ware's model was an appropriate learning tool for use

in the study. Indeed, in terms of 'beneficence', I saw its use as containing the potential for stimulating learning or generating 'new meanings' (Wenger, 1998) because of its novelty value, which arose because of Ware's particular organisation of transactional analysis and psychiatric concepts; a feature of the model with which participants were unfamiliar.

Design of the study.

Initial research questions.

Having decided that Ware's model was an appropriate learning focus for my study, I formulated the following research questions as a guide for informing my fieldwork:

- 1) How is Ware's model received by students and by my experienced counselling training colleagues from non-transactional analysis backgrounds? What are the most plausible explanations for any differences in their reception of this model?
- 2) To what extent does the adoption of Ware's model entail an acceptance of the realist and deviance based thinking upon which it is derived? How can this be avoided?
- 3) How does the explicit use of Ware's model influence the perceptions of counselling, psychotherapy and counselling training of colleagues from non-transactional analysis backgrounds? What impact does it have on their practice in these contexts?
- 4) How does the deliberate use of Ware's model influence students' perceptions of counselling, psychotherapy and counselling training? What impact does it have on their practice as 'counsellors in training'?
- 5) How does the explicit use of Ware's model, in the context of my research, change my own perception of counselling, psychotherapy and counselling training, and my practice within these contexts?

- 6) How does the explicit use of Ware's model, in the context of my research, change my perception of the value of the model itself?

These questions shaped my initial research approach, but, as mentioned previously, my research focus changed over the course of my fieldwork.

Methods used for collecting the data.

I adopted a single case study approach. Everyone in the group was included in the case study, that is, six students and my two co-training colleagues. In the interests of maintaining the anonymity of my co-participants in the research, I refer to them by the following pseudonyms: Beth, Lena, Polly, Trish, Vicky and Zandra (students), Gerald and Jo (trainers).

In my fieldwork, I used a multi-method approach, which comprised individual, joint and group interviews with participants, and observations (of simulated counselling practice sessions). I chose these methods because they dovetailed with the conventional organisation of training, and therefore, as a whole, offered a familiar, non-disruptive, and hence collaborative means for gathering information. Further, as a qualitative researcher, and therefore the 'key instrument' (Robson, 1993) in the process of my data collecting, I felt that it was important to use methods with which participants and I were familiar, since this had implications for the richness of the data I was able to collect.

I audiotaped and later transcribed all of the data that I collected in the various interviews that I had with participants and in the simulations that I observed. In addition, I carried a notepad and pen with me in order to record my thoughts and feelings immediately following and/or during my fieldwork. That is, I noted down my thoughts and feelings immediately following the interviews rather than during them in order not to disturb the flow of dialogue between participants and myself. In the simulations, I was able to write

down my thoughts and feelings as they occurred, since, in these sessions, I was a 'participant observer' (Robson, 1993).

From extensive experience of using audio taping as a reporting medium for my own clinical supervision of my individual and group work with clients, I was aware of several potential problems that may have arisen in my use of this medium, and that may have had practical and methodological research implications. These potential problems are as follows: Firstly, with regard to tape recording group interviews, there is the issue, in playback, of separating and accurately attributing comments to people in the group (Powney and Watts, 1987). Secondly, tape recording can result in participants feeling self-conscious and vulnerable, and this would have had implications for the depth and quality of the data that I was able to collect. Thirdly, there is the issue of whether or not to admit data that was provided after I had switched off the tape recorder and when participants may have felt less constrained in their comments (Powney and Watts, 1987). Fourthly, there might be technical difficulties with the recording that may result in poor sound quality and consequent problems in deciphering the data.

In terms of the first issue, a problem did not arise in my study. This was because of the small group size combined with knowing the participants so well that I was able to clearly distinguish their voices. Another significant feature was to do with communication norms in a counselling training culture. In this culture, respect for others includes not talking over others whilst they are speaking. Therefore, there was a clear separation between the individual comments made during the group interviews.

In terms of the second issue, once again, this did not seem to apply in my case. Lack of apparent participant vulnerability with respect to taping was probably because, in a counselling training culture, audiotaping forms part of routine training practice. For instance, in my case study community it was routine practice for students to tape

unsupervised simulated counselling practice sessions. These tapes would then be played back to the group as a whole in order for the students concerned to receive feedback from tutors and peers. Also, students were required to tape their counselling work with their actual clients for the purpose of tutor assessment of their counselling practice.

Within the context of my study, I understood the third issue as part of a boundary issue. That is, as part of the process of placing a boundary around the case study sessions, I did not admit data that was provided after I had turned off the tape. This form of selectivity seemed necessary, partly because my fieldwork was situated within the training course as a whole and partly because of the small scale, relatively short term nature of the research. Selectivity made the study more manageable and formed part of my 'purposive sampling' (Robson, 1993) methodology. I say more about the strengths and limitations of this methodology in Chapter 7.

In relation to the fourth issue with taping, I was fortunate in not having any technical difficulties with the tape recorders. This was probably because the recorders belonged to the college and were well maintained. Also, the sound quality was good because the recorders were specifically designed for use in educational settings.

I now go on to describe the three phases of the fieldwork, which I carried out between January and July 2001.

Phase 1: I began the first phase of my fieldwork by conducting two two-hour group interviews with the six student participants. The purpose of the first of these group interviews was to explore students' positions in relation to counselling prior to introducing Ware's model. I considered that appreciating their standpoints on counselling was significant in terms of understanding any differences in their positions in relation to their reception of the model. At the end of the first group interview, I provided each student with a copy of Ware's paper on his model, for them to read in

preparation for our second group interview. The focus of the second group interview was to explore students' initial reception of the model as a basis for their agreed use of it in the six simulated counselling practice sessions that formed a later part of the study.

I then conducted two joint one-hour interviews with my two colleagues. The purpose of the first interview was to explore my colleagues' positions in relation to counselling and therapy prior to introducing them to Ware's model in order to understand how their positions may mediate their use of the model in the study. As in the case of students, I gave each of them a copy of Ware's paper at the end of this interview, for discussion in our second interview. The focus of the second interview was to explore my colleagues' initial views on Ware's model, as a basis for facilitating my understanding of some of the mediating influences in their use of the model as a conceptual framework for feedback in the simulated counselling practice sessions that they had agreed to lead later in the study.

There were two main interrelated reasons why I held separate interviews with students and colleagues. The first was to do with conventional practice. It would have been unusual for three tutors (if I include myself) to be present in any two-hour block of formal group contact with students, especially with a group of only six students.

Secondly, such a heavy tutor group presence in the group interviews may have limited students' autonomy, in as much as they may have been unduly influenced by my colleagues' contributions to the discussions.

I also carried out a one-hour individual interview with each of my colleagues. These interviews were designed to give colleagues an opportunity to talk about any concerns they may have had about using Ware's model in the study and to clarify organisational details of the forthcoming simulated counselling practice sessions.

Phase 2: I began the second phase of my fieldwork with six one-hour simulated counselling practice sessions in which I was present as an observer. These sessions, which were shaped by Ware's model, were led by either Jo or Gerald. (We had agreed that Jo and Gerald would lead three sessions each, but due to difficulties with Gerald's availability, it turned out that Jo led the first four sessions and Gerald led the last two.)

These sessions were organised so that each student had an opportunity to be both a 'counsellor' and a 'client', which required six sessions. The sessions were organised so that different combinations of students could take part in each simulation rather than simply reversing roles in the same pairings. My rationale for this was that, if students had a more varied, multiple perspective experience of the deliberate use of Ware's model they would have a broader context for critically understanding the impact of the model on their perceptions of counselling, psychotherapy and counselling training. Each of the sessions was structured in terms of two half-hour periods. In the first period, two students simulated a counselling session in which the 'counsellor' used Ware's model as a conceptual framework for understanding the 'client's' process and for shaping their interventions with the client. The remaining students were observers in this part of the session. In this context, simulated counselling practice assumed the meaning of 'concrete experience' (Kolb, 1984). The second half-hour period was used for feedback based on 'observations and reflections' (Kolb, 1984) from the tutor and observing students. This led to 'the formation of abstract concepts and generalisations' (Kolb, 1984). Conventionally, abstractions and generalisations were based on the observing tutor's theoretical preference, but, for the purposes of the study, Ware's model was to be used as the conceptual framework for locating the meaning of the client's process and the counsellor's interventions. In conventional training practice, the 'formation of abstract concepts and generalisations' (Kolb, 1984) was intended to enable students':

'testing... (of the)...implications of... (these)... concepts in new... ('concrete')...

situations' (Kolb, 1984), that is, with the students' actual clients. As part of the study, I was initially keen to understand what impact the deliberate use of Ware's model would have on students' practice as 'counsellors in training'. The other main reason for my initial observations was to understand the extent to which the deliberate use of Ware's model entailed an acceptance of the realist and deviant assumptions on which it is based, and how this could be avoided.

Following Jo's completion of the simulated counselling practice sessions that he led, I conducted a one-hour interview with him in order to understand his experiences of using Ware's model. I carried out a similar interview with Gerald following completion of the simulated counselling practice sessions that he led. I also carried out two half-hour individual interviews with each of the six student participants, one following completion of the simulated counselling practice sessions that Jo had led and the other following completion of the sessions that Gerald had led. The main purpose of these interviews was to gain an understanding of students' experiences of using Ware's model.

Phase 3: In the third phase of my fieldwork, I conducted a one-hour individual interview with Jo and Gerald and a one-hour individual interview with each student participant. These interviews, which I carried out towards the end of the study, were initially designed to help me to understand how the explicit use of Ware's model had influenced participants' perceptions of counselling, psychotherapy and counselling training and what impact, if any, it had had on their practice in these contexts.

Changing direction.

As I discuss in more depth in the next section, I used reflection and iteration throughout the study. My reflexivity between and during the above phases influenced the questions that I asked in my interviews with participants and shaped my observations during the

simulated counselling practice sessions. I moved from a pre-structured approach to a more exploratory one, and accordingly, from a 'respondent' (Powney and Watts, 1987) style of interviewing to an 'informant' (Powney and Watts, 1987) style. That is, initially I asked questions that were designed to elicit a response that was primarily shaped by my research agenda and driven by my initial research questions, but increasingly, participants became informants as I moved to a more exploratory position. Within the overall parameters of my research, my explorations were primarily shaped by what occurred during the participatory process that emerged in the interviews. As my thinking and focus of interest changed, I included questions designed to help me to understand this process, and this new focus guided my observations. My observations were increasingly mediated by assumptions that were consistent with Fay's understanding of interpretivism. Fay puts it this way:

'... if practices constitute the logical possibility of certain classes of actions, then *constitutive meanings* underlie social practices in the same way that practices underlie actions. By a "constitutive meaning" I mean all those shared assumptions, definitions, and conceptions which structure the world in certain definite ways (hence "meanings")... without them the practice as defined couldn't exist (hence, "constitutive")...' (original italics) (Fay, 1975, p. 76).

This dynamic process of change in the direction of my thinking is compatible with Barrineau and Bozarth's distinction between quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. The key difference for these writers is that: '... in heuristic inquiry spontaneous creation of new methods or changing methods in midstream is not only allowed, but is encouraged...' (Barrineau and Bozarth, 1989, p. 467).

I did not know at the outset of my fieldwork where my exploration would take me, but being used to an evolutionary process of discovery, shaped by reflexivity, enabled me to go with the flow of my experiences and to trust that this process would enable my deeper understanding of the data. Ongoing reflections on the explicit use of Ware's model in the context of my research changed my perception of the value of the model

itself. This shift occurred as I ‘put my prejudices at risk’ (Gadamer, 1989) and reframed my understanding of the data by adopting a situated learning theory perspective (which I discuss in Chapter 6). Wilson and Myers (2000) ask a number of critical questions for educators who adopt a situated learning approach. These questions, which resonate with those that emerged from my shift in perspective and which helped to shape my inquiry, are:

‘... Is the learning environment successful in accomplishing its learning goals? How do the various participants, tools and objects interact together? What meanings are constructed? How do the interactions and meanings help or hinder desired learning?...’ (Wilson and Myers, 2000, cited in Fenwick, 2003, p. 37).

Handling the data.

Consistent with an inductive approach, I wanted the theory to emerge from the data, which I ‘transformed’ into a purposeful account, or story by way of ‘description, analysis and interpretation’ (Wolcott, 1994). Wolcott suggests that these elements: ‘... are the three primary ingredients of qualitative research...’ (Wolcott, 1994, p. 49).

These three ingredients provided different emphases in my process of transforming the data, which, as Wolcott contends:

‘... occur simultaneously in thought. I can’t imagine that a human observer ever does or ever could attend solely to descriptive concerns in one sitting, analytical ones in the next...’ (Wolcott, 1994, pp. 47-48).

Therefore, as parts of a whole interpretivist process of meaning making, at times, my emphasis is descriptive, for instance, in Chapter 5, when I talk about what I see happening in the simulated counselling practice sessions. At other times, my emphasis is more abstract and analytical, for instance, in Chapter 5, when I offer reasons for what I see happening in the simulated counselling practice sessions. In Chapter 6, my emphasis is interpretive, as I locate the meaning of my data within Wenger’s situated learning theory. Unlike a traditional (quantitative) approach to research, I did not review all of the literature before I began my study, since I did not want to be constrained by it. Rather, my use of the literature formed an ongoing iterative part of my research process.

Eventually understanding what emerged from the data in terms of Wenger's (1998) situated learning theory allowed me to link my study to a wider body of knowledge.

Drawing on Geertz's notion of 'I-witnessing' (Geertz, 1988, quoted by Wolcott, 1994, p. 44), Wolcott states that:

'... "I-witnessing" offers two interpretive options. The first is to personalize the interpretation: "This is what I make of it all." The second is to make the interpretation personal: "This is how the research experience affected me."...'
(Wolcott, 1994, p. 44).

My understanding of the data is largely based on the first option, which strikes me as being the more active of the two and, as such, is more consistent with my desire to take 'moral responsibility' (Smith, 1998) for what I helped to co-create.

I understand the intrapersonal process that informed my description, analysis and interpretation of the data in terms of Moustakas's six phases of heuristic inquiry. These phases are: 'initial engagement', 'immersion', 'incubation', 'illumination', 'explication' and 'creative synthesis' (Moustakas, 1990). Since I have written about them elsewhere (Bresloff, 2002), I will limit myself here to a brief outline of these phases, indicating how they applied in my case. 'Initial engagement' involves: '... an inner search to discover the topic and question...' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27). In my case, the initial question was how to integrate Ware's model into my practice as a counselling trainer. I 'immersed' myself in the data by: '... maintaining a sustained focus and concentration...' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28) on this question. 'Incubation', which is: '... the process in which the researcher retreats from intense, concentrated focus on the question...' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28) enabled my 'tacit' understanding of the question. This led to 'illumination', which Moustakas describes as: '... a breakthrough into conscious awareness of qualities and a clustering of qualities into themes inherent in the question...' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29). The cyclical and dynamic nature of this heuristic process led to various illuminations throughout my fieldwork, and these illuminations

led to a change in the topic and main question of interest. I became more interested in understanding the process of participation that emerged from the use of Ware's model than in understanding how I might integrate the model into my counselling training practice. 'Explication' is to do with understanding: '...the various layers of meaning involved in conscious awareness of the question...' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). The final phase in heuristic inquiry is in constructing a 'creative synthesis' (in my case, my thesis). Constructing a creative synthesis means being: '... thoroughly familiar with all the data in its major constituents, qualities, and themes and in the explication of the meanings and details of the experience as a whole...' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31).

I understand Moustakas's six phases of heuristic inquiry as interrelated features of an emergent, or gradually unfolding process of understanding. Therefore, I do not attempt any demarcation of these phases, which I consider would be reductionist and antithetical with regard to the holistic parameters of a hermeneutic approach. Similarly, to presuppose a linear, or staged view of these phases would be incompatible with an understanding of the iterative, organic nature of discovery. Hence, although these phases provided a useful and ongoing means of understanding my own process of handling the data, I have not attempted any artificial separation of them.

In summary, I view the 'illuminations' (Moustakas, 1990), or 'Aha' (Koestler, 1964) moments that rendered my learning from the study transformative as emanating partly from my 'reflection-on-action' (Schön, 1983) or, in Moustakas's terms, 'immersion' in the data. However, embedded in my 'reflection-on-action', was the 'reflection-in-action' (Schön, 1983) that took place in the interactive process between my co-participants and myself during the data collection phase of my research and the reflection-in (and on)-action that occurred as I analysed the data. I take the view that both my reflection-on-action and my reflection-in-action included learning that was subliminal, and which, via a period of 'incubation', led to my 'illumination'

(Moustakas, 1990), and this brought into my conscious awareness that which, prior to incubation, was inaccessible to me. From this perspective, my learning included retrospection, introspection, or 'indwelling' (Moustakas, 1990) and what might be termed 'interspection', that is, reflecting during interactions between myself and other participants.

The interpretivist parameters, in terms of which I carried out my study and which I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, rendered certain neorealist procedures inappropriate, for example, verification procedures such as the establishment of an 'audit trail' (Schwandt and Halpern, 1988, cited in Miles and Huberman, 1994). As I have discussed in more detail elsewhere (Bresloff, 1997), the audit trail assumes constancy and the possibility of 'objectivity'; that the knower and the known are separate and therefore that other researchers following the same 'trail' as myself might discover the same phenomena and hence be able to 'replicate' the 'findings'. This verification procedure is inconsistent with the specificity of a reflexive approach. That is, by its very nature, reflexivity presupposes an 'internal locus of evaluation' (Rogers, 1969) and this locus of evaluation forms part of a context specific approach to research. Therefore, this approach militates against replication, which is only meaningful if the possibility of 'external validity', or 'generalisability' is assumed. As a central part of the context that I was studying, reflexivity enabled me to have a voice and hence to situate myself in my research, which helped me to understand my part in the whole process of meaning making in the study.

As I have also discussed elsewhere (Bresloff, 2002), 'member checking' (Miles and Huberman, 1994) as an ongoing means of verifying the data also seemed inappropriate in so far as it assumes a 'truth' external to the researcher. As Gallagher states:

'... This method of verification... ('member checking')... suggests that in the midst of multiple realities (the investigator's and the participants'), those being

studied are the real knowers and therefore the possessors of truth...’ (Gallagher, 1995, p. 26).

My position regarding member checking as a verification procedure marks a departure from Moustakas’s view that:

‘... verification is enhanced by returning to the research participants, sharing with them the meanings and essences of the phenomenon as derived from reflection on and analysis of the verbatim transcribed interviews and other material, and seeking their assessment for comprehensiveness and accuracy...’ (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 33-34).

For Moustakas (1990), returning to his participants for the purpose of verification reflects his aim to synthesise his own reflexive meaning of the data with the meanings of his participants. However, Moustakas’s position, which is subject to the same criticism levelled by Gallagher (1995) at member checking as a verification method, highlights issues raised by interpretivists such as Garratt and Hodkinson (1998), Smith (1998) and Smith and Deemer (2000), to do with whose interpretation of the data, or ‘truth’ (the researcher’s or participants’) does the researcher use. Therefore, in my study, although after each meeting with participants (interviews and observed sessions) I checked out with them whether there was anything that they had said that they did not wish me to use or commit to print, I did not use member checking as a verification procedure.

Member checking raises an interesting issue about the point at which, as researchers, we ‘reify’ our data by transferring it to print, and prompts questions about whether this procedure adds depth and richness to existing meanings, or whether it helps to co-create new meanings/learning. Assuming the latter to be the case, interpretivist research can be seen as a potentially open-ended, infinite process of learning, and any end point can only be arbitrarily decided by the researcher. From this standpoint, member checking can be seen not so much as a verification procedure but more as a means of generating new questions and thereby extending the research process. For my part, I accept that others (co-participants in the research and readers of my thesis) may view the data

differently from how I have understood it. This is partly because data construction is a purposeful activity, and the purposes of those who read my account are likely to differ from mine. It may also be because ‘what I make of it all’ (Wolcott, 1994) both reflects and is affected by my particular conceptual framing of the data (see Chapter 6) and my particular location as a researcher.

In the next section, I discuss some of the ethical and methodological challenges that I faced in my inquiry.

Ethical and methodological challenges.

The first ethical challenge that I faced was in acquiring informed consent from students and colleagues to take part in the study. The predominant ethical consideration at this point was to do with ‘autonomy’. Both as a trainer and potential researcher, I was aware of wanting to respect participants’ right to be ‘self-determining’ (Bond, 1993).

However, I was conscious, especially in the case of students, that their consent might be determined by the hierarchical nature of our relationship and by my being one of the assessors of their course work. Therefore, students may have wanted to please me by consenting to take part in the study. Also, attempting to understand the situation from my colleagues’ perspectives, I was conscious that they may have viewed any unwillingness on their part to participate in the study as running the risk of creating tension in our professional relationships. Being aware of these possibilities, I assured potential participants of their right not to participate if they so wished and their right to withdraw from the study at any point during it, and that exercising these rights would not result in any negative consequences for them as far as I was concerned. This said, I was mindful that had participants exercised either option it would have had methodological and practical implications for my inquiry, given the small number of participants in the inquiry and the tight fit between the design of the inquiry and training

practices. I was grateful that all expressed a willingness to participate and that during the study none of the participants withdrew.

At the point of seeking informed consent from students and co-training colleagues, I was also aware of wanting to honour the trust that I was asking them to place in me as a researcher ('fidelity') and, therefore, of my ethical responsibility to provide as much information as possible about what my research would involve. This presented a challenge directly related to my case study methodology, since, by virtue of its fluid and organic nature, and hence ongoing generation of new questions of interest, the study design and my requirements of co-participants in the study were likely to change, and I could not anticipate in advance of the study itself what these changes might involve. Therefore, whilst I provided this information to colleagues and students, it struck me that this was another reason for choosing participants with whom there was an existing level of trust.

Reflexive researchers such as Caplan (1993) and Hertz (1997) have written about the complexities involved in researchers situating themselves in their research. In my case, I wondered to what extent my situation of self was particularly difficult because of my 'action research' (McCutcheon, 1987) approach, which involved merging my responsibilities as a trainer with those of a researcher. Like Caplan (1993), I think that my 'positionality' in the research was an important feature in determining the kind of data that I collected and my interpretation of the data. My positionality was partly determined by what I brought to the study and partly by a co-created and dynamic process between myself and participants, to do with who I was to participants at any given time (trainer, researcher, therapist) and who participants were to me at different times (trainees, research participants, clients).

I anticipated that, during my inquiry, my dual role as a trainer and researcher might prove to be challenging, in as much as there was the potential for a conflict of interests between my requirements as a researcher, students' training requirements and my responsibilities as a peer to my colleagues. A conflict of interests between my requirements as a researcher and students' training requirements happened on a number of occasions, the first of which was in the initial group interview that I had with students as part of the study. In this interview, I had invited students to talk about why they had decided to become counsellors. This prompt led to an exploration of perceived differences between psychotherapy and counselling, which is the subject of ongoing debate within the field of therapy. However, whilst some of the contributions in this group interview could be directly related to this debate, other contributions conveyed a misunderstanding of the term 'psychotherapy'. The following contributions from Lena and Polly are examples of the former, although Polly's contribution indicates a limited understanding of psychotherapy:

Lena: *'... For me, counselling is different from psychoanalysis but not psychotherapy...'*

Polly: *'... I think there is a difference, not just between counselling and psychoanalysis, but also between counselling and psychotherapy. In psychotherapy, I think that you're dealing a lot more with the unconscious...'*

In positioning themselves in relation to these differing viewpoints, other participants contributed interpretations of psychotherapy that illustrated a lack of understanding of this term. Beth's contribution is an example of this:

Beth: *'... I think psychotherapists use a lot of therapies, hence the word "psychotherapy"; they don't just use one therapy. Also, like Polly, I believe that they deal more with the unconscious mind than the conscious...'*

My methodological challenge, on this occasion, arose because a requirement of my research was to understand students from their perspectives, whilst their training requirement was to receive guidance from me. I met this challenge by moving away from trying to find an 'either-or' solution to my dilemma, which would have meant subordinating one or other of these requirements. Therefore, in this group interview, I shaped my participation in terms of the parameters of my research, and, after this interview, offered to provide a further opportunity for discussion of the issues in point as part of the training agenda. With hindsight, I view my ethical challenge, in this instance, as part of a whole learning process that resulted in a beneficial outcome for student participants and for myself. How I met this challenge provides one illustration of how my research informed my work as a trainer.

Another methodological challenge occurred as a result of students' familiarity with the one-to-one interview format, which they were used to from their personal therapy. In the study, their tendency was to want to use the research interviews as they might use their therapy sessions, that is, for deep levels of self-disclosure. Had I attempted to interrelate with them in terms of therapeutic parameters, this would have taken me beyond the scope of my research remit and would have breached the British Association for Counselling Ethical Code for Counselling Trainers, which effectively prohibited trainers from providing therapy to their own trainees. However, whilst I attempted to be as empathetic as the research context allowed, I did not provide therapy for students. Their safeguard was that they were all in therapy, since this was a course requirement. This therapeutic safeguard meant that students had a confidential arena in which to discuss any distressful occurrences that may have arisen during the research interviews or indeed during any of the research activities in which they had participated. However, knowing that students had this therapeutic safety net, in itself created a methodological challenge, since it would have been all too easy, in the interests of collecting 'in-depth'

data, to probe further than perhaps the research warranted. Had I acted upon this disturbing thought, I believe that I would have abused my position of power. This led me to reflect further on the ethical implications of ‘depth’ in qualitative research and to question when ‘in-depth’ research becomes more understandable in terms of the parameters that define therapy.

Reflecting further on the methodological and ethical challenges that I faced during my study led me to my current position on heuristic inquiry. My position is that I consider that one of the strengths of heuristic inquiry is that, what counts as valid ‘in-depth’ data is as much about the information (or data) that I gathered from my own reflections, or ‘indwelling’ (Moustakas, 1990) as it is about the data that I collected from my co-participants in the research. Whilst I view this as one of the advantages of heuristic inquiry, I am aware that it may be construed as a disadvantage, or methodological challenge with regard to the ‘confirmability’, ‘dependability’, ‘credibility’ and ‘transferability’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of the findings. My own views on this are compatible with those of Gallagher, who has this to say:

‘... Believability does not mean that one applied method accurately... Behind every application of method stands the researcher, who is a person. In the end, we have no choice but to judge for ourselves whether that person has acted with honesty and integrity. Methods and criteria cannot offer us assurance in our judgements...’ (Gallagher, 1995, pp. 32-33).

Adopting this position regarding the verification of findings calls into question the appropriateness of systematically using fixed criteria for judging the ‘goodness’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994) of a piece of qualitative research. As I have critiqued in more depth elsewhere (Bresloff, 2002), judging all qualitative research in terms of criteria such as ‘confirmability’, ‘dependability’, ‘credibility’ and ‘transferability’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), or in terms of a combination of qualitative and quantitative criteria (‘confirmability/objectivity’, ‘dependability/reliability’, ‘credibility/internal validity’, ‘transferability/external validity’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994)) is more compatible with

neorealist parameters than with interpretivist ones. This is because the practice of judging research in terms of these criteria assumes the possibility of 'objectivity'.

However, as Garratt and Hodkinson argue from a hermeneutic perspective: '... criteria can only be located in the interaction between research findings and the critical reader of these findings...' (Garratt and Hodkinson, 1998, p. 515). Their argument, which is compatible with Gallagher's (1995) position, is that: '... it is both illogical and pointless to attempt to predetermine a definitive set of criteria against which all qualitative research should be judged...' (Garratt and Hodkinson, 1998, p. 515).

Summary.

In this chapter, I have attempted to convey the different features that comprised my research methodology. I began by outlining the philosophical perspective that informed my research methodology. I then described Ware's model and explained why I considered it to be a suitable focus for my study. I explained how I designed my fieldwork in order to answer the questions that initially provided the guidelines for exploring my research interest. I also explained how my fieldwork design predated the changes in my thinking that occurred during the execution of the fieldwork, and how this shift in my thinking shaped the construction of my data that I go on to describe, analyse and interpret in later chapters. As part of my discussion on handling the data, I talked about how the iterative and heuristic process informs my description, analysis and interpretation of the data. I have also included some of the ethical and methodological challenges that occurred during the study, and have described how I dealt with them.

In the next chapter, I describe the training community in which my study was located.

4. My case study community.

My case study group was located in a college of further and higher education. The group comprised six female mature students in their second, and final year of a Diploma in Counselling and Human Relations course, two co-training colleagues and myself. As I discussed in Chapter 2, learning was organised in terms of a humanistic-integrative core theoretical model. In its broadest sense, training consisted of on-site (college) based training, off-site counselling practice for students in various student placements, off-site supervision of students' counselling practice, off-site personal therapy for students and off-site supervision of training for my colleagues and myself.

In common with the humanistic ethos of this community, training was partly determined by the use of an explicitly negotiated training group contract. In my case study group, the group contract emphasised confidentiality and guidelines for interaction, which were framed in terms of Rogers' person-centred 'core-conditions' of 'respect' (for self and others in the training group), 'empathy', and 'congruence' (or genuineness) (Rogers, 1967). These core conditions were incorporated as a means of creating a facilitative climate for learning. A central element of learning was the demonstration of increased self-awareness. Self-awareness was considered to be a necessary precursor for self-development, which was assessed by the depth of students' self-disclosures, and depth was understood in terms of the level of sophistication that was evident in students' theoretical framing of their understanding of self. Confidentiality was included in order to protect trainees from having their self-disclosures talked about outside of training sessions, either by others in the same training group community or with others outside of this community. These contractual items were also intended to parallel the climate and process of relationship that trainees would eventually establish with their clients.

Consistent with the prevailing ethos, the norm was for students and tutors to sit in a circle. This conventional formation was based on egalitarian principles (Rogers, 1983; Freire, 1974). The deliberate intention was to move away from a didactic, ‘top down’ approach, symbolised by the tutor sitting (or standing) at the front of the class. The circular formation was an open one; there were no desks or tables in front of students because furniture was considered to create a barrier to communication.

I located my understanding of the data that I collected in this context within the theoretical framework provided by Wenger’s situated perspective on learning. From this perspective, Wenger paints a picture of communities of practice as incorporating three interrelated dimensions: ‘... a community of mutual engagement, a negotiated enterprise, and a repertoire of negotiable resources accumulated over time...’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 126). His depiction of a community of practice appealed to me for three main reasons.

Firstly, he makes a direct relationship between his depiction of a community of practice and learning. He does this by providing a useful framework for understanding some of the stable, or ‘continuous’ (Wenger, 1998) features that indicate the existence of a community of practice. These ‘indicators’ (Wenger, 1998) are as follows:

- ‘1) sustained mutual relationships - harmonious or conflictual
- 2) shared ways of engaging in doing things together
- 3) the rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
- 4) absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
- 5) very quick set up of a problem to be discussed
- 6) substantial overlap in participants’ descriptions of who belongs
- 7) knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise
- 8) mutually defining identities
- 9) the ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
- 10) specific tools, representations, and other artifacts

- 11) local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
 - 12) jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones
 - 13) certain styles recognised as displaying membership
 - 14) a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world.’
- (Wenger, 1998, pp. 125-126).

By implication, ‘perturbation’, or ‘discontinuity’ (Wenger, 1998) can be understood in terms of actions by members of the community that disturb stability, or equilibrium in the areas of practice suggested by the above indicators of a community of practice.

Wenger’s contention is that:

‘... Learning... requires enough structure and continuity to accumulate experience and enough perturbation and discontinuity to continually renegotiate meaning...’
(Wenger, 1998, p. 227).

Secondly, consistent with a situated perspective on learning, Wenger shifts the location of learning from the individual to the social. Hence, he provides holistic understanding of a community of practice. This social holistic emphasis strikes me as especially apt for single case study research on learning in a particular group, or community of practitioners.

Thirdly, Wenger’s part-whole, local-global construction of communities of practice is compatible with the hermeneutic philosophy that underpins my case study. This is apparent in his statement that:

‘... when I use the concept of “community of practice”... I really use it as a point of entry into a broader conceptual framework of which it is a constitutive element...’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 5).

Wenger’s view of communities of practice as constituent parts of ‘constellations’, that is, ‘broader configurations’, depicts a view of communities of practice as being part of a wide landscape that incorporates ‘boundaries and peripheries’ or ‘discontinuities and continuities’, ‘disconnections and connections’ (Wenger, 1998) (in my case, the various facets of training described in the first paragraph of this chapter). Negotiating this complex landscape is viewed by Wenger as an integral part of the learning process, in

so far as this process is constructed as an adaptive one in which there is the potential for 'new meanings', or learning to be co-created in participation with others.

The above aspects of his theory are compatible with my understanding of my case study group as a Wengerian community of practice. This said, there are certain differences between my understanding of Wenger's depiction of a community of practice and my understanding of my case study group. These differences are related to features that distinguish a training community from the workplace communities of practice from which Wenger's theory stems.

The first of these differences is to do with patterns of continuity and discontinuity. For instance, my community only had a two-year duration (the length of the training course). This meant that, systematically, training groups formed and reformed every two years as one group of students completed their training and left and another group of students started their training. This pattern was, of course, different for my colleagues and myself for whom there were elements of continuity (as well as discontinuity) from one student intake to another. In Wenger's (1998) example of workplace learning in 'Alinsu', workers joined and left this community in a more random fashion.

The relatively continuous nature of workplace communities of practice supports Wenger's concept of: '... a communal memory that allows individuals to do their work without needing to know everything...' (Wenger, 1998, p. 46). This is because, in a workplace setting, the workforce can be understood to include a mix of both 'newcomers' and 'old timers' (Lave and Wenger, 1991). However, in my case, students could only be regarded as relative 'newcomers' in the first year of their training and relative 'old timers' in their second year of training, since, once formed, the training community was closed to potential newcomers. Therefore, every two years, all the newcomers in a particular intake of students were 'legitimate peripheral participants'

(Lave and Wenger, 1991) at the same time. Of course, the extent to which students' peripherality was legitimated is debatable, since, in an environment in which the assessment of deliberate learning is so closely and narrowly tied back to the meanings embedded in a core model, there may be little opportunity for creating new meanings. Notwithstanding this point, in such an environment, Wenger's notion of a 'communal memory', for instance, which: '... helps newcomers join the community by participating in its practice...' (Wenger, 1998, p. 46), has limited usefulness in terms of explaining certain aspects of students' participation in my inquiry.

Another difference relates to Wenger's view of learning in a workplace setting and my view of learning in my community. In Wenger's portrayal of workplace learning, his main emphasis is on the informal, organic process of learning that underpins normal work routines. In a counselling training community, although informal, organic learning may well take place, unlike in a workplace community, the main purpose of participation is deliberate learning.

Whilst the above differences seem noteworthy, on the whole, there appear to be more areas of compatibility between Wenger's depiction of a community of practice and my understanding of my case study group, who I now go on to introduce. I start with brief pen portraits of student participants, whom I have listed in alphabetical order, and then provide portraits of my colleagues and myself (also listed in alphabetical order). I obtained the information that I include in the next section in my individual interviews with participants. As part of these interviews, I asked participants if they would be willing to give me some background details about themselves. I prompted discussion by providing a few examples of the sort of details I was interested in, for instance, educational and work experiences. I asked for this information in order to give participants a more visible presence in the text and hence avoid a situation in which they effectively became disembodied voices. This said, I am aware that my following

portrayal of participants does not do full justice to the depth of some of their background disclosures to me. However, in the interests of maintaining participants' anonymity and honouring the trust that they placed in me as a researcher, I have used my discretion and limited what I have included to the background details that participants gave to me based on the examples I gave to prompt discussion.

Pen portraits of participants.

Students.

Beth, who was in her early fifties at the outset of the study, was born in Ghana, from where she emigrated on her own to England when she was nineteen years old. Her early education was at a Roman Catholic boarding school for girls, which had been run by nuns. She had left school with no formal qualifications, but, as a mature student, had obtained qualifications in catering and institutional management. Beth had gained experience in these areas from her work in psychiatric hospitals. At the time of the study, she owned and managed a boarding house for elderly people diagnosed as having '*senile dementia*'.

Lena was in her early fifties and was born and brought up in England. Her early education was at a private girls' school. She had a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology and Philosophy and a Master of Science degree in Education. Lena had had a long career in teaching, which included her being Head of Department in a school for students with 'special needs'. At the time of the study, she was working as a member of a child and adolescent mental health team.

Polly, who was in her late fifties, was born and brought up in England. She had left school at fifteen with no formal qualifications, but, as a mature student, had obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Combined Studies. At the time of my study, Polly was doing

a part-time cleaning job to help pay for the course. She told me that her last '*proper job*' was working in a residential home with people who had mental health problems.

Trish was in her late thirties and was born and brought up in England. She had left grammar school at sixteen with 'O' level GCE qualifications. From the ages of sixteen to thirty seven she had developed her career in banking, and within this system had become a staff trainer. Trish had left the banking system just before starting her counselling training and, at the time of the study, was not in any paid employment.

Vicky was in her late thirties. She was born and brought up in England and was a wheel-chair user. Her early education at a special school for the disabled had been severely disrupted by her intermittent need for in-patient hospital treatment on her legs. She had left school at sixteen with no formal qualifications. As a mature student, Vicky had obtained five GCE 'O' levels and four GCE 'A' levels, with a view to becoming a teacher. At the time of the study, Vicky had just begun teaching Information Technology skills to adults.

Zandra was in her late fifties and was born and brought up in England. Her early education was at a special school for the hearing impaired. She had left school at fifteen with no formal qualifications. She told me that, as a mature student, she had obtained one GCE 'O' level and an Advanced Certificate in Education. At the time of the study, Zandra was working as a computer operator in the family business.

The all female composition of the student group was consistent with United Kingdom norms in the field of counselling training (McLeod, 2001a; Gillon, 2002). As I have previously discussed (Bresloff, 1996) in relation to learning, this may be because of the close fit between ideological norms, including gender expectations about the 'preferred' (that is, 'divergent') learning style, of women and the 'non-scientific' approach to learning predominant on counselling training courses in the United Kingdom. Also

typical of United Kingdom norms, was the interdisciplinary nature of the student participants' educational backgrounds (Thorne and Dryden, 1993; McLeod, 2001b). This differs from the United States where students of counselling are required to have a psychology degree.

Trainers.

Gerald was born and brought up in England. He had a Bachelor of Science degree in the behavioural sciences, an Advanced Diploma in Guidance and Education and a Master of Arts degree in gestalt psychotherapy. Gerald was in his mid-forties and, at the outset of the study, had worked at the college for approximately eleven years. He combined his half-time work as a tutor/trainer with his half-time private practice in gestalt psychotherapy. Gerald (together with myself) had designed and developed the counselling training course, which, at this time, had been running for eight years. He had been the course co-ordinator up until the time Jo joined the training team in 1999.

Jo was born in India, from where he emigrated to England with his family when he was sixteen. Jo had a Bachelor of Arts degree in History and English and an Advanced Diploma in Guidance and Counselling. At the time of my study, he was a second-year trainee on a part-time psychodynamic psychotherapy training course. Jo, who was in his mid-fifties, was a full-time Senior Lecturer. At the outset of the study, he had worked at the college for over twenty years. When I began my inquiry, Jo had been the course co-ordinator and a trainer on the counselling diploma course for two years. He was also a tutor on the college's social work and nursing diploma courses.

I was born and brought up in England and was in my late fifties at the time of the study. I have a Bachelor of Arts degree in Combined Studies and a Master of Education degree. Like Jo, I have an Advanced Diploma in Guidance and Counselling. I am also a qualified clinical transactional analyst - psychotherapist. At the time of the study, I had

worked as a tutor/trainer at the college for approximately eleven years (eight of which had included tutoring on the Diploma in Counselling course). For six of these years, Gerald and I had worked as the sole training team on the counselling training programme. At the time of the study, I had a half-time lecturing post at the college, which enabled me to combine my teaching with my work as a therapist.

Tenor of relationship between Gerald, Jo and myself.

An underlying source of friction between Gerald and Jo was that, relative to Gerald, Jo had ‘newcomer’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991) status in the counselling training community, but ‘old timer’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991) status as a lecturer in the college. As a Senior Lecturer, Jo was used to occupying a leadership position. This situation was effectively reversed in the case of Gerald and me. These variations between Jo’s experience, competence and theoretical preference, on the one hand, and Gerald’s and mine on the other, created disharmony at times. This was especially the case between Gerald and Jo, partly because of differences in their opinions about how to manage the course and partly because their participation as trainers seems to have been shaped more by their emphasis on differences in their theoretical preferences than similarities (as evidenced in extracts [83] and [84] on p. 104). The reverse was the case for Gerald’s and my participation. In our case, our co-training relationship was based on similarities in our theoretical preferences. In terms of Wenger’s indicators of a community of practice, Jo’s style as a trainer and, to some extent, a coordinator was incompatible with the ‘... styles recognised as displaying membership’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 126) of this community.

Summary.

In this chapter, as a means of contextualising my inquiry, I have described my case study community and pertinent aspects of the conceptual framework in terms of which I located my understanding of my fieldwork data. I have examined the extent to which my case study group matched Wenger’s notion of a community of practice and provided

brief portraits of the participants in my case study in order that readers may situate us in the inquiry. I have also given a thumbnail sketch of the tenor of the relationships between Gerald, Jo (my two co-training colleagues) and myself.

In the next chapter, I describe and analyse the data that I collected from my observations of the simulated counselling practice sessions that were individually led by Jo and Gerald. In my analyses, I draw on some of the data that I collected in the interviews that formed part of my study.

5. Use of Ware's (1983) 'doors to therapy' model.

In this chapter, I present extracts from the data that I collected in the simulated counselling practice sessions that I observed as part of my case study. I have selected data from three of the four sessions that Jo led and the two sessions that Gerald led on the basis of its usefulness in telling my story.

I start the chapter by describing what I saw happening, and why, in three of Jo's sessions and then do similarly for the two sessions that Gerald led. My description consists of extracts of my data interspersed with my comments. I number each extract for the purposes of cross-referencing. Following my description of Jo and Gerald's sessions, I move on to a more abstract, analytical level with a view to providing a plausible explanation for the differing patterns of interaction that emerged in the two sets of sessions. My description and analysis of the data in this chapter provide the basis for my interpretation of it in the next chapter. Handling the data in this manner is not intended to imply that I view 'description, analysis and interpretation' (Wolcott, 1994) as three discrete categories, since clearly it is not possible to say where one ends and the other begins. However, I have used this structure in an attempt to make what, in practice, is a complex process, more accessible.

I focus my analysis in two main areas. Firstly, I examine the different relations between Ware's model and the stated theoretical preferences of tutors and students. Secondly, I analyse the complex set of power relations that existed within the group and that were affected by my role as a researcher, that is, the power relations between tutors, between tutors and students, and between students. In my analyses, I draw on data that I collected in the individual and group interviews that formed part of the study.

In the hermeneutic tradition of story telling, I understand my data as part of the text in an evolving story that, as indicated above, moves through 'description, analysis and

interpretation' (Wolcott, 1994). Most of the data that I present is from the feedback periods following the simulated counselling practice of students, since this data includes contributions from the student group as a whole. However, I also include 'scene setting' data from the beginning of each simulation in order to provide a context for understanding the data that I present from the feedback periods.

In my presentation of the data, where meanings attributed to actions in the simulation are primarily shaped by transactional analysis assumptions, that is, Ware's notion of 'doors' (thinking, feeling, behaving/doing), I have indicated this by single underlining. Where meanings are mediated by an emphasis on psychiatric assumptions, that is, Ware's concept of 'personality adaptations', I have indicated this by double underlining. I use this style in order to provide a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of the differing emphases that mediated participation based on Ware's model. This construction of the text serves to highlight an aspect of the meaning that informed my analytical understanding of the data and my later interpretation of it, rather than implying a 'grounded theory analysis' (Miles and Huberman, 1994) based on a reduction of the text into 'meaning units' identified by the formal use of coding and categorisation systems. The inclusion of my commentary forms a part of my story that was shaped by reflexivity and my desire to situate myself in my inquiry.

In each simulated counselling practice session, one student took the position of 'counsellor' and the other took the position of 'client'. Each simulation, which lasted for thirty minutes, and which was observed by either Jo or Gerald, the remainder of the student group and myself, was followed by a thirty-minute feedback period. In terms of Robson's depiction of observational methods, I understood my position as that of a 'participant observer' (Robson, 1993). According to Robson:

'... One possible strategy for the participant as observer is to *evoke* a particular situation or behaviour from members of the group. Essentially this involves setting up a situation which has meaning for the group and observing what

happens... This kind of active involvement can be seen as a kind of simulation or role play exercise...' (original italics) (Robson, 1993, p. 197).

My participatory input was the introduction of Ware's model.

Description of participation in the simulated counselling practice sessions led by Jo.

In the first of the simulated counselling practice sessions that Jo led, Lena 'counselled' Vicky. Their session began as follows:

[1] **Vicky:** *'I'm sat here wondering if there's anything I can talk about... I just feel scared about manufacturing something just to go through the session in a mechanical way and then leaving the session feeling, "What was all that about?" ...'*

[2] **Lena:** *'... So did it feel a bit pressured? Did you feel you were trying to "please me" 'cos I was asking you what you wanted, and you were thinking, "What can I come up with?" ...'*

In this extract, Lena uses the language adopted by Ware (underlined) in constructing the doors aspect of his model. She also uses the term '*please me*', which is a transactional analysis 'driver' that indicates a self-explanatory type of behaviour. For the remainder of the simulation, Lena continued to use Ware's concept of doors (thinking, feeling and behaving) to shape her therapeutic interventions and to attempt to understand Vicky's process in the simulation, whilst Vicky struggled to find anything much to talk about.

Extracts from the feedback period from Jo and other participant observers of the simulation are as follows:

[3] **Jo:** *'OK, how can we understand the client... (Vicky)... in terms of Ware's model? ... Eventually we're trying to sort out what personality adaptation they are.'*

Jo's diagnostic emphasis in this extract is on Ware's personality adaptations (these adaptations are shaped by psychiatric assumptions of mental disorders, which Ware attempts to fuse with his concept of doors).

[4] Trish: *'Well, she... (Vicky)... describes what she was doing, and I'm sat here sort of thinking, "She's talking about behaviour stuff, about doing rather than feeling or thinking." ...'*

[5] Jo: *'Are there any other clues that might support some of your thinking on this, and the lack of feelings?'*

[6] Polly: *'I think Lena a couple of times asked Vicky how she was feeling and Vicky answered with what she was thinking rather than what she was feeling.'*

In extracts [4] and [6], Trish and Polly emphasise Ware's doing rather than the personality adaptations aspect of the model.

[7] Jo: *'Think in terms of personality types... You can take it out of the session and say more generally: Does that give you any clues about where you might put her... (Vicky)... in terms of personality types?'*

In this extract, Jo talks about 'personality types' rather than personality adaptations. I see this subtle reframing as indicative of his psychodynamic orientation.

[8] Beth: *'I felt she was Schizoid. I'm also looking at Paranoid...'*

In this extract, Beth adopts Jo's emphasis by proposing a diagnosis of Vicky based on two of the personality adaptations used by Ware.

A discussion then developed in which Beth, Jo and, to a lesser extent, Trish proposed various analyses of Vicky's personality adaptations (not included in the text). Jo, observing that Vicky (the 'client') had not contributed to this discussion, made the following comment:

[9] Jo: *'I'm slightly concerned that we're excluding Vicky...I want you... (Vicky)... to be part of the thinking process as well. So I want you to try detach yourself and analyse you, as you were, and as you are, obviously.'*

In this address to Vicky, Jo invites her self-analysis. Vicky's reluctance to take part in this is evident from her lack of response. This elicits the following dialogue:

[10] **Polly:** *'I wonder how you feel Vicky as we're throwing all these things at you?'*

[11] **Vicky:** *'I feel OK actually.'*

[12] **Beth:** *'Is that a "be strong"?''*

[13] **Vicky:** *'Possibly.'*

In the above dialogue, Beth uses the term '*be strong*', which is a transactional analysis 'driver' that indicates that Beth views Vicky's behaviour in the discussion as defensive, in this case, as Vicky's reluctance to talk about her feelings.

Referring back to her simulated counselling practice session with Vicky, in which Vicky had struggled to find anything to talk about ([1]), Lena then made the following intervention:

[14] **Lena:** *'I found I had such a strong empathy with you... (Vicky)... not wanting to talk. I feel the same in my counselling; "What is the point of this at the end of the day." So I find it quite hard to-'*

Lena's empathic intervention was interrupted by Jo, who made the following comment:

[15] **Jo:** *'Do I notice a reluctance to put her... in a box?'*

[16] **Lena:** *'You do. Well observed. I find I'm struggling with that, with putting her in a box.'*

Jo and Lena's use of the term '*box*' refers to Ware's personality adaptations. The term '*box*' was first used by Lena in speaking about her initial response to Ware's model (given later in extract [65]). Jo and others in Lena's peer group picked up this term.

In the second simulated counselling practice session that Jo led, Trish participated as 'counsellor' and Polly participated as her 'client'. Their simulation began as follows:

[17] **Trish:** *'How would you like to use your time?'*

[18] Polly (looking at Ware's paper): *'Well, I'm feeling very confused... I just don't know who I am really in terms of these personality adaptations... I just think I'm all of them really... so I'd really like to use this session to sort things out if I can, just where I'm coming from... maybe I am really all of these and maybe this is just a load of rubbish...'*

[19] Trish: *'OK, you sound quite confused... Are you wanting to try and put yourself in one box or a number of boxes? ...'*

[20] Polly: *'... Well, I've got myself in all of them at the moment. So I think - I don't know - I'd like something a bit more concrete than that.'*

Trish and Polly's session was generally difficult, because there was very little mutual understanding or baseline for agreement about Polly's 'personality adaptations'. For instance, at one point, Polly talked about her: *'tendency to rebel'*, to which Trish replied: *'So there's part of you that feels a bit rebellious'* and Polly replied: *'No, not really.'*

Extracts from the feedback period of their session are as follows:

[21] Jo: *'OK, What sense can we make of someone who comes to a counselling session with a paper? ... (Ware's article) ...'*

This extract highlights an action (bringing 'a paper' into a counselling session) that was an exception to a culture of learning assumption related to notions about what constitutes a barrier to communication, in this instance, Ware's paper. This assumption is implicit in Trish's response to Jo ([22]) and in the subsequent dialogue between Jo and Beth ([23], [24]).

[22] Trish: *'I had a strong resistance to looking at it... (Ware's paper).... I really didn't want to, but she had it there. I could have easily looked... I just didn't want to; that's not being with the client, if you see what I mean, and that's not right... and I didn't want to start putting her in a box; there's no way I wanted to do that.'*

[23] Jo: *'What's your understanding of that? What is she... (Polly)... protecting?'*

[24] Beth: *'She's protecting herself from the actual process. She doesn't want to get into the relationship, so the paper is the wall between them, yeah, the wall between them.'*

[25] Jo: *'My experience was that Trish experienced you... (Polly)... as quite aggressive.'*

[26] Polly: *'Me aggressive?'*

[27] Trish: *'Yeah... and when I said, "I feel a resistance.", she... (Polly)... got even more angry.'*

[28] Jo: *'There was also a sense of attack there...'*

[29] Trish: *'Yeah.'*

[30] Beth: *'But would that be her... (Polly)... asserting herself rather than being aggressive? What's the difference?'*

[31] Zandra: *'I think Polly's Hysterical - Passive-Aggressive, but I'm not sure.'*

[32] Jo: *'That's what I experienced, Passive-Aggressive.'*

[33] Beth: *'She could be asserting herself actively.'*

[34] Trish: *'I didn't see it as assertive.'*

[35] Jo: *'She... (Polly)... threw a spanner in the works didn't she?'*

In the above sequence of interactions ([25] to [32]), Jo, with the support of Trish and Zandra, increasingly moves into an interpretation of Polly's personality adaptation as Passive-Aggressive. As part of this sequence, Beth ([30], [33]) offers an alternative interpretation of Polly's participation in the simulation.

In the final simulated counselling practice session that Jo led, Beth 'counselled' Zandra.

Their simulation begins as follows:

[36] Zandra: ‘... *I’m a bit sad today. A friend of mine and my husband’s died in Tenerife. And, mm, it’s made me think – that it was specially sad that he was on his own.*’

[37] Beth: ‘*So you’re sad today because your husband’s friend died?*’

[38] Zandra: ‘*My friend too, all friends.*’

In this simulation, Zandra corrects Beth’s reflection of her (Zandra’s) opening comment. This process of correction and, at times, contestation by Zandra was one of the aspects of their session that I particularly noticed.

In the feedback period following this simulation, students seemed unwilling to engage with Ware’s personality adaptations or with the transactional analysis language used by Ware (for example, ‘injunctions’ and ‘drivers’). Jo picked this up and acknowledged one of the differences between the person-centred values that underpinned conventional training practice in this learning culture and practice based on Ware’s model. This is evident in the following extract, which ends with Jo encouraging students to use Ware’s model:

[39] Jo: ‘*I’m interested that none of you have actually mentioned “injunctions” and “drivers” and those sort of things today... A person-centred way of working doesn’t lend itself to those schemes... We need to be a bit more directive to get the information we want to sort out the adaptations... You slowly build a picture and then change it with new information, and you assess it as you go along... On the information we’ve got... (about Zandra, the ‘client’)... what can we say with reasonable confidence – well, can we say anything with reasonable confidence?*’

[40] Lena: ‘*Well, just don’t ask me to put her... (Zandra)... in a box, because I’m not going to; I can feel myself backing away.*’

[41] Jo: ‘*Because?*’

[42] Lena: *'Because I don't think it is appropriate to put people into boxes. I think people are people and my tendency is not to put them in boxes.'*

In extract [42], Lena reiterates her reservation about using Ware's personality adaptations (referred to as 'boxes'). The student group indicated their concurrence by nodding. Following a silence, the session ended with Jo's analytical interpretation ([43]) of Zandra's personality adaptation, which he fuses with a transactional analysis concept ('Free Child'):

[43] Jo: *'So maybe there's a bit about you... (Zandra)... that's Obsessive-Compulsive. Actually, working hard is an Obsessive-Compulsive trait, isn't it? And that doesn't allow you to be a "Free Child" if we're thinking in TA terms.'*

This intervention by Jo marked the end of the block of four simulated counselling practice sessions that he had led. I now go on to describe what I saw happening in the simulated counselling practice sessions that Gerald led.

Description of participation in the simulated counselling practice sessions led by Gerald.

In the first session of simulated counselling practice that Gerald led, Zandra 'counselled' Lena. Their simulation began as follows:

[44] Lena: *'... I've got issues around my mum, because she lives with us... She doesn't like to be left at night and we like to... have holidays and it's getting to crunch time about what to do about that.'*

[45] Zandra: *'... I can imagine, just a little, how it must be for you because it's your mum. I lived with my father-in-law and sister-in-law for a lot of years... You've got these bonds pulling at you...'*

[46] Lena: *'No, no I haven't.'*

In this dialogue between Lena and Zandra, Lena contests ([46]) Zandra's understanding of her (Lena's) opening comments. Lena's dissatisfaction (see [49]) with Zandra's response ([45]), which includes a degree of self-disclosure, became apparent in the feedback period following their simulation.

The feedback period began with Gerald offering some positive feedback to Zandra on her use of self-disclosure:

[47] Gerald (to Zandra): *'I think your ... appropriate use of self-disclosure was good because it provides a way of saying, "Well, actually I am here as someone who has experience of these kind of emotional areas and I'm wanting to support you from that perspective." ...'*

[48] Zandra: *'My feeling was that it was good.'*

[49] Lena: *'And I thought it was quite value-laden when you said, "...and it's your mother." I thought you were dumping on me all the values that a mother has in relationship to a daughter, and I actually hadn't given you that, so I did feel I was being told how a daughter should be.'*

After a moment's silence, Beth then made the following comment:

[50] Beth (to Gerald): *'I was aware of Lena... (the client)... using I think quite a lot, and I was sat there thinking, "Oh, is that her contact door?", trying to relate it to Ware's model, and then it changed to feelings and she became more animated... So was that her open door?''*

This extract provides evidence of Beth's desire to interpret Lena's participation in the simulation in terms of Ware's doors to therapy. Gerald's response ([51]) provides evidence of his reluctance to do this.

[51] Gerald: *'I'm not prepared to make those judgements; ask Lena... (the client)...'*

Beth did not ask Lena. Rather, she repeated her question (to no one in particular):

[52] Beth: *'So, in this case, is Lena's contact door feeling or thinking; that's what I don't know?'*

Nobody responded.

[53] Gerald (to Zandra): *'Actually, I enjoyed your disclosure, and I think your thinking was right about focusing more on feelings...'*

In this extract ([53]), Gerald reiterates his position in relation to an aspect of Zandra's participation in the simulation (her self-disclosure) and avoids any direct engagement with Beth.

In the second simulated counselling practice session that Gerald led, Vicky 'counselled' Trish. Their simulation began as follows:

[54] Trish: *'...I'm meeting a girl I used to work with... I've known her four or five years, and... she rang and said to "S", my husband... "Do you mind us gate crashing your weekend away at Easter?" and he said, "No, no, not at all..." I mean, it would be quite nice to see them, but - well, I could do with them not really being there, and I don't know how to tell her...'*

[55] Vicky: *'So you've got mixed feelings about it. On the one hand, it would be nice to see them and on the other hand you really like this time to yourself.'*

In this response, Vicky seems to accurately reflect back to Trish the essence of Trish's opening comments. However, for the remainder of their session, Vicky's comments were minimal, and Trish's discourse dominated the session.

Extracts from the subsequent feedback period are as follows:

[56] Gerald (addressing the group): *'...there was something thematic about the push and the pull of what she... (Trish)... said - "I want to" and "I don't want to", "I should" and "I shouldn't".'*

This opening comment illustrates the essence of the meaning that Gerald made of Trish's interaction with Vicky in the simulation.

[57] Trish: *'Yeah, it makes sense. Yeah, I'm thinking this but I'm feeling that.'*

In this extract ([57]), Trish attempts to frame her interpretation of Gerald's overall analysis of her session with Vicky in terms of Ware's doors to therapy.

[58] Gerald: *'So what would be the primary "interruption to contact"?''*

In this response, Gerald re-frames Trish's interpretation in terms of a gestalt concept, that is, as an 'interruption to contact'.

Trish did not respond, and after a moment's silence, Polly made the following comment:

[59] Polly: *'Sorry?'*

This comment, which reflects Polly's confusion about Gerald's re-framing, elicited his reiteration of his question to the whole group:

[60] Gerald: *'What would be the primary "interruption to contact" - anybody?'*

Trish responded ([61]) by again attempting to reinterpret Gerald's gestalt understanding in terms of Ware's concept of doors:

[61] Trish (to Gerald): *'Do you mean, what would be the trap door, the trap door?''*

[62] Gerald: *'No, I was thinking about "interruption to contact". In your experience, what were you struggling with? I was thinking of "introjects" really.'*

In this response ([62]) to Trish, Gerald re-emphasises and extends his earlier theoretical re-framing by introducing another gestalt concept, that is, 'introjects'.

Having described aspects of participation that occurred during five of the simulated counselling practice sessions from which I extracted the above data, I now turn to my reflections on my position in the simulations as a participant observer.

Robson recognises several potential difficulties with a participant observer role. The following two seem particularly relevant in my case. Firstly: ‘... The group may perhaps do something, or do something in a different way to please or placate the “important” observer...’ (Robson, 1993, p. 197). Secondly: ‘... it may prove difficult for others to see you in your new role as observer and there may be an artificiality and hesitancy in seeking to get shared understandings explicit...’ (Robson, 1993, p. 198).

Regarding the first difficulty, I think that in conducting a study with one’s own students there is always the potential for them to try to ‘please or placate’ (Robson, 1993) the researcher/tutor. In my case, this tendency may have been reduced since it was part of students’ routine practice to be observed by tutors (and peers) during their simulated counselling practice. However, what was new was that, during the study, effectively, there were two observing tutors, Jo or Gerald (depending on who led the session) and me, whereas normally there would have only been one. It seems that two possibilities existed here. Firstly, students may have seen me as the more ‘important’ observing tutor, since, in the study, my observations were not limited to watching students’ practice, but also included watching my colleagues’ practice. This effectively placed my colleagues in a similar position to students and, to this extent, I may have acquired greater importance for students than my colleagues. Alternatively, students may have seen both tutors in each session as having equal importance and may have experienced a dilemma about which tutor to ‘please or placate’. However, considering that, in this training culture, participants’ theoretical preferences are a significant feature in shaping their practice, it may have been the case that students wanted to please the tutor whose theoretical preference most closely matched their own. With regard to my research position as a participant observer, ascertaining participants’ theoretical preferences (given in Figure 5.1, p. 91) may have gone some way towards reducing the potential for them to please me, since, having clearly stated their preferred theoretical positions, they

may have felt less inclined to compromise these positions by: ‘... doing something in a different way to please or placate... (me)...’ (Robson, 1993).

With respect to the second potential issue regarding a participant observer role, I think that it was difficult for my colleagues, in particular, to see me in my ‘new role as observer’ (Robson, 1993). This was principally because participation in the study was based on the use of Ware’s model, and, relative to my colleagues’ understanding of the model, I was the ‘expert’ observer of their practice. Therefore, relative to my position in the study, they were effectively in a novice position. (I discuss this in more detail later in this chapter under the sub-heading ‘Disturbing effects of the study on interrelationships between Gerald, Jo and myself’). Had I adopted a less active position and simply observed my colleagues’ usual practice in this training context, rather than participating by introducing a model from my own practice, the effects of my observation role may have been lessened, but this would have had implications for the holistic nature of the study. That is, as part of the environment I was studying, I accepted that the detached observer role that goes hand in hand with notions of objectivity was not possible, or desirable, in my case. Clearly, a participant observer role is not free of difficulties, but it seems that there are methodological challenges whichever research strategy is used. I say more about my views on studying one’s own working context in my ‘Critical reflections on the study’ in Chapter 7.

I now turn to my analysis of participation in the simulated counselling practice sessions that I previously described in this chapter.

Analysis of participation in Jo and Gerald’s sessions.

I start my analysis by examining how the stated theoretical preferences/self-categorisation of each participant (given in Figure 5.1, below) might have mediated their use of Ware’s model in the simulated counselling practice sessions. In doing so, I

draw on data from these sessions and data that I collected in the interviews that I had with participants, which preceded the simulated counselling practice sessions. In my first joint interview with my two colleagues, I asked them which theory or theories they preferred to use in their practice as counselling trainers. Similarly, in my first group interview with students, I asked which, if any, of the theoretical models used on the course they preferred to use in their counselling training practice. I list their stated theoretical preferences in Figure 5.1.

Participant	Theoretical Preference
Jo	Psychodynamic
Gerald	Gestalt
Beth	Transactional analysis, person-centred
Polly	Person-centred, Eclectic
Vicky	Gestalt
Zandra	Gestalt
Trish	Transactional analysis
Lena	Transactional analysis

Figure 5.1. Stated theoretical preferences of case study participants.

Jo's theoretical relation to Ware's model: In the simulated counselling practice sessions, Jo's psychodynamic relation to Ware's model is evident in the emphasis that he placed on the personality adaptations aspect of the model (in extracts [3], [7], [15], [32], [39] and [43]). This relation is understandable, given that this aspect is one with which Jo is very familiar, since Ware's personality adaptations are constructed from the same psychiatric concepts that form a central feature of Jo's psychodynamic preference. For the most part, it might be expected that the same analytical features that emerged in Jo's sessions would apply from the use of Ware's model in a transactional analysis

training context. However, the main difference between Jo's psychodynamic emphasis and a transactional analysis one, as I see it, is that, in a transactional analysis training context, the emphasis would be on understanding effects of the interplay between the therapist's and client's personality adaptations and 'doors to contact' (Ware, 1983).

Therefore, relative to Jo's emphasis, a transactional analysis emphasis would take more account of the interactive, or transactional process between therapist and client, and not simply focus on the actions of the client as a basis for determining their personality adaptations and doors to contact. Also, a transactional analysis approach is likely to be less confrontational than a psychodynamic one, because the emphasis is on making empathic contact with the client. Jo's psychodynamic orientation is evident in the following extract. The extract is taken from the second joint interview that I had with Jo and Gerald, in which I asked Jo for his initial views on Ware's model:

[63] Jo: *'I thought it's interesting...I like it...(Ware's model)... I think it's sometimes useful to divide people and say you're Obsessive, or Schizoid, or Paranoid... It allows one to look at the best way to make contact with people; that's where the feeling, thinking and behaving type model is useful... There are people within the psychodynamic school who will actually accept that. Others operating from a classical model won't. They would say you must confront people's resistances. In terms of Ware's model, that would mean going straight for the trap door rather than the open door... It's taking TA back into psychiatry and psychodynamic mode...I don't have discomfort about using the categories as a diagnostic tool...psychodynamic language takes on those categories totally. So the notion of psychopathology and the other main categories... are very common, so I wasn't disturbed by them...'*

My analysis of Jo's participation in the feedback periods is that it was mainly shaped by classical psychodynamic assumptions, which, in his own terms, are about '*confronting people's resistances*' ([63]). One example of this is evident in the sequence of

interactions ([25] to [32]) that led up to Jo's analysis of Polly as '*Passive-Aggressive*'. In this instance, Polly's actions in the simulation (bringing Ware's paper into her session with Trish) were seen by Jo and some of her peers as Polly's resistance to engaging with Trish in the session. However, Jo's psychopathological emphasis on Ware's model discounts at least two aspects of the context in which Polly's action was situated; firstly, Trish, who was part of the context, and secondly (and in common with a transactional analysis emphasis), culture of learning norms about what constituted a barrier to communication. Rather, Polly's action was separated from the context and was viewed as a pathological characteristic of her personality. The same deductive assumption that is evident in his interaction with Polly is evident in his invitation to Vicky to '*detach yourself and analyse you, as you were, and as you are, obviously*' ([9]). In this invitation, Jo assumes that Vicky's actions in the simulation are a product of her personality, which, irrespective of the context, will remain constant.

Gerald's theoretical relation to Ware's model: In the first session that Gerald led, his humanistic position in relation to Ware's model is particularly evident in the dialogue between Beth and himself ([50]), [51]) in which he overtly refused to interpret Lena's actions as 'client' in terms of the model. Similarly, in his second session, Gerald's non-use of Ware's model indicates his lack of affinity to it. This is evident from his repeated use of the gestalt term '*interruption to contact*' ([58], [60], [62]) and the term '*introjects*' ([62]).

Gerald's initial response to Ware's model and his failure to use it in either of the sessions that he led helps to explain his relation to it. His lack of affinity with the model is evident in the following extract from the second joint interview that I had with Jo and Gerald, in which I asked Gerald for his initial views on the model:

[64] Gerald: '*I'm not sure about it... (Ware's model)... I don't think in those terms, you know, open door, closed door, etcetera. It's not part of my intuitive way of working... I*

don't like to be fitted into categories and boxes of any kind. In fact, I tend to rebel against it... I don't want to be seen as being a part of something that seems very rigid and ritualised and fixed... I think it's about me wanting to be different... although sometimes being seen as different means not being liked or accepted or not getting on with people...'

Lena's theoretical relation to Ware's model: Lena's transactional analysis emphasis on making empathic contact with Vicky, her 'client', is evident in her use of Ware's doors ([2], [14]) and her 'struggle' to use Ware's personality adaptations ([16]), which she refers to as '*boxes*'. The pejorative meaning of this term, which Lena first expressed in the second group interview, is evident in the following extract, which is Lena's response to my asking student participants for their initial views on the model:

[65] Lena: *'I felt really uncomfortable when I read it... (Ware's model)... It just made me cringe really - She's a Hysteric, he's a Schizoid; it's like - stop putting people in boxes... It's labelling me from the outside and it's not about me. It's not about getting to know me...'*

Trish's theoretical relation to Ware's model: Trish's transactional analysis emphasis is also evident in her use of Ware's doors ([4], [57], [61]), her lack of emphasis on Ware's personality adaptations and her defence of the transactional analysis terminology 'please others' and 'be strong' (Stewart and Joines, 1987) ([66]). Her dislike of the adaptations first became evident in her reply to my inquiry regarding students' initial views on Ware's model. Trish's response is as follows:

[66] Trish: *'...I looked at the words and I thought, "Those feel like uncomfortable words," like Antisocial, Schizoid, Hysterical... You can say, "I've got a 'please others'" for instance - that doesn't sound too bad - or a "be strong", but Schizoid feels quite extreme really...'*

Beth's theoretical relation to Ware's model: Beth's relation to Ware's model seems to be more balanced than that of her peers. As with the majority of her peers, she uses Ware's doors ([50], [52]). However, her occasional use of Ware's personality adaptations ([8]) indicates a different, non-pejorative view of this aspect of the model from that evident in the responses of most of her peers. For instance, in the following extract ([67]), in which Beth is giving her initial thoughts on Ware's model, although she picks up Lena's use of the term 'box' to denote personality adaptations, Beth does not use this term in a derogatory manner:

[67] Beth: *'I think it... (Ware's model)... shows that if you can describe anyone as, quote, "normal", you should be able to fit, a little bit, into all the boxes, not just one particular box.'*

Polly's theoretical relation to Ware's model: Polly's early contribution during the feedback period of the first simulation also shows a transactional analysis interest in understanding Vicky's process in terms of Ware's doors ([6]). However, following this contribution, Polly said very little in this or subsequent feedback periods. In the session in which she participated as 'client', her contributions seem to have been partly mediated by her difficulty (as 'client') in understanding herself in terms of the personality adaptations aspect of the model ([18]) and partly from the diagnoses of Jo and some of her peers, which she questions ([26]). In the individual interview that I had with her following the simulations, in response to my inquiry about her experiences of the simulations that Jo had led, she says:

[68] Polly: *'... It felt really confusing at the time. I think I was trying too hard to sort of place me in one of these slots... (Ware's personality adaptations)... and it wasn't happening...'*

Polly's theoretical preference (person-centred - eclectic) indicated her penchant for using concepts from a range of theoretical perspectives. This dynamic approach seems

likely to have mediated her view of Ware's model, since her initial response to it suggests that one of her difficulties with it might have been to do with the fixed nature of the personality adaptations. This is apparent in the following extract, which formed part of her response to my inquiry about participants' views on the model:

[69] Polly: *'Is the person who devised this... (Ware's model)... saying that if a person is, for example, a Hysteric they're always a Hysteric?'*

Vicky's theoretical relation to Ware's model: Vicky's contributions in the feedback periods were minimal. This may have been partly because her gestalt orientation was shaped by a more dynamic view of people than suggested by the essentialist assumptions embedded in Ware's model. This is evident in her initial response to the model, which is as follows:

[70] Vicky: *'I think it's an interesting idea that people will be a certain way all their life and then they'll change... It's like he's... (Ware)... saying changes can only happen if you go to counselling, and I can't connect with that at all. I think people change all the time... and it's this idea of being in one box throughout your life, and also words like Schizoid... suggest to me, not personality types but psychiatric disorders.'*

Her minimal contributions in the feedback period following the session in which she participated as 'client' may partly be explained by her difficulty in this role ([1]) and partly from her apparent discomfort (indicated by her silence) with the diagnostic nature of feedback from Jo and some of her peers. For instance, in the individual interview that I had with her following the simulations, in response to my asking what her experiences of Jo's simulated counselling practice sessions had been, she told me that:

[71] Vicky: *'... Some things that people said connected and others didn't... I don't know whether I had a barrier or something, but I was like, "Let that one ... (analysis)... in, don't let that one in..." I wouldn't let Jo's in...'*

Zandra's theoretical relation to Ware's model: Zandra appears to adopt an imaginative, dynamic view of Ware's personality adaptations. This is apparent in the following extract from the second group interview, in which she gives her initial thoughts on the model.

[72] Zandra: *'I think it's like astrology, where you have twelve different months and overlapping characteristics for each month. It's, um, I think there's room for manoeuvre.'*

Whilst this view of the model may have mediated Zandra's relationship to it, she made very few contributions in the feedback periods. This may reflect Zandra's preferred gestalt orientation, but this is not clear. It is possible that her low level of contributions was partly due to her hearing impairment, which, by her own account, created difficulties in a whole group situation. This is evident in the following extract from my individual interview with her following the simulated counselling practice sessions that Jo had led. The extract formed part of Zandra's reply to my inquiring about her experiences of these sessions:

[73] Zandra: *'... When you're in a group, you can find that if your hearing's not as good as others it's very easy to have someone say something that you won't hear...'*

Participation mediated by participants' theoretical preferences cannot, I suggest, be separated from the location of meaning embedded in the particular theories that shaped their participation in the study. That is, from my understanding of the various theories that informed participants' practice in the study, I assume the following location of meaning in these theories. For example, in a 'client-centred' (Rogers, 1951) approach, I assume that meaning resides within the client, and the work of the therapist is to 'non-directively' (Rogers, 1951) facilitate the client's production and ownership of this meaning. To some extent, this assumption is evident in Polly's therapeutic agenda in her simulated counselling practice with Trish ([18], [20]). In gestalt, practice, shaped by an

'I - Thou' (Buber, 1970) process, meaning is located within both client and therapist in so far as: '... relationships... are... (seen as)... the source of that which gives meaning and validation to the self...' (Erskine, 1997, p. 21). Zandra's attempt at establishing an 'I - thou' connection between herself and Lena in their simulation is apparent in her use of self-disclosure ([45]). The analytical emphasis in practice mediated by transactional analysis presupposes that the therapist owns meaning that the client is assumed to adopt. Taking into account the location of meaning in these theories as a shaping influence in student participation helps to provide a more holistic explanation of the social relations between students that emerged in the simulated counselling practice sessions. For instance, Lena and Trish's preference for transactional analysis helps to explain why, in their participation as 'counsellors', they situate themselves as the meaning makers in the simulations. This is evident in Lena's response to Vicky's opening comment in their simulation ([2]) and in Trish's response to Polly in their simulation ([19]).

The order in which students chose to be 'counsellors' in the six simulated counselling practice sessions was consistent with their theoretical preferences, in as much as those who expressed the most affinity with transactional analysis chose to be 'counsellors' first. That is, Lena and Trish chose to be 'counsellors' in the first two sessions, followed by Polly and Beth in sessions three and four, and Vicky and Zandra in the final two sessions. This order was also consistent with formal, tutor assessed academic levels of competence, with the most academically competent choosing to be 'counsellors' first, and also consistent with the informal student hierarchy, with those at the top of the hierarchy choosing to be 'counsellors' first. Of course, it is not possible to say which, if any, of these features (theoretical preference, academic ability or informal hierarchical position) was most influential in the order of students' participation as 'counsellors'. For my part, I see participants' preferred theoretical orientations as one significant aspect in a multi-faceted process that mediated actions, and that may form part of an

explanation of certain differences in interactions around Ware's model in Jo and Gerald's sessions. An interrelated aspect that also seems likely to have shaped participation in these sessions is the complex set of power relationships that existed within the group; between tutors and students, between tutors, and between students. I now go on to consider how the study may have disturbed these relationships.

Disturbing effects of the study on the interrelationships that Jo, Gerald and I had with students.

In general terms, in our relationships with students, my colleagues and I were positioned as the providers of knowledge and students were positioned as the recipients of knowledge. This relationship reflected the developmental assumptions embedded in the legitimate power structure of the trainer - trainee interrelationship. My study disturbed the hierarchical dynamic between students and myself, partly because my contribution to the research enterprise did not involve my provision of knowledge to students. What I provided was a legitimate context and focus for the co-emergence of knowledge that was shaped by Ware's model. Indeed, in my role as researcher, I effectively positioned students (and colleagues) as providers of knowledge for me.

In retrospect, I can now see that use of Ware's model as a deliberate learning focus for participation in the study contained the potential for disturbing interrelationships between my colleagues and students. This is because of the partial mixture of knowledge that students and colleagues had about the model. That is, from their own psychotherapy training, colleagues had knowledge of the psychiatric concepts that shaped Ware's 'personality adaptations', but were less familiar with other aspects of the model. Students, on the other hand, had knowledge of some of the transactional analysis concepts used by Ware from their counselling training, but not the 'personality adaptations'. This mixture of knowledge was an equalising feature of the study.

However, in a learning culture that was conventionally organised in terms of hierarchical relations between lecturers and students, this was potentially disturbing.

In terms of Jo's sessions, it seems plausible that his ownership of Ware's personality adaptations (as evidenced in extract [63]) and his emphasis on these adaptations ([3], [7], [32], [43]) helped him to maintain his hierarchical position as a theoretical expert relative to students. However, Jo's emphasis on this aspect of the model and students' emphasis on the other main aspect of the model (Ware's doors) created a split between these two parts of the model that Ware had attempted to integrate. This split effectively amounted to a division between psychodynamic values and humanistic ones.

It is not possible to say to what degree Jo's psychodynamic emphasis reflected his conscious aim to confront students' 'resistance' to his interpretation of some of their actions in the simulated counselling practice sessions that he led, for example, in his relations with Vicky ([9]) and Polly ([25]). However, to the extent that Jo's approach did reflect his conscious attempt to facilitate their learning, or, in Jo's psychoanalytical terms 'insight', Fenwick's critique of a psychoanalytic orientation to learning seems pertinent. She bases her critique on Freud's concept of 'denial', in which:

'... we attempt to intellectualise the idea, to separate our ego's emotional involvement with (and therefore possible subjection to) the idea, even while we are actively "hating" the idea. In these tensions between intellection and affection, learning occurs as a movement through the dilemma to accepting knowledge...' (Fenwick, 2003, p. 29).

Freud's concept of denial raises questions for Fenwick that are not only pertinent to Jo's sessions, but raise ethical questions about the role of conflict, or perturbation as a deliberate learning strategy. These questions are:

'... Should education induce these tensions and somehow midwife the movement to a learner's acknowledgment and insight? How much anxiety can an individual stand? How can learning proceed if its very conditions of anxiety stimulate the resistance that forestalls learning?...' (Fenwick, 2003, p. 29).

Therefore, in relation to Jo's sessions, the question arises, did: '... conditions of anxiety stimulate the resistance that forestalls learning?...' (Fenwick, 2003). In as much as Polly's response ([74]) indicates 'resistance that forestalls learning' (Fenwick, 2003), this response, which is based on her reflections on Jo's interpretation of her participation as 'client', bears out Fenwick's concern. Polly's thoughts on her participation as client in Jo's sessions were given to me (in our individual interview) in reply to my question about her experience of the simulations that Jo had led. Her reply was as follows:

[74] Polly: *'...I just had to step back and say, "It's OK, I don't have to think like that." ...'*

However, Vicky's response to her apparent anxiety in Jo's session seems to indicate that she did gain learning, or 'insight'. This is evident in her thoughts ([75]) on Jo's sessions, given to me in our individual interview following the simulations, in response to my inquiry about her experiences of these sessions:

[75] Vicky: *'... Jo's approach felt to be really useful...It helped me to make a link between my process of getting a wheelchair when I was a child and the 'Passive-Aggressive' process that Ware talks about...'*

In Gerald's case, he maintained the hierarchical status quo, and hence continuity between himself and students, by not using Ware's model. His humanistic preference emerged as a result of this omission and his emphasis on gestalt concepts. This emphasis appears to have been an alienating feature, especially in his relationship with Beth ([50] to [52]). This is most evident in her response ([76]), in our individual interview, to my inquiry about her experiences of Gerald's sessions:

[76] Beth: *'I couldn't make much of it... I don't think he... (Gerald)... could express it... (Ware's model)... properly...I couldn't take anything out of it or put anything into it... Sometimes I felt a bit angry...'*

Indeed, in their individual interviews, in response to my inquiry about students' experiences of Gerald's sessions, the majority expressed disappointment. This is evident in extracts ([77] to [79]). Exceptions to this were Vicky and Zandra ([80], [81]).

Extracts from these interviews are as follows:

[77] Lena: '*... I wanted a bit more ... I thought it was about learning about the model... rather than about looking at other counselling techniques...*'

[78] Polly: '*... Gerald... didn't want to engage with Ware's model... The feedback was not helpful in terms of what we were supposed to be doing.*'

[79] Trish: '*...He... (Gerald)... didn't use any of Ware's stuff at all... So, with regard to learning more about Ware's model it didn't help.*'

[80] Vicky: '*...I was thinking about gestalt, I was thinking about what had gone on in the session... (Vicky's simulated counselling session with Trish)... and I wasn't so able to make connections with Ware's model during those sessions...*'

[81] Zandra: '*I thought that Gerald's approach was subtle ...*'

Vicky and Zandra's responses ([80], [81]) are understandable in as much as they had the same theoretical preference as Gerald (gestalt).

It seems likely that students' experiences of Gerald's sessions will have been mediated by their comparative experiences in Jo's sessions. Their responses to Gerald's sessions ([76] to [81]) may have also reflected students' sense of accountability to me, which may have been best demonstrated by their expressions of dissatisfaction with Gerald's lack of emphasis on Ware's model and satisfaction with Jo's emphasis on the model. In other words, students may have emphasised those features of their experiences that they hoped would sit more favourably with me.

I now go on to discuss some of the disturbing effects of the study on the relationships between Gerald, Jo and myself.

Disturbing effects of the study on interrelationships between Gerald, Jo and myself.

Historically, one of the stable elements of training practice negotiated between Gerald and me, both overtly and tacitly, had been our emphasis on the similarities in our therapy specialisms (gestalt and transactional analysis, respectively). This harmonious emphasis was consistent with the humanistic-integrative ethos of the training culture (described in Chapter 2), but inconsistent with Jo's confrontational emphasis on conflict. Jo's views on conflict are evident in extract ([82]). I obtained this data in the first joint interview that I had with Jo and Gerald. The extract formed part of my exploratory dialogue with Jo, which evolved from his self-identification with psychoanalysis. I inquired as to what it was about psychoanalysis that particularly appealed to him. In his reply, Jo indicated that it was the non-rational aspect that appealed to him. He distinguished this aspect of the theory from transactional analysis, which he saw as a highly rational approach. In doing so, Jo highlighted 'conflict' and 'the unconscious' as two fundamental psychodynamic concepts that he felt defied rational understanding. This is evident in the following extract:

[82] Jo: *'... the notion of "conflict" is a basic psychodynamic concept... the "unconscious" is the other one. We're only aware of a tiny amount of any behaviour that we can explain in conscious, rational, terms, and most of our behaviour is not as easily accessible to rational thinking... We all fight; there are different tensions and we fight in different ways.'*

From Gerald's perspective, Jo's approach appears to be out of step with humanistic values (where this is apparent to me, in extract [84] below, I have used bold lettering). This created a certain amount of friction between them, which is evident in both of their following responses ([83], [84]) in the first individual interviews that I had with them.

In these interviews, I had asked them what they saw as their main similarities and differences as trainers. Interestingly, both emphasised their differences:

[83] Jo: ‘... *I think he’s ... (Gerald’s)... precious and protective of gestalt and of his way of being... On one level, he’s more secure in his theory of gestalt than I am in mine, partly because I haven’t completed my course... (in psychodynamic psychotherapy training)... and partly... because I don’t feel comfortable when I begin to feel too secure in any one theory. You know, whatever a theory is, it just can’t be enough...*’

[84] Gerald: ‘*Well... I’m more confident than he... (Jo)... is. I think a tension in my experience with him is that I experience a competitive process with him... I do think that I know more than he does about interpersonal processes... I see him as more intellectual than I am. He likes reading theory and... I like to work more creatively. I’m more willing to engage with particular emotions than he is... We’re both very determined, but I see him as much less organised than I am...*’ (my highlighting).

There were several reasons why I consider that the study disturbed the interrelationships between my colleagues and me.

Firstly, in the study, there was a greater level of continuity between Jo and me than there was between Gerald and me. This was partly because Jo’s use of Ware’s model made the conceptual overlap between his psychodynamic practice and my transactional analysis practice more transparent. Because transactional analysis was a stable feature of the learning culture, this conceptual overlap may have served to legitimise Jo’s particular use of Ware’s model. Certainly, his approach in the simulated counselling practice sessions seems to have been appreciated by students. This is evident in the following extracts from their responses to my inquiry, in individual interviews, as to students’ experiences of Jo’s participation in these sessions:

[85] Vicky: ‘... *I really liked Jo’s approach ’cos, from a learner’s point of view... we were encouraged to think about the personality adaptations... how that fitted and how that didn’t fit...*’

[86] Polly: ‘... *I thought that Jo got really involved... He seemed to be willing to engage... in the discussion in the light of the model, and was using the model by talking to it...*’

[87] Beth: ‘... *It was clear how he put things to me, and I could make sense and make contact with it... (Ware’s model)...*’

[88] Lena: ‘... *I think it was helpful because he related to Ware’s model and asked me specific questions, which helped keep it in perspective about what it was all about...*’

[89] Trish: ‘... *I found his feedback really useful in thinking about thinking, feeling, behaviour - useful in associating it with Ware’s model...*’

[90] Zandra: ‘... *He gave me things to think about... I identified with elements of most of the adaptations... but, in particular, the Passive-Aggressive and Schizoid processes... Having a hearing impairment, it wouldn’t be safe to be openly aggressive. I think you develop that... (Passive-Aggressive process)... I dare say, as a way of getting even... When you’re in a group, you have this feeling of being vulnerable, that you’re “one down”, being Passive-Aggressive helps you to feel more equal ...*’

Secondly, by the time Gerald participated in the simulated counselling practice sessions, Ware’s doors to therapy (if not his personality adaptations) had become a continuous and relatively stable feature of students’ participation in this learning culture, and therefore part of a shared discourse that, until this point, Gerald had not helped to construct, at least, not in any deliberate way.

Thirdly, my position as an observing ‘expert’ on Ware’s model in the simulated counselling practice sessions that Jo and Gerald individually led meant that they were

effectively positioned as novices. This was a position that was more compatible with the position of students than with Jo and Gerald's conventional positions as theoretical experts in their own right. Hence, my 'contribution to the enterprise' (Wenger, 1998) did not reflect our 'shared way of doing things together' (Wenger, 1998). Therefore, within the context of my inquiry, and relative to my conventional position of equality with Gerald and Jo, I had: 'a disproportionate amount of power and influence' (Wenger, 1998).

I now turn to the disturbing effects of the study on interrelationships between students.

Disturbing effects of the study on interrelationships between students.

In the data that I collected as part of my attempt to understand elements of stability and perturbation from students' perspectives, I asked them, in individual interviews, about the nature of their relationships with their peers. Students gave the following replies to my inquiry about which of their peers they had the most harmonious relationships or friendships with:

[91] Lena: '*... Trish... there's a level we can talk together about things we think about, and I can talk to her more than any of the others...*'

[92] Beth: '*... Polly, Lena and sometimes Trish, but, as I explained... I've got a problem with attachment, so I don't like to feel close to anybody...*'

[93] Polly: '*... Beth, because she's straightforward and says what she thinks, and I know where I am with her. I just feel I have some rapport with her...*'

[94] Vicky: '*... Zandra and Polly. There's a level of honesty and openness with Zandra. With Polly, it's something about her being different...*'

[95] Zandra: '*... Vicky... there's a kinship in having an impairment...*'

[96] Trish: '*... Lena and Beth, because I feel safe with them...*'

In response to my inquiring about which peers they had the most conflictful relationships with, students stated the following:

[97] Lena: ‘... Zandra. I think it’s to do with her life style - her home life and the business side of things... and her upper middle class background. That just seems very different, and her approach to counselling is very different from mine...’

[98] Beth: ‘... Zandra. I mean there is a wall there. I don’t know - it’s probably because she can’t hear me...’

[99] Polly: ‘... Trish, partly ’cos I feel she’s trying to get me into a vulnerable position so she’ll betray me...’

[100] Vicky: ‘... Trish. Sometimes it feels a bit competitive... I feel she’s defensive... I think if I say anything she’s gonna think I’m having a go at her...’

[101] Zandra: ‘... Trish. I find it niggly when she’s trotting out theory...’

[102] Trish: ‘...Polly. It’s the aggression - the way she sits up in her chair and goes “No, no” and shakes her head... it disempowers me...’

The study disturbed the conventional pattern of participation among students in the simulated counselling practice sessions. One reason for this may have been because I had designed these sessions with the expectation that each student would participate as both a ‘counsellor’ and a ‘client’, but in different pairings, rather than simply reversing roles in the same pair. This meant that, at times, students paired themselves with peers with whom they had conflictful relationships ([97] to [102] (and with whom they rarely worked), and it was in some of these pairings that there was the most perturbation. The most notable evidence of this is in Trish experience of working with Polly in their simulation ([27], [34]) and in Lena’s experience of working with Zandra in their simulation ([49]).

The complex pattern of power relations that mediated participation in the study can be interpreted in terms of Wenger's theory of communities of practice as 'economies of meaning' (Wenger, 1998), which I go on to discuss in the next chapter.

Summary.

In this chapter, I have described and analysed some of the interactions around Ware's model in five of the simulated counselling practice sessions that formed part of the study. In my analysis, I focused on two main strands; firstly, participants' theoretical relations to the model, and secondly, the disturbing, or perturbing effects of the study on the complex set of power relations that existed within the group. My handling of the data in this chapter provides the basis for my interpretation of it in Chapter 6.

In Chapter 6, I interpret the data by locating it within Wenger's situated learning theory and critically examine the extent to which this theory helps to provide a convincing explanation of the data.

6. Interpreting the data in terms of Wenger's (1998) perspective on communities of practice as economies of meaning.

My description and analysis of the data, which I carried out in Chapter 5, provides the basis for my interpretation of the data in this chapter. In interpreting the data, I am cognisant of Wenger's view that: '... Learning... requires enough structure and continuity to accumulate experience and enough perturbation and discontinuity to continually renegotiate meaning...' (Wenger, 1998, p. 227). In this respect, I see structure, or stability as involving the continuation of practices that were shaped by core theory values, and see these values as an embedded part of the theoretical: 'jargon and shortcuts to communication' (Wenger, 1998) that helped to define my case study community. Therefore, in my interpretation of the data, I start from the premise that students' adoption of Ware's doors, combined with their reluctance to use his personality adaptations, is a reflection of their: 'ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products' (Wenger, 1998) for humanistic counselling training practice underpinned by Rogerian principles. Their ability to do this suggests to me that, prior to the study, students had had: 'enough structure and continuity to accumulate experience' (Wenger, 1998), that is, experience of practices shaped by these principles. This was consistent with their status as second year trainees. Hence, in bearing in mind what might have constituted 'enough continuity' and 'enough discontinuity' (Wenger, 1998) to enable learning, my main emphasis in my interpretation of the data is on understanding elements of discontinuity, or perturbation. Following my interpretation of the data, I then give my critique of Wenger's theory.

I begin the chapter by locating the meaning of the data that I collected in the simulated counselling practice sessions within Wenger's situated learning theory of communities of practice as 'economies of meaning' (Wenger, 1998).

Locating the meaning of the data within Wenger's (1998) situated learning theory.

What happened in the simulated counselling practice sessions (discussed in Chapter 5) can partly be explained in terms of Wenger's 'indicators' of a community of practice (given on pp. 68-69). For example, on an organisational level, there was an: 'absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process' (Wenger, 1998), which resulted in a: 'very quick set up of... (the)... problem to be discussed' (Wenger, 1998). This is because students were aware of: 'what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to the enterprise' (Wenger, 1998). For instance, it was a 'stable' (Wenger, 1998) feature of conventional simulated counselling practice sessions for Lena to take the position of 'counsellor' and to volunteer to go first, and for Vicky to take the position of 'client', and for these two students to work together in this way. This aspect of participation can be understood as a reflection of Lena and Vicky's 'mutually defined... (counselling training)... identities' (Wenger, 1998). A similarly stable feature of participation was for Trish to be among the first to volunteer to be a 'counsellor' and for Polly to participate as a 'client'. However, it was an unstable, or 'discontinuous' (Wenger, 1998) feature of training practice for Trish and Polly to work together as 'counsellor' and 'client'.

The pattern of interrelationships between students can be understood in terms of an informal hierarchy. In this hierarchy, the tendency was for Lena and Trish to take leadership positions and for Vicky and Zandra to take compliant positions. This is evident in the following dialogue between Vicky, Trish and Lena. The data is taken from the second group interview, which took place prior to the simulated counselling practice sessions. In this interview, my aim was to facilitate group discussion based on an exploration of students' views about using Ware's model in the forthcoming

simulated counselling practice sessions. I started my exploration by asking students for their thoughts and feelings about using the model in these sessions:

[103] Vicky: *'... it just seems a huge jump from reading about it... (Ware's model)... to being able to put it into practice... I mean, if you ask me to name the personality types, you've got no chance. If you ask me to name the "drivers" to go with it, I don't have the ability... and to actually put someone into one of those boxes, I would find absolutely impossible.'*

[104] Trish (addressing her comments to Vicky): *'I think it's about just doing a session as you would usually do a session, OK, and then, as a group, frame it theoretically.'*

[105] Lena: *'Mm, as a group, we could frame it theoretically and... apply it to your session... (that is, Vicky's simulated counselling practice session)... You can also get feedback from the "client", who may say, "That really worked for me." or "No that didn't." and then talk about why.'*

[106] Trish (to Vicky): *'So just do it and frame it theoretically afterwards. Does that make sense?'*

[107] Vicky: *'Yeah, yeah it does.'*

In as much as this pattern of interaction reflected Lena and Trish's influential position in their peer group and Vicky's relatively less influential position in the group, the participation of these three students can be interpreted as part of a whole pattern of social relations that can be usefully understood in terms of Wenger's concept of an 'economy of meaning' (Wenger, 1998).

According to Wenger, the term:

'... "economies of meaning" makes sense because the notion of an economy emphasizes:

- 1) a social system of relative values
- 2) the negotiated character of these relative values
- 3) the possibility of accumulating "ownership of meaning"
- 4) the constant possibility of such positions being contested

5) systems of legitimation that to some extent regulate processes of negotiation of meaning.'

(Wenger, 1998, p. 199).

Hence, the concept of an 'economy of meaning' refers to the 'value of the meanings produced' (Wenger, 1998) by people in a community rather than the: '... direct relations between people and an artifact...' (Wenger, 1998, p. 199). Therefore, in framing my interpretation of the data in terms of Wenger's concept of an economy of meaning, I am attempting to understand the value of the meanings that were produced by participants and that were shaped by Ware's model, rather than attempting to understand participants' direct relations with the model.

There are several instances in the study that indicate the relatively high value of the meanings produced by Trish and Lena, if value is assessed in terms of the extent to which members of the group 'adopted' (Wenger, 1998) the meanings proposed by these two students. As indicated above, one example is Vicky's adoption of Trish and Lena's collective suggestion about how to use Ware's model in the simulated counselling practice sessions ([107]). Another example is the group's adoption of Lena's pejorative meaning of the term 'box' ([65]) to denote Ware's personality adaptations. (Other examples of participants' use of this term can be seen in extracts [15], [19] and [22].)

Also, it seems likely that Lena's overt refusal to use Ware's personality adaptations ([40]) influenced the student group's resistance to using this aspect of the model (or indeed any of the terminology used by Ware) in their final session with Jo. Whilst there is less tangible evidence for this, it seems likely that her contribution was influential.

That her contribution had 'currency' (Wenger, 1998) can be inferred from interactions that occurred following Jo's contestation of the group's resistance to using the language of the model ([39]), and from Lena's subsequent reiteration of her aversion to using the personality adaptations ([42]). Lena's reiterated position emerged as a consolidatory statement of the student group's position as a whole, as indicated by their affirmative

nodding and continued silence on the matter, together with Jo's lack of further contestation of their position. In so far as Jo's production of meaning in this instance (that is, his analysis of the 'client's' (Zandra's) personality adaptation ([43])) is understood as his modelling of practice shaped by this aspect of Ware's model, his modelling can be understood as his indirect contestation of students' collective rejection of Ware's personality adaptations. Their failure to adopt Jo's position in relation to this aspect of the model can be understood as their implicit contestation of Jo's legitimacy and power as a trainer. To this extent, their actions bear out Wenger's claim that:

'... while an economy of meaning does reflect relations of legitimacy and power, it also captures the inherent fluidity of these relations, which are themselves shaped through the negotiation of meaning...' (Wenger, 1998, p. 200).

In Gerald's sessions, he appears to tacitly contest Lena's influential position in the student group hierarchy. He does this by reiterating his positive opinion of Zandra's use of self-disclosure in her 'counselling' of Lena ([53]) in spite of Lena's contestation or refusal to 'own' the meaning proposed by Zandra ([49]) in the simulation. Gerald's having the last word on this ([53]) bears out Wenger's view that: 'systems of legitimation... to some extent regulate processes of negotiation of meaning' (Wenger, 1998, p. 199). It also supports Wenger's stance that: '... because of differences in position within an economy of meaning, appropriation can cause alienation by overshadowing or displacing original meanings...' (Wenger, 1998, p. 201). In this instance, Gerald's apparent appropriation of the concept of 'self-disclosure' ([47]), which, in relative terms, has more currency in gestalt theory than in transactional analysis (Lena's preferred orientation), overshadowed Lena's 'original' interpretation of Zandra's meaning. That is, from Lena's perspective, Zandra's self-disclosure was '*value-laden*' ([49]), but from Gerald and Zandra's perspective, Zandra's self-disclosure was seen as an example of a therapeutic intervention shaped by an empathic intention. In this case, perturbation, in the form of discontinuity, occurred because the value that

Gerald and Zandra attributed to Zandra's self-disclosure was different from the value that Lena attributed to it. In this instance, value, or currency can to some extent be understood in terms of the differing theoretical orientations (Gerald and Zandra's preference for gestalt and Lena's preference for transactional analysis) that shaped their 'identities of participation' (Wenger, 1998) in this community. However, in Lena's case, her perturbation and, by inference, her 'alienation' in relation to Zandra can also be understood in terms of her 'social relations of participation' (Wenger, 1998) with Zandra.

According to Wenger, social relations of participation and identities of participation cannot be separated, since each reflects and affects the other. In a counselling training culture, identities of participation are shaped by the theories that inform practice. I suggest that these theories incorporate a notion of social relations of participation that stems from where the location of meaning is assumed to be in the counsellor-client relationship. That is, as previously discussed (pp. 97-98), whether the location of meaning is situated with the counsellor, with the client or with both counsellor and client. Therefore, in any discussion of these two interrelated elements of participation (that is, social relations of participation and identities of participation), any implied distinction is more a matter of which element is emphasised. In terms of understanding Lena's interactions with Zandra, equal emphasis can be placed on each element. For instance, the tension in Lena's social relations of participation with Zandra can be explained in terms of their differing identities of participation as trainees, and their differing identities of participation helps to explain the tension in their social relations of participation. This is evident in extract [97]. In this extract, Lena identifies Zandra as the person within her peer group with whom she has the least affinity. From Lena's perspective, one of the reasons for this relates to Zandra's identity of participation, which is different from Lena's because of Zandra's '*different approach to counselling*'

(see extract [97]). Thus, Gerald's support of Zandra's actions (that is, her use of self-disclosure) in her simulation with Lena may have inadvertently contributed to recreating what can be understood as a stable part in the whole pattern of social relations that characterised this group.

An example from Jo's sessions, which can also be seen as making a contribution to an aspect of stability in terms of the social relations of participation within the group, is a situation that arose in the feedback period following Trish and Polly's simulation. On two occasions in the feedback period Beth openly contested Jo's analysis of Polly's actions in her simulated counselling practice with Trish by offering an alternative interpretation ([30], [33]). Jo's analysis of Polly as '*aggressive*' ([25]) and eventually as '*Passive-Aggressive*' ([32]) 'overshadowed' (Wenger, 1998) Beth's interpretation. This overshadowing was helped by Trish's support of Jo's position in relation to Polly's actions (evidenced in extracts [27], [29] and [34]). It seems likely that this series of interactions contributed to recreating a stable pattern of social relations of participation within the group. That is, it recreated a stable pattern of social relations between Trish and Polly, who each identified the other as the student with whom they had the least affinity (evidenced in extracts [98] and [99]), and between Beth and Polly, who each identified the other as the student with whom they had the most harmonious relationship (evidenced in extracts [92] and [93]).

I now go on to discuss differences in: 'the negotiated character of... (the)... relative values' (Wenger, 1998) in Jo and Gerald's sessions.

In Jo's sessions, the negotiated character of relative values is apparent in the contrasting emphases that Jo and students place on Ware's model. That is, relative to the psychiatric/psychodynamic emphasis on Ware's personality adaptations that shaped Jo's confrontational approach (evidenced in extracts [25], [28], [32] and [35]), students'

emphasis on Ware's doors ([4], [6]) assumed a meaning that appears to be more compatible with humanistic values related to empathic contact and harmony. This is evident in extracts [4] and [6] in which Trish and Polly effectively problematised Vicky's actions in her simulated counselling practice with Lena. The problem was partly framed in terms of Vicky's perceived emphasis on 'doing' rather than on 'feeling' or 'thinking' ([4]) and partly in terms of a perceived mismatch between Lena's question to Vicky about what she was feeling and Vicky's response, which was seen by Polly as a 'thinking' one ([6]). However, to the extent that 'problems' and 'solutions' are theoretically informed, Trish and Polly's problematisation of Vicky's actions only acquires currency in as much as the humanistic values of empathic contact are assumed to be a necessary component of successful counselling. Hence, perturbation in this session can be seen to stem from differing emphases on conflicting values (psychiatric/psychodynamic and humanistic).

In Gerald's sessions, the negotiation of relative values between himself and students was, to some extent, more subtle and complex. It seems likely that this was because, in humanistic terms, there was less contrast between the gestalt concepts used by Gerald and those introduced into his sessions by students in the form of Ware's doors.

However, relative to the meanings produced by Gerald, those negotiated by students on the basis of Ware's doors had less currency because he did not adopt them, and because, in this economy of meaning, Gerald had a greater degree of legitimate power than students. Perturbation seems to have occurred in Gerald's sessions because, by the time he led these sessions, Ware's doors had become a continuous, or stable part of the shared discourse of students. Therefore, in his interactions with Beth, Gerald's refusal to use Ware's doors to interpret Lena's actions in her simulation with Zandra (evidenced in extract [51]) emerged as a discontinuous, or perturbing element of participation. In this instance, the nature of Gerald's participation effectively reduced: '... the possibility

of accumulating the “ownership of meaning”...’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 199) shaped by Ware’s model. Hence, whilst there was always the possibility that Gerald’s ownership, or appropriation of gestalt meanings (evidenced in extracts [58], [60] and [62]) would be ‘contested’ (Wenger, 1998) by students, the hierarchical ‘system of legitimation’ (Wenger, 1998) may have served to ‘regulate processes of negotiation of meaning’ (Wenger, 1998). Thus, his position in relation to Ware’s model prevailed, and there is little evidence of him using the model in the sessions that he led. In my individual interview with Gerald, following his sessions, I referred back to the incident with Beth in order to attempt to understand the nature of his refusal to use Ware’s doors in his interaction with her:

[108] Me: *‘One of the things I noticed in the first session was that Beth asked you to say what Lena’s open door was at one point, and you said that you weren’t prepared to make that kind of an assessment... Will you tell me what that was about?’*

[109] Gerald: *‘I was interested in what her... (Beth’s)... thinking was... and I didn’t really know the answer to the question. I hadn’t thought about it in those terms... It wasn’t that she was interested in the answer to the question; it was more that she was testing me out and I didn’t want to go there... I didn’t want to be put in that position...’*

As part of the same interview, I asked Gerald if he would talk more generally about his experiences of the two sessions that he had led. His reply was as follows:

[110] Gerald: *‘I wasn’t conscious of using Ware’s model very much... I thought a lot of interesting things came out in both pieces of work... For example, in the work that Vicky was doing with her client... (Trish)... she... (Trish)... didn’t know how to... “mobilise” her feelings... in the gestalt model, and thinking about “introjects” - her “introjects” could get in the way of her completing her experience...’*

Whilst Gerald’s emphasis on gestalt terminology in the sessions that he led can, as discussed above, be understood in terms of his position of supremacy in relation to

students in the prevailing hierarchical system of legitimation, this system of legitimation does not help to explain Gerald's emphasis on gestalt terminology in our interview ([110]). This is because, in our professional relationship as co-training colleagues, Gerald and I had parity.

From my perspective, I experienced Gerald's use of gestalt terminology in our interview as a signal of his reluctance to negotiate meanings that were shaped by an emphasis on Ware's model. To the extent that this was the case, it seems possible that his use of this terminology was, in part, his attempt to re-stabilise an aspect of our participatory process, which, prior to the study, had been mediated by a 'shared discourse' that included 'jargon and shortcuts to communication' (Wenger, 1998) that were shaped by gestalt concepts. From Wenger's perspective, Gerald's apparent attempt at re-stabilisation might be understood as having been fuelled by perturbation resulting from the high profile position of Ware's model, which effectively 'overshadowed or displaced original... (gestalt)... meanings' (Wenger, 1998).

There are at least five interrelated reasons why Ware's model might have overshadowed original meanings. Firstly, for seven months, use of the model dominated training because it provided the deliberate learning focus for participation in the study.

Secondly, by the time of Gerald's sessions, Ware's model had become a dominant part of students': 'jargon and short cuts to communication' (Wenger, 1998). This may have led to Gerald's sense of alienation from the model. According to Wenger: '... appropriation by some... (in this case, students)... can entail alienation from others... (in this case, Gerald)...' (Wenger, 1998, p. 201). Thirdly, the model highlighted the connectedness, or conceptual overlap between Jo's psychodynamic orientation and my transactional analysis orientation. Hence, to some extent, Jo and I had shared ownership of meaning. Fourthly, relative to Gerald's gestalt proposals of meaning, Jo's construction of meaning, because it was tied back to Ware's model, appeared to acquire

greater currency with students than Gerald's. Fifthly, the two students who occupied the highest position in the student hierarchy (Lena and Trish), and who were also the 'clients' in the sessions that Gerald led, effectively contested the meanings that Gerald produced (evidenced in extracts [49], [57] and [61]) and, to some extent, this may have influenced the student group's dissatisfaction with Gerald's sessions. Certainly, there is evidence that most students attached relatively low value to the meanings produced by Gerald in his sessions compared with the values they attached to the meanings produced by Jo in his sessions. These relative values emerge when students' responses to these two blocks of sessions, obtained in individual interviews, are juxtaposed (this can be seen when extracts [76] to [81] are compared with extracts [85] to [90]).

Having interpreted my data in terms of Wenger's theory of communities of practice as economies of meaning, and still holding stability and perturbation in mind, I now turn to my critique of his theory.

My critique of Wenger's theory.

As indicated above, in my interpretation of my data, I found Wenger's construction of communities of practice as 'economies of meaning' (Wenger, 1998) particularly useful. This construction provided an explanatory framework for understanding how the use of Ware's model impinged on the complex set of power relations evident in the participatory process of learning in the study. Wenger's depiction of economies of meaning is shaped by an amalgamation of ideas, which, in my case, served to highlight the interrelationship between social relations of participation and identities of participation, and the interrelationship between these dimensions of participation and the production of meaning/learning.

Wenger's (1998) approach to understanding learning is shaped by organic, co-emergent ideas. In terms of appreciating the place of perturbation in the learning process,

Wenger's organic understanding is not based on a view of perturbation as a deliberate strategy for learning, but rather, as a natural element in a system where perturbation ebbs and flows in our social relations with others. This understanding of perturbation implies a non-interventionist position for educators, since to intervene in any deliberate way would be to interrupt the organismic flow of interactions within a community of practice. Viewed as part of an organismic process, perturbation takes on a neutrality that is neither negative or positive. This prompts ethical considerations regarding the appropriateness of using non-interventionist approaches in deliberate learning environments, not least because deliberate learning environments are hierarchically structured, and with power comes responsibility. Therefore, depending on the nature and degree of perturbation (which Wenger does not appear to address), it may be that certain disturbances within a group require intervention by educators. These considerations suggest that, relative to certain other situated approaches to learning, for example, Billett's (2001) activity theory, Wenger's approach is less politically oriented.

In a more general critique of 'enactivist' or co-emergent approaches to learning,

Fenwick asks the following question:

'... How can an educational project for change be formulated that adequately accounts for the complexified ongoing systemic perturbations, without being deliberately illusory? That is, if any action of an educator or other particular element of a system becomes enfolded in that system's multiple interactions and unpredictable expansions of possibility, what sort of reference point can be used to guide intention towards some pedagogical goal? ...' (Fenwick, 2003, p. 51).

Whilst finding a: 'reference point... to guide intention towards some pedagogical goal' (Fenwick, 2003) may be a challenge for co-emergent approaches to learning, I suggest that the issue is to do with the more general challenge of constructing holistic understanding. In such an understanding, it seems to me that, if the reference point is not to be arbitrarily decided, it is likely to be determined by the purpose it is intended to serve, and this has political implications, which seems to be what Fenwick is hinting at.

Another critical question that Fenwick asks in relation to co-emergent approaches to learning is:

‘... If all interactions between people co-emerge in ways that specify each other, how is it that educators often influence learners more than they are influenced in their interactions?...’ (Fenwick, 2003, p. 51).

Regarding Fenwick’s deceptively naïve question, I suggest that Wenger’s concept of communities of practice as economies of meaning counters some of her criticisms by providing a convincing framework for explaining how it is: ‘that educators often influence learners more than they are influenced in their interactions’ (Fenwick, 2003). This is evident in Wenger’s stance that although there is an: ‘inherent fluidity in... relations’ (Wenger, 1998) between, in my case, tutors and learners, ultimately, systems of legitimation serve to regulate the learning process. Of course, in an educational setting, the extent to which a system is regulated will probably vary according to the particular culture of learning, and I agree with Fenwick’s implied suggestion that a co-emergent, non-interventionist approach does not promote actions designed to protect:

‘... individuals... (who)... become vulnerable to a few who... (may)... manipulate the system’s discourses to sustain their own power, ensuring that their experiences become the most valued knowledge in the collective...’ (Fenwick, 2003, p. 51).

However, I suggest that, in providing a framework for understanding interactions in a community of practice, Wenger’s concept of economies of meaning makes a useful contribution towards raising awareness of inequitable aspects of the participatory process, and that this awareness has the potential for mediating interactions. I now turn to one of the main limitations of Wenger’s theory, as I see it.

Wenger’s approach interested me because of his attempt to fuse a social understanding of knowledge production with a notion of individual identity. However, in this respect, and in terms of understanding perturbation, I find his ideas problematic for two interrelated reasons. Firstly, there seems to be a philosophical tension between his concepts of an identity and an identity of participation. Secondly, Wenger’s

conceptualisation of identity appears to subtly discount the interrelationship between the individual and the social context.

The philosophical tension between Wenger's concepts of an identity and an identity of participation.

I suggest that the philosophical tension between Wenger's concepts of an identity and an identity of participation arises because these two concepts are constructed in terms of different philosophical assumptions, and because Wenger seems to suppose that they constitute two parts of a whole. That is, it seems to me that Wenger's view of identity reflects an individual emphasis based on a 'realist' ontology, whereas his view of an identity of participation reflects a social emphasis based on an 'interpretivist' epistemology. As a whole, the two concepts reflect a 'neorealist' position, which, as Smith, from an interpretivist perspective, purports, is an 'untenable' (Smith, 1998) position because, as I have discussed in some depth elsewhere (Bresloff, 2002), realist and interpretivist assumptions are incompatible.

In the interests of holism, Wenger consciously sets out to avoid any either/or (that is, individual or social) explanations regarding the location of learning; rather, he attempts to adopt an integrationist perspective in which the individual and the social are seen as mutually defining dimensions of a co-emergent, organic process of learning. As previously mentioned, this self-regulatory process incorporates both stability and perturbation, or harmony and disharmony in the participatory process. In this process, which is shaped by, and which shapes, our identities of participation, Wenger depicts stability and perturbation in neither positive nor negative terms. However, in Wenger's depiction of identity, perturbation takes on more negative connotations. This is because he apparently sees perturbation as forming part of an ongoing process of self-maintenance in which maintaining a consistent sense of self requires reconciling the perturbation. Indeed, the relationship that Wenger makes between perturbation and

identity is, to some extent, more akin to a psychodynamic view of the need for us, as individuals, to 'work through' our intrapsychic conflict in order to experience ourselves as whole, rather than 'fragmented' (Frosh, 1991), or, in Wenger's terms, as 'one person' (Wenger, 1998). This said, he seems keen to distance himself from a fragmented view of the individual. This is evident in his following construction of identity:

'... An identity... should be viewed as a nexus of multimembership. As such a nexus, identity is not a unity but neither is it simply fragmented... being one person requires some work to reconcile our different forms of membership...'
(Wenger, 1998, p. 159).

However, it could be argued that this construction of identity also falls short of the holism that he attempts to achieve. This is partly because, in this depiction of identity, our assumed drive towards equilibrium and stability takes on a degree of consistency ('being one person') that seems to be underpinned by rationalist notions. For instance, in terms of Wenger's view of identity, Vicky and Zandra's identification with Ware's personality adaptations (evidenced in extracts [85] and [90], taken from their individual interviews with me) is inconsistent with their identities of participation as gestalt trainees, as evidenced, for example, in their apparent rejection of this aspect of Ware's model in the group interviews. From Wenger's perspective, this inconsistency may be seen as an irrational element of their identities that requires some 'reconciliation work' in order for them to experience themselves as 'one person'. But this inconsistency only appears irrational if consistency is assumed to be the norm, if perturbation is framed in negative terms, and if the culture in terms of which learning is situated is discounted.

It seems to me that understanding Vicky and Zandra's use of Ware's adaptations in terms of their identities of participation (rather than in terms of their identities) provides a more convincing explanation of some of their actions in the study if the culture of learning is taken into account. That is, in a hierarchical 'social system of relative values' (Wenger, 1998), it seems probable that sharing their identification with Ware's personality adaptations with me constituted their attempt to demonstrate their competent

use of a theory that they associated with me, since doing so was also part and parcel of their identities of participation as trainees. To this extent, a limitation of using Ware's model was that it may have generated contributions to the research enterprise that were shaped by students' desire to seek my favour, given the inequitable power relations between myself and trainees, and given that my identity of participation was shaped by transactional analysis, and Ware's model was a transactional analysis artefact. This said, a socially located explanation helps to explain why Zandra and Vicky appear to have reserved their identification with this aspect of the model for their interviews with me rather than sharing it in a whole-group context, where the majority of their peers had rejected Ware's personality adaptations. Also, in not sharing this information with the whole group, their participation in the group was in closer 'alignment' (Wenger, 1998) with that of their peers, and in Wenger's terms, this might have had implications for their sense of 'belongingness' (Wenger, 1998) to their peer group.

Clearly, on an ontological level, Wenger's depiction of identity does not extend as far as implying the existence of a 'true', or 'core' self to be 'uncovered' or 'discovered' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) in participation with others. Neither does he move to the opposite polarity by adopting what might be considered to be a radical postmodernist view in terms of his portrayal of an identity of participation, that is, a view of a: '... decentred self, subjectivity without a centre or origin, caught in meanings, positioned in language and the narratives of culture...' (Usher et al., 1997, p. 103). Nonetheless, it seems to me that, in a more subtle way, Wenger's theory sits somewhat uneasily between two stools; the essentialist-individual and the organic-social.

I now turn to the second difficulty that I have with Wenger's conceptualisation of identity, which is that it appears to subtly discount the interrelationship between the individual and the social context. This is because, in Wenger's conceptualisation, identity takes on a permanence that is consistent with cumulative assumptions, in so far

as he sees this construct as constituting: ‘... layers... (that)... build upon each other to produce our identity...’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 151). For Wenger, identity is: ‘... the vehicle that carries our experiences from context to context...’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 268). I suggest that this view discounts, albeit again quite subtly, that participants in a community are part of the context, not separate from it, so that in negotiating meaning participants are at one and the same time helping to negotiate the context of learning. In my study, this contextualisation of learning is evident in both Jo and Gerald’s sessions. In Jo’s sessions, the negotiation of meaning between himself and students is shaped by varying levels of ‘continuity’ and ‘discontinuity’, or ‘stability’ and ‘perturbation’ (Wenger, 1998) in relation to the values embedded in the two main constituents of Ware’s model (his personality adaptations and doors). The differing emphases that Jo and students place on these interrelated constituents leads to their polarisation, and this effectively results in an either/or underlying struggle. That is, there was a struggle between Jo’s attempts to create a context for learning shaped by Ware’s personality adaptations (which are relatively more compatible with his psychoanalytical values than with humanistic ones) and students’ attempts to create a context for learning shaped by Ware’s doors (which are relatively more compatible with humanistic values than with psychoanalytical ones). Students’ assessment of Ware’s model is evident in some of their responses to it in our second group interview (as evidenced in extracts [65], [66], [69], [70] and [72]). Therefore, it seems plausible that their emphasis on the model in Jo’s sessions reflected their identities of participation, which were shaped by, and which helped to shape, the humanistic context of this counselling training community.

In Gerald’s sessions, struggles related to the contextualisation of learning are evident in the perturbation that emerged between himself and Beth ([50] to [52]) and himself and Trish ([58] to [62]). Perturbation, in this instance, can be understood as stemming from differences between the values associated with Gerald’s gestalt identity of participation

and the values associated with Trish and Beth's transactional analysis identities of participation. Accordingly, Gerald's view about the legitimacy of using Ware's model as a conceptual tool for the contextualisation of learning differed from Trish and Beth's. Also, in Gerald's sessions, there was a mismatch between his and students' expectations about the content of learning, and hence the contextualisation of learning. In this respect, it seems probable that, had students expected Gerald's practice to be shaped by gestalt concepts, they would not have been perturbed by his actions in the study. They were perturbed because their expectations were that learning would be contextualised by Ware's model, which did not prove to be the case.

The underlying struggles in the contextualisation of learning in Jo and Gerald's sessions raises issues that are pertinent to Lave and Wenger's notion of 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger, 1991). That is, such struggles prompt questions about the degree of peripheral participation in the negotiation of meaning, or contextualisation of learning that students are legitimately allowed in a counselling training culture that is shaped by a particular set of definitive assumptions embodied in a core model. In his earlier work with Lave (Lave and Wenger, 1991), they explore some of the reasons why legitimate peripheral participation may be restricted. However, in his later work (Wenger, 1998), he departs from this more political stance.

I end my critique of Wenger's approach by considering where his approach might be located in the wider context of the situated learning theory debate (mentioned in Chapter 2) about the retention of self when the focus is social (Smolka et al., 1995; Daniels, 2001; Billett, 2001). In this regard, Wenger's position in relation to an identity and an identity of participation can be seen as his attempt to not lose sight of the individual in an approach that emphasises the social location of learning. However, in as much as there are difficulties in reconciling Wenger's individual notion of identity with his social notion of an identity of participation, I suggest that this element of his theory

is less convincing than other elements of his theory that I have drawn on in interpreting my data.

On a more general level, adopting a critical perspective on Wenger's theory as an interpretive framework for my data enabled my understanding of the multiple perspectives reflected in his approach. These include; 'reflective', 'constructivist', 'enactivist', 'postmodernist' and 'activity' theories of learning, and notwithstanding my above reservations, I see his work as a 'creative synthesis' (Moustakas, 1990), or 'fusion of... (theoretical)... horizons' (Gadamer, 1989) that makes a useful contribution to understanding learning as a participatory process.

Summary.

In this chapter, I have attributed meaning to my data by interpreting it in terms of Wenger's view of communities of practice as economies of meaning. In my construction of this understanding, I have emphasised those aspects of participation in the study where there was evidence of perturbation. I have also drawn on Wenger's interrelated concepts of social relations of participation and identities of participation. Following this, in my critique of Wenger's work, I have examined his notion of an identity and his notion of an identity of participation and have talked about the philosophical tension that is evident to me in this two-part construction.

In Chapter 7, I give my tentative conclusions, closing comments and critical reflections on the study.

7. Tentative conclusions, closing comments and critical reflections on the study.

In this chapter, I give my tentative conclusions and closing comments on; counselling training as a participatory process, difficulties related to counselling training practices shaped by a core theoretical model, and stability and perturbation in relation to learning in a counselling training context. Finally, I give my critical reflections on the study.

Counselling training as a participatory process.

My first tentative conclusion from the study is that counselling training can be usefully understood as a participatory process. The study shows that understanding counselling training in this way shifts the emphasis from a relatively passive view of learning as the transmission of theory from tutor to student to an active view of learning as ‘doing’. In the context of the study, I have adopted Wenger’s (1998) implied use of the term ‘doing’, which I have taken to mean the tacit and explicit negotiation of meaning, or learning by members of a community of practice. Accordingly, the emphasis in such an understanding is on the social location of learning rather than on the individual location of learning. In a counselling training context, this situation of learning moves the focus away from a psychological view of actions as a reflection of personality or pathology to a social focus on the interactions between participants, and, as such, highlights the co-created nature of learning. One of the implications of viewing counselling training as a participatory process is that the process of learning (that is, how learning is negotiated and organised), the content of learning (that is, the deliberate focus for learning) and the main product of learning (that is, becoming a counsellor) come to be seen as part and parcel of the same interactive, holistic process.

Difficulties related to counselling training practices shaped by use of a core model.

Learning that is organised in terms of a core model appears holistic because of the level of stability and cohesiveness regarding the content of learning, the process of learning and the product of learning. However, my study suggests that this may not be the case.

This is because an understanding of holism based on a core model approach may not include an understanding of learning as a negotiated process that is shaped by the social relations of participation. Rather, practices that are based on a core model appear to assume a direct relationship between participants and the core model, which serves to discount the ways in which social relations of participation may mediate learning.

Influential proponents of the core model, such as Wheeler (1999), suggest that: ‘training in a core model is essential’ (Wheeler, 1999). In support of her position, she states that:

‘... Counselling and psychotherapy training could be compared to the process of growing up... Children thrive when they know where they are and what is expected of them... Parents provide some kind of life map and a set of rules that guide and provide security... This seems like a helpful metaphor for training as a therapist, a process of growing and developing intellectually, emotionally and professionally, with a sound core theoretical model...’ (Wheeler, 1999, p. 203).

A similar developmental assumption is apparent in the British Association for Counselling criterion for accreditation for courses that are based on an integrative core model. This guideline is: ‘... that integration is clarified by the staff offering the training rather than left to the students...’ (Wheeler, 1999, p. 202).

My study indicates that there are difficulties with the developmental assumptions that go hand in hand with learning practices that are based on a core model. One of the difficulties is that a view of training based on this approach may reduce students’ autonomy in learning. Another difficulty is that organising counselling training in terms of developmental parameters may attribute too much power to trainers in the learning process.

Regarding the first difficulty, my study indicates that learning that is structured in terms of meanings emanating from a core theory may limit the extent to which students are able to become contributors to knowledge production, or 'legitimate peripheral participants' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) in the contextualisation of learning. This was the case in Gerald's sessions, for instance, in which his reluctance to use Ware's model was effectively legitimised by his adherence to the gestalt concepts that formed part of conventional training practices shaped by the humanistic-integrative core model. In Jo's sessions, his emphasis on psychiatric/psychodynamic concepts was effectively legitimised by the 'core' theory used for the purposes of the study, that is, Ware's model. The perturbation arising from struggles in the negotiation of meaning in these sessions between tutors and students suggests that students were not considered by tutors to be legitimate peripheral participants in a collective production of meaning, even though, in relation to Ware's model, all participants (tutors and students) were relative novices.

The second difficulty with training based on developmental assumptions is that these assumptions appear to endow trainers with a level of influence in the learning process that may discount learning influences from students' peer relationships. For instance, in my study, it is noticeable that, in the main, those students who expressed similar theoretical preferences to each other (shown in Table 5.1, p. 91), also expressed the greatest affinity with each other (evidenced in extracts [91] to [96]). Therefore, it may be the case that harmonious (and disharmonious) social relations between student peers are as influential in the learning process as social relations between tutors and students. This raises questions about the extent to which cohesion and 'security' (Wheeler, 1999) can be linked to a core model, and the extent to which they reflect the pattern of social relations of participation within a group. To the extent that social relations of participation are inextricably linked with identities of participation and both are shaped

by core theory values, it seems that not to take account of the social relations of participation may be reductionist.

I now turn to my closing comments on stability and perturbation.

Stability and perturbation.

Wenger states:

‘...I cannot emphasise enough that interrelations arise out of engagement in practice and not out of an idealized view of what a community should be like.... Peace, happiness, and harmony are therefore not necessary properties of a community of practice....’ (Wenger, 1998, pp. 76-77).

However, in my counselling training community, in conventional: ‘... interrelations... (that arose)... out of engagement in practice...’ (Wenger, 1998), there was an implicit assumption of stability and harmony shaped by an emphasis on collaboration rather than on argument/debate, and an emphasis on the similarities between the theories that comprised the core model, rather than on the differences, or a mixture of both. In such an environment, perturbation may take on negative connotations, as happened in the study. Therefore, not too surprisingly perhaps, the study does not show the value of perturbation in learning in this counselling training context. This said, much may depend on how the data is interpreted and what is counted as learning. For instance, if learning in the study is seen as the confirmation or reaffirmation of theoretical and ideological humanistic values that were important to students, then perturbation in the form of disturbances to these values, created by the use of Ware’s model, can be seen as the catalyst for learning. On the other hand, if students adherence, in the study, to the core values is seen as evidence of their passive internalisation of these values, then perturbation created by the use of Ware’s model may have been the catalyst for reinforcing these values. In other words, it is difficult to say to what extent the data reflects students’ ownership, or ‘appropriation’ (Wertsch, 1998) of humanistic values or their ‘mastery’ (Wertsch, 1998) of these values. In terms of my own learning, the study

disturbed certain taken for granted learning culture norms in my counselling training community, and this prompted my questioning of these norms.

As I near to a close, I return to Wenger's statement that:

‘... Learning requires enough structure and continuity to accumulate experience and enough perturbation and discontinuity to continually renegotiate meaning...’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 227).

Given that, for Wenger, perturbation is not seen as a deliberate learning strategy, it seems, from the above statement, that, from Wenger's perspective, a community of practice needs to contain a certain amount of both stability and perturbation in order for learning to occur. However, it seems likely that what constitutes ‘enough structure and continuity’ and ‘enough discontinuity and perturbation’ (Wenger, 1998) to create the potential for learning in a deliberate learning environment depends on the culture of learning, how stability (or continuity) and perturbation are understood, and what counts as learning. It seems likely that Wenger would consider that, in counselling training communities based on practices informed by a core model, there may be too much ‘structure and continuity’ and not enough ‘perturbation and discontinuity’ (Wenger, 1998). This would be compatible with Wenger's view that:

‘... Whereas training aims to create an inbound trajectory targeted at competence in a specific practice, education must strive to open new dimensions for the negotiation of the self... Education is not merely formative it is transformative...’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 263).

Critical reflections on the study.

Subtly embedded in my initial research interest was the realist assumption of a duality between the subject and object of learning. That is, I had implicitly assumed that the conceptual tool that I used as a deliberate focus for participation in the study (Ware's model) could be separated from the users of this tool (the participants in my inquiry) for the purpose of its evaluation. The professional development aim that underpinned my research interest was based on a similar assumption of dualism; that is, that somehow I

could understand my position/practice as a tutor from my position/practice as a researcher. The non-viability of these assumptions became evident to me during my fieldwork. This awareness led to a shift in my understanding of the location of meaning/learning and the significance of context in relation to learning. Therefore, rather than locating meaning within Ware's model, for instance, I began to understand meaning as a co-created, context specific product of group negotiations that were shaped by interactions around the model.

As I became more interested in understanding learning as a co-created process, my research aim widened. That is, my aim extended from one that reflected an individualistic emphasis on developing my own counselling training practice to a social emphasis on gaining a critical understanding of learning practices as a whole in my case study community and to wanting to make a contribution to knowledge that extended beyond the anecdotal. Moving from the anecdotal to the more general occurred as I linked the illuminations I gained from my study to the wider field of counselling training, of which my case study community was a part. The process was an iterative one that involved continually moving from the particulars of my case to counselling training more generally and back to the particulars.

In a traditional (quantitative) approach to research, the shift in my understanding and focus of research interest would have been problematic, in that it had implications for the design of the study, which was pre-structured by way of the initial research questions. However, from an interpretivist perspective, this shift formed part of an evolving understanding, which was enabled by the flexible, non-formulaic and iterative character of the qualitative case study methodology. This said, I have asked myself the question: If I was doing this research again, what would I do differently? The main difference would be to ensure, from the outset, a greater level of consistency between the philosophical assumptions that underpinned both my methodology and research

aims. I have also asked myself the hypothetical question: If my shift in understanding during the study had constituted the starting point of my study, would it have been more or less useful to have used a deliberate learning focus for understanding participatory processes and learning than simply observing usual learning practices in this community? As I see it, there are limitations and advantages to both.

A limitation of using a deliberate learning focus that was compatible with the theoretical preference that mediated my practice as a trainer was that I may have unwittingly generated contributions to the research enterprise that were shaped by students' desire to seek my favour. Had I chosen a deliberate learning focus that was not related to my particular theoretical orientation, this possibility may have been lessened. However, considering my original research objective (to improve my practice as a trainer), I had little alternative than to use a focus related to the theoretical perspective that shaped my practice as a trainer. To some extent, this limitation can be associated with an action research approach in which the aim is for those involved in an educational practice to conduct research within that practice in order to improve it. (Of course, much may depend on how broadly or narrowly the notion of practice is understood.)

Notwithstanding this point, an advantage, as I see it, of using a deliberate learning focus for learning (in my case, Ware's model) was that this focus helped to boundary/contextualise the study, which was situated within the training course as a whole. This contextualisation came about because deliberate use of Ware's model was reserved for use in only those sessions that formed part of the case study. As a centrally shaping feature in the participatory learning process, during these sessions, participants' use of the model provided the basis for 'purposive sampling' (Robson, 1993) (that is, the purposeful selection of data on the basis of its relevance to the account or 'story' one wishes to tell). A possible limitation of purposive sampling is that it may have blinkered me to other significant features of the case. This said, in a small-scale study such as

mine, it is not possible to address a full range of issues, especially when the reporting medium (the thesis) has wordage limitations. Given these constraints, the issue becomes one of achieving a balance between 'looseness and selectivity' (Robson, 1993). In my study, there was effectively a trade off between some of the looseness and flexibility associated with a fully emergent process (which would have required the time and wordage that only a large-scale study would allow) and the selectivity necessary for producing an in-depth, purposeful account based on data collected over a relatively short time.

Qualitative case study has been described as being to do with the generation of questions (Robson, 1993). My thinking is that, in part, the generation of questions in qualitative case study is almost inevitable due to purposive sampling norms, which enable depth and limit breadth. In my case, the critical questions that my research generated were shaped by the change in my research direction and, accordingly, on my critique of the paternalistic, developmental model of learning on most counselling training courses. In particular, I would be interested in conducting a further exploration into understanding the extent to which tutor participation that is shaped by a co-emergent and non-interventionist understanding of learning is possible and ethical in a counselling training context, and what the role of tutors might be in such a context.

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